

Sponsoring Committee: Dr. Joseph Shosh, Moravian College  
Dr. Connie Unger, Moravian College  
Dr. Elizabeth Conard, Bethlehem Area School District

**I CAN READ:  
USING POETRY TO DEVELOP AND MOTIVATE YOUNG READERS  
IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM**

**Kerri A. Umholtz**

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education  
Moravian College  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania  
2008

©

by

Kerri A. Umholtz

2008

All Rights Reserved

## **ABSTRACT**

This research study documents the observed and reported experiences when poetry is implemented as a strategy to teach reading skills, therefore motivating and developing young readers. The participants were 13 first grade students in a rural elementary school located in New Jersey. The students were introduced to weekly poems that included a variety of reading strategies such as concepts of print, oral language, phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, analogy, and learning to think about words.

This study suggests that using poetry to teach these skills helps increase students' abilities to read. Throughout the research, a variety of games and activities were employed to provide practice with word recognition and decoding. The students also completed DRA and sight word assessments to track progress. Along with observable student improvement in reading, sight word recognition growth also emerged. Peer-helpers formed through the process of buddy reading, which aided in students abilities to edit misunderstandings and clarifications. The incorporation of all learning modalities throughout the study helped target specific areas of weakness in reading ability. Overall, all learners were positively impacted due to successful classroom management and fostering a positive reading environment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank all of my students for participating in my research study. Your patience during the surveys, DRA inventories, and numerous sight word assessments is greatly appreciated. Your willingness to try new ideas with your teacher, and complete them without any regrets, demonstrates the genuine caring you have for yourselves and your peers. I feel privileged to have worked with such a wonderful, unique group of students.

Next, I would like to thank my fellow colleagues. Your endless support and encouragement when I would vent my frustrations means more than you can imagine. Thank you for my lunch time pep-talks and phone calls over the weekend that would inspire me to continue on with my working pace. The wisdom and suggestions you provided when I hit the “wall” aided greatly in the writing of my research study.

To my family, you are my rock. Not only have you supported me through the years, but also during my graduate school journey. You have comforted me during the hard times, and celebrated with me during the good times. When my printer ran out of ink, you were there to quickly refill it! I owe much to all of you, and thank you whole heartedly for being the most wonderful people in the world.

My friends have also been a wonderful support system. You have lent an ear when I needed to communicate my frustrations. On the other hand, when I overcame challenging obstacles, you were the first ones to take me out and

celebrate. Many of you have been my “other” family for numerous years. Thank you for being my best friends and standing by my side during this endeavor.

Through my years at Moravian, I have met influential and inspiring faculty. I would like to thank Dr. Shosh for your patience with a curious and ever-questioning student. My endless e-mails that you faithfully answered only begins to show your dedication to the program. Thank you for aiding me to become a better educator and a better person. I never would have completed this journey, if it weren't for your presence.

From the introduction to Literature Circles, to your willingness to participate on my committee, I would like to show my gratitude to Dr. Connie Unger. I thoroughly enjoyed being your student. You have influenced my teaching in many ways, mainly due to your enthusiasm with reading in the classroom. I will continue to model your classroom techniques with all of my students.

I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Conard, for joining my thesis committee and taking the time to offer words of wisdom and critique, adding value to my final piece of work.

Lastly, I need to give a huge thanks to my support group, my fellow peers here at Moravian College. We have been together for over a year now, and all of you have influenced me in ways you could never imagine. Your willingness to listen and provide feedback throughout all of our classes together has made me a

better student. We have laughed together, yelled together, and cried together. We have grown to know much about one another, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Thank you for being the wonderful people that you are.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
RESEARCHER STANCE .....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Introduction.....	8
Fluency.....	8
Music and Fluency.....	10
Poetry and Emergent Literacy.....	12
Poetry and Phonological Awareness.....	12
Poetry and Language Arts.....	13
Poetry in the Classroom.....	16
Predictable Books and Poetry.....	17
Poetry and Children.....	18
Teachers, Librarians, and Poetry.....	19
Advantages of Poetry.....	20
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Setting.....	22

Participants.....	22
Data Collection.....	23
TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	27
THIS YEAR’S STORY.....	29
The Beginning.....	29
They’re Back.....	30
Survey Says.....	34
Pastiche: What is a poem?.....	38
Dramatization: I Can See.....	39
Consulting Cooper.....	43
Eyeball Sticks.....	43
Color Words.....	46
Elkonin Boxes.....	48
Dramatization: Where Does the Letter Go.....	51
Word Family Notebooks.....	53
Poetry Center.....	56
Musical Words.....	59
Moving Right Along.....	62
Let’s Go Fishing.....	64
The End is Near.....	66
Pastiche: Why Do We Use Poetry.....	68



Concluding the Study.....	69
Dramatization: Where Is My Hat.....	69
METHODS OF ANALYSIS.....	74
Observational Data.....	74
Survey and Interview Data.....	75
Analytic and Reflective Memos.....	76
Coding and Organizing Data.....	77
Themes.....	78
FINDINGS.....	80
Introduction.....	80
Student Work.....	80
High Frequency Words.....	82
Games.....	84
Word Families.....	85
Student Observations.....	85
Peer Helpers.....	86
Reading Poetry.....	87
Learning Modalities.....	88
Classroom Management.....	89
NEXT STEPS.....	91
REFERENCES.....	95

RESOURCES.....	100
APPENDIXES.....	101

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....	34
Table 2.....	42
Table 3.....	58
Table 4.....	67
Table 5.....	72

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.....	38
Figure 2.....	55
Figure 3.....	68
Figure 4.....	79
Figure 5.....	82
Figure 6.....	83

## RESEARCHER'S STANCE

The year was 1987 and I was in the second grade. My family and I were living in a small two story home in New Jersey. I was sitting in the living room watching television with my brother. I heard the side door open and was soon greeted by my mother who was carrying something in her hand, but I could not tell what the object was. She came over to the couch, gave me a kiss and a hug, and handed me a soft covered book. It wasn't like the other books I had in my bedroom with their hard covers and large pages. This book with its smaller, rectangular shape had a soft cover with a really interesting picture of a girl, maybe a little older than me lying on her bed and talking on this really neat pink phone. When I paged through the inside of the book, there weren't any pictures at all. I remember being so confused by this. No pictures? How would I understand what was happening in the book? There was also another special part to the book that I had never seen. It was called a "Table of Contents." The book was divided into chapters, which was something I had only seen in my reading, math, science, and social studies books at school. To be completely honest, this book did not greatly excite me!

I turned my attention back to the television program that I was watching and placed the book on the coffee table. During commercials, I kept eyeing the book, wondering what was hidden on the inside pages. After many glances, I decided to turn off the television and give this book a closer look. I hopped off my

couch and sprawled my body across the coffee table. I knew this type of behavior was not accepted by my parents, but I was confident that due to the fact I was reading, it would be just fine! I slowly eased into the first chapter, which introduced the main character, Janet Hamm. From that moment on, I was hooked. I was so intrigued by this middle school girl. I loved her friends and the fact that they wore makeup and picked out their own clothes to wear to school. They had crushes on boys and were getting ready for their first dance ever. Except Janet Hamm. She still needed to find a date for the dance. Every chapter I read kept me glued to this new type of book. I could not put it down and before I knew it, I had read the entire thing—over one hundred pages in a matter of hours. I loved this book and I could not wait to read more of these “long books,” which is what I called them at the time; it would be later in life that I would discover these books were called chapter books. On this day I officially began my fascination with reading. For me, reading was a bunch of puzzle pieces that need to be put together in a logical order to make sense of the text. I loved reading all types of books. I would go to my friends’ houses and borrow their chapter books three at a time. The books would follow me on vacations and long plane rides. I just couldn’t get enough!

My fascination with actually understanding the process of reading itself began when I was student teaching in a first grade classroom during my senior year of college. Clearly, first grade is a critical year in which students learn a

multitude of reading skills, and here I was with absolutely no teaching experience getting ready to embark on this important adventure. My job was to work with all the leveled reading groups.

The first group I encountered was the independent readers, and it quickly became clear to me why these students were placed into this reading group. They made accurate predictions through the picture walk, could pronounce all vocabulary words, knew one-to-one correspondence and read more than enough words per minute with fluency and comprehension.

Next, I met with the challenge reading group. Students made many great predictions, but not all of them were correct. Some vocabulary words caused confusion, and students needed much elaboration to help them make meaning. They were quite familiar with one-to-one correspondence and did a fantastic job with their oral reading fluency even as they sometimes struggled with comprehension.

Finally, I gathered together my last reading group. These students were identified as the lowest readers in the class. I remember expecting this group to struggle with reading but to make progress quickly. I sadly discovered, though, that the process took longer than I initially thought it would. These children had little or no ability to piece words together. Sounding out was almost non-existent due to the fact that they did not recognize all letters or know their corresponding sounds. While reading the story aloud, many students in this group were not able

to follow along with the concepts of print. Some of the children pointed to the wrong words as they read aloud and turned the pages at inappropriate times. The frustration these students felt was evident. Their eyes often left the story book and wandered to other parts of the classroom. Heads were drooping and eventually finding a place on the table. I was losing them. I felt hopeless, lost, and an honest sense of sadness for these children.

When I became a full-time teacher in the classroom, I found that my concerns about reading were still similar. Last year, I made a transition from third grade to a first grade classroom. Twenty new boys and girls were going to enter my classroom and start a new adventure in their education. I knew that the sooner I determined the reading levels of my students, the quicker I would be able to help them become stronger readers. The reading levels varied here from low to independent— just as they had in my student teaching classroom. However, this year I discovered a new challenge. I had one particular child who truly became an inspiration to me and who changed my outlook on teaching.

This young boy was working with me on a sight word assessment, consisting of twenty-four words that most children recognize at the beginning of first grade. I remember pointing to the word *I*. His response, “I don’t know.”

I pointed to the word again and said, “Look at the letter. What letter is this?” He replied, “L.”



I could see that he wasn't even looking at the paper, but at my face instead. I decided to move on and ask him to read another word. I skimmed over the other words and pointed to *me*. He looked at the word and then the floor.

"Floor," he replied. "Not exactly," I said. "Look again. What does the word begin with?" A few seconds of silence followed this question until eventually he looked up at me and said, "I can't do this. It's too hard." Tears welled up in his eyes and at this moment I decided to read the word to him.

"*Me*," I said. "Can you say that?"

He repeated the word after me and I praised his efforts. Then, I asked him to return to his seat.

For the first time in my life, a child had left me speechless. I thought long and hard about my previous first grade placement when I had been a student teacher, and I wasn't sure what to do. I again felt hopeless and lost, but instead of feeling sadness, I was heartbroken. It was at this point that I determined to help all children feel successful in reading, no matter what their level of performance when entering my classroom. I also decided to abandon my efforts to put every student above and beyond the so-called reading standards. Educator William Ayers says, "We must find ways to break with the deficit-driven model, and we must move away from teaching as a way of attacking incompetencies, teaching as uncovering perceived deficiencies and constructing micro-units for repair. We must find a better way, a way that builds on strengths, experiences, skills, and

abilities; a way that engages a whole person and guides that person to greater fulfillment and power” (p. 33).

Having a child cry because he can't yet read the words is not targeting the child's natural strengths and is standing in his way of becoming a confident reader. My first new goal of reading instruction would need to be getting the students to enjoy reading. My first grade teaching partner and I created a book club for the students with a goal of reading one hundred books by the end of the year. When students had collectively accomplished this goal, both classes would celebrate with a book party. However, I wanted students to realize that books are not the sole source of enjoyment in reading. Hence, I developed my second goal: using other forms of texts such as poems, simple rhymes, and songs to trigger reading enjoyment. Before I knew it, a new research question evolved: **What would be the observed and reported experiences when using poetry to motivate and develop young readers?** I wanted to observe the changes in attitudes about reading and overall reading achievement when students regularly read poetry in the classroom. I decided to provide the class with poetry binders. Every time I introduced a new poem to the class, we placed a copy into the binder to read again during free time. These poems targeted common words found in everyday reading. Not only were the students provided with reinforcement by constantly viewing these sight words, but the rhyme and repetition of the poems, accompanied by music, made these poems enjoyable to reread. With this research,

I was hoping that poetry would develop and motivate young readers, thereby helping them to feel more successful with reading in the classroom. But before the implementation, it was time to consult previous researchers and their endeavors with poetry in the classroom.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

*“There is nothing like poetry in the whole wide world. Eat it, drink it, sleep with it. Make it a part of your everyday life. Make poetry YOURS.”*

~Lee Bennet Hopkins

Including poetry in the classroom setting can prove to be a rewarding and joyful experience. Not only do the rhyme and rhythm of poetry appeal to students of all ages, but they nurture a love and appreciation for the sound and power of language. Poetry can help people view things differently, enable readers to understand themselves and others, and authenticate their roles in this world (Perfect, 1999). As Perfect (1999) points out, “It is a genre especially suited to the struggling or unmotivated reader” (p. 728).

### Fluency

According to Blau (2001) one definition of fluency is “the ability to read aloud expressively and with understanding” (p. 1). A fluent reader reads in a way that the text flows together smoothly rather than in a choppy fashion. Blau (2001) suggests increasing fluency in readers by exposing students to a wide variety of poetry. Rasinski (2000) also suggests using poetry to help increase the fluency of a struggling or unmotivated reader. Including poetry as a part of the reading curriculum can help promote fluency through repeated readings of a variety of texts.

In order for students to understand how to read fluently, they must recognize what reading sounds like, which will help them transfer multiple experiences into their own personal reading. One of the most important ways for educators to help students is to read aloud to them often and with great expression. Cunningham and Allington (1998) discuss the importance of using repeated readings, including poetry, to help students recognize high-frequency words. This practice helps students strengthen their ease of reading and also promotes fluency (Blau, 2001). In her research study, Durham (1997) used daily poetry readings to help increase reading and writing skills of a fourth-grade classroom. She found that many of her students were re-reading to understand the overall meaning. By doing this, the students became more attentive to sounds and images, therefore allowing them to become more expressive in their readings.

The National Reading Panel feels that fluency is an essential part of reading. According to the NRP, fluent readers can “read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p.3-1) Results from the NRP’s executive study on fluency found that repeated oral readings are effective in improving reading fluency and overall reading achievement. While word recognition is an important component, it is not the end point for reading instruction. “Fluency represents a level of expertise beyond word recognition accuracy, and reading comprehension may be aided by fluency” (p. 3-3). The NRP suggests two approaches to aiding students with progress in reading fluency.

One is to emphasize the repeated oral reading practice in the classroom and the second would be to encourage independent reading as often as possible, including sustained silent reading.

Pikulski and Chard (2005), mention more than repeated readings of text in the classroom to aide with fluency. They feel that “fluency builds on a foundation of oral language skills, phonemic awareness, familiarity with letter forms, and efficient decoding skills” (p. 517). They suggest a nine-step program to help develop a deep construct of fluency such as phonological awareness, phonics, and letter recognition, oral language skills, providing practice in high frequency vocabulary, teaching common word parts, modeling the decoding strategy, using appropriate texts to build reading speed, incorporating repeated readings, encouraging independent reading, and monitoring fluency through the use of assessments. With the combined use of these strategies, Pikulski and Chard feel that students will improve their overall reading fluency.

#### Music and Fluency

Children can be captivated by the powerful appeal of music in their environment. “Through music, children can experience the wholeness of language such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing” (Kolb, 1996, p. 76). Kolb feels that, “the most effective way to teach children to learn and to value languages is to provide them with a variety of meaningful experiences that fine tune their ability to hear rhythm, sounds, and melodies” (p. 76).

The first step with implementing the music experience is to repeatedly sing a song until the students are familiar with the tune and lyrics (Barclay & Walwer, 1992; Handy, 1989; Harp, 1988; Renegar, 1990, as cited in Kolb, 1996). Providing the music for the students to hear in a special place where there isn't any distractions will aid as a helpful strategy. The second step is to provide the lyrics in print for the students, basically writing the words where the students can view them. The lyrics should be introduced to the students and sufficient time should be allowed for sharing thoughts and comments (Handy, 1989; Harp, 1988; as cited in Kolb, 1996). When the teacher provides the printed lyrics, students will be able to participate in the reading experience, therefore promoting print awareness. "Activities such as pointing to each word as it is sung, locating words that appear in more than one place, and providing children with word cards to match like words are excellent ways to reinforce the link between speech and print" (Harp, 1988; Renegar, 1990; as cited in Kolb, 1996).

Targeting sight words is another benefit of displaying printed lyrics. Students can categorize the words according to patterns and vowel sounds, play concentration by repeating each word as it is read aloud and then matching it with its partner, and adding these words to the classroom word wall as a means to provide practice and reinforcement.

### Poetry and Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy is defined as increasing the awareness of the print world while primary students observe and experiment with the learning process (Smith 1991, as cited in Love, 1995).

Reading poetry with children can help advance emergent literacy. Poetry is able to link spoken language to the written language while also engaging children in rhyme and rhythm. When children hear the spoken language and view the written text, they are able to process letter-sound combinations and recognize meaningful words (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, as cited in Gable, 1999).

Continuous exposure to poetry will allow children to grow in their knowledge of spoken and written language, therefore increasing their reading (Gable, 1999).

Higgins and Cox (1998) found that after being exposed to a poem more than once, students were able to process the written language with the spoken language to determine meanings of unfamiliar words. Gellar (1983, as cited in Gable, 1999) found that in poetry “children also learn to discriminate familiar sounds and to recognize written words” both necessary precursors to successful reading (p. 10).

### Poetry and Phonological Awareness

Closely tied to emergent reading would be the practice of phonological awareness and the impact poetry has on it. Phonological awareness refers to the spoken language, such as words within sentences, syllables within words, and phonemes within syllables and words. Teachers need to provide students with an



oral language-rich environment; one that includes read-alouds, songs, nursery rhymes, poems, and other forms of language play. Some suggestions to keep a classroom rich in oral language are to embed phonological awareness into everyday reading and writing experience, provide time for children to write and allow for invented spelling, read aloud children's literature that focuses on specific language features, use fun and engaging oral language activities, determine what students need, and involve families. Children are surrounded by rhyme in everyday life, whether it is a song that is sung by parents or something from the classroom. They develop an ear for rhyme at an early age, and educators should continue to immerse them in rich activities that will continue to foster this love (Opitz, 2000).

#### Poetry and Language Arts

“Poetry should be at the center of all literary training, and literary prose forms the periphery” (Frye, 1970, as cited in Sloan, 2000, p.5). Poems are special examples of language that encourage a lively spirit to emerge from the reader. Children can read and recite poetry anywhere and especially love when they are allowed to explore and play with poems. The rhythm and rhyme found in poetry helps students to read it easily and at a quicker pace. Reading poetry creates a pleasure and enthusiasm for students, while at the same time, helping them develop a love for the language (Galda & West, 1993).

Marlow Ediger (2000) believes, “An important type of reading for elementary age pupils is to read poetry” (p. 3). Reading poetry helps students obtain meaning and understanding of the poems that they read. This helps to improve comprehension and word recognition, therefore increasing reading skills. Not only does the reading of poetry promote other forms of literacy, but students can use information read and relate it to other readings of the classroom. Poetry can tie in with all aspects of the curriculum proving to students that it is a valuable part of their learning experience (Ediger, 2000).

According to Benton (1990), reading poems differs from reading a story or another piece of text. Usually, poems that children read are short, and the words can be read within a small amount of time, providing the students with more of an opportunity to reread the patterns of rhyme and rhythm, therefore creating a taste for poetry in the classroom. Along with fostering a love of poetry, reading confidence may be increased due to the familiarity and fun of the rhyming sounds.

First grade teacher, Kalie Stern implemented rhythm and alliteration in her students’ daily speech. Stern and her students used these techniques to create tongue twisters that followed rhyming patterns, and they shared their creations daily. Kalie commented that, “poetic language comes naturally to the children” (Sloan, 2000. p. 9). Lenz, (1992, as cited in Perfect, 1999) said that reading poetry and listening to it aloud have helped her first graders “develop a feel for the texture and the power of the language” (p. 597). Perfect (1999) suggests that this

joy in the feel and sound of language helps students depart into a deeper love of poetry, for students of any age.

Dwyer (1982, as cited in Smith, 2003) suggests using poetry in guided reading lessons because it can “combine aesthetic appreciation with developing essential reading and writing skills” (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 3). In his poetry guide, Dwyer suggests ways to connect poems to specific vocabulary and comprehension strategies, which also enhance reading fluency.

Ediger (1999), another advocate of poetry in the classroom, feels that incorporating different forms of poetry will add to the students’ enjoyment. Haikus, free verse, tanka, and limericks focus on rhyme and reason, assisting students in identifying unknown words by using their knowledge of phonics elements. Ediger observed a student teacher and cooperating teacher who focused on rhyming words in poems (1999). The students then used these rhyming words to develop vocabulary that followed the same word family patterns. The teachers found that the students “were able to use the onset/rhyme approach to determine other unknown words in reading...” (Ediger, 1999, p. 1).

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) suggest that when students are immersed in rich, lively poetry, they are introduced to “intense, concise, and skillfully crafted language” (p. 410). Students have the ability to learn how authors convey their feelings into few thoughts and words that are written on paper. In particular, poetry enables students to appreciate the sound and imagery of language; invites

students to understand and view themselves and their world in new ways; enriches students' lives as they discover words, sound, and rhythm in unique, creative ways; intrigues students as it offers puzzles within puzzles; and captures the essence of meaning in the sparest of language (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 410).

### Poetry in the Classroom

The classroom is a cultural and social environment, where students and teachers can both influence one another. Providing complex tasks helps students to achieve within their zones of proximal development (Wienczek, Vazzano, & Reizian, 1999). The zone of proximal development refers to “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). When poetry is combined with a message that celebrates books and literacy, students revel in the excitement of the humor and rhyme of words. They absorb the importance of reading which helps them to enhance enjoyment and fondness for poetry (Honeyghan, 1999). Bass-Nelson (1991) found that using poetry daily in a kindergarten class can increase poetry skills and facilitate early reading ability (Honeyghan, 1999). Exposing children to poetry can also stimulate many areas of development. Emergent literacy is promoted through reading poetry aloud and displaying written text that links a variety of sounds. Implementing poetry also fosters children's cognitive development

(Gable, 1999). “The predictability of rhyming words in verse exercises memory, future orientation, and problem-solving skills” (Gellar 1983, as cited in Gable 1999, p.12). Another area of development that is fostered through poetry would be the connection that develops between children and adults. Exchanging poetry is a way for children and adults to experience amusing language, which is an integral part in the development of literacy (Dunn 1988, as cited in Gable 1999, p. 13). Children and adults begin to develop a positive rapport and routine activities become more meaningful (Gable, 1999).

#### Predictable Books and Poetry

Using predictable books (texts for children that make use of repeated phrases and language patterns) helps involve children with wonderful stories in their primary school experiences. Bridge, Winograd, and Haley (1983) compared groups of first-graders who were taught with basal readers to students taught with predictable books (Love, 1995). The students who read predictable books acquired more sight words, became more efficient at using context clues to discover the meaning of an unfamiliar word, and overall had a more positive feeling about reading. Implementing predictable stories also produced higher reading comprehension skills (Deford 1981, as cited in Love, 1995). Several other benefits of predictable books are:

1. The child is exposed to wonderful literature.
2. Predictable books can be read over and over and still enjoyed.

3. Predictable books provide excellent practice for sight words.
4. Reading comprehension can be emphasized.
5. Good oral reading skills are easily taught.
6. Predictable books provide excellent opportunities for writing activities.
7. Predictable books lend themselves to creative dramatics.
8. Children have the opportunity to read “real books.”
9. Predictable books allow the child to learn by reading (Love, 1995, pgs. 3-5).

#### Sharing Poetry with Children

According to Love (1995), surrounding children with poetry will help ignite an interest in it. Teachers should provide a variety of poetry to primary students and share them multiple times throughout the week. Love suggests keeping poetry books in a section of the classroom library allows students to view them at their own leisure. These anthologies can remain in the classroom library all year and featured at appropriate times of instruction. Along with books that include poetry, teachers can provide poems that are on tape. Since poetry is meant to be read out loud, using poems on tape enables students to hear their favorites again and again. Listening to a repeated reading reinforces literacy skills and introduces children to words that are beyond their current decoding ability.

Inviting guest readers to visit the class and read aloud poetry to the students can reinforce the importance of poetry to the community. The most

important point to remember is to keep poetry integrated into the school day. Teachers can study specific poets, hang poems from the walls of the classrooms, or pair up students to read their favorite poems together. Love (1995) feels that as children become more comfortable with poetry, they will be more willing to share it with each other.

### Teachers, Librarians, and Poetry

Studies suggest that poetry is one of the most neglected components in the language arts curriculum. Benton (1992, as cited in Perfect, 1999) feels that handling poetry is the part of the curriculum where teachers feel the most uncomfortable about their methods and uncertain of their knowledge of poetry. Teachers also spend less time reading and sharing poetry with their classes as students advance from primary to intermediate grades. Despite these negative facts, teachers and librarians can work together to share poetry with students (Miguez, 2005). The librarian can use poems to decorate the school library. Teachers and librarians can develop lessons and unit plans can be developed by teachers and librarians to expose students to enjoyable activities (Miguez, 2005). Kutiper and Wilson (1993) conducted a study on the poetry preferences of students from primary to secondary grades. They found that 1) The narrative form was most popular among students; 2) Students preferred poems that contain rhyme, rhythm, and sounds; 3) Most children enjoyed poetry with humor; and 4)

Students disliked poems with imagery and figurative language. Librarians and teachers can use this information to capture the poetry appreciation of all students.

#### Advantages of Poetry

“Poetry helps broaden children’s experiences with new concepts and provides fresh outlooks on the ordinary things around them” (Strickland & Strickland, 1997, p.203, as cited in Perfect, 1999). Poetry can create a bridge between students and the poet as well as students and others. Poetry also helps children make sense of the events in their lives and validate feelings about the world around us. Some teachers have been convinced “that poetry touches all children in a meaningful way” due to the poetry activities that have taken place in the classroom (Duthie & Zimet, 1992, as cited in Perfect, 1999, p. 14). Poetry can be chosen to suit the range of abilities and interests that emerge in a classroom, therefore making it meaningful to all learners. Siemens (1996) also discussed an advantage of poetry that cannot always be found in prose. Reluctant readers were more inclined to volunteer to read aloud the shorter, more common, passages of poetry (as cited in Perfect, 1999). The frequent rhythm, rhyme, and predictable language of poetry sparks the interest of children who would like to participate in oral and choral poetry readings. This also allows students to creatively develop dramatic interpretations of the poems (Perfect, 1999). Dramatizing poetry can encourage self-discovery and has unpredictable outcomes as opposed to the predictable teacher directed lessons (Heil, 1993). In her research study, Heil



(1993) implemented poetic mini-dramas into a second grade classroom. Although she found that the poetry interests of her students varied day by day, children still enjoyed dramatizing poems and viewing the performances of their peers, allowing children to think for themselves and making it possible for students to better understand the meaning of the poem (Heil, 1993). Franco (2005) also discusses advantages of poetry in her book *Conversations with a Poet*. She feels that poetry- 1) has the ability to channel ideas for storytelling; 2) may help the reluctant reader; 3) is powerful enough to expose our innermost feelings; 4) can range from deep to serious in tone, thereby attracting a variety of audiences; and 5) brings people back to a time when we were younger-when everyone wanted to tell a personal story.

Poetry has the ability to open many doors in the elementary and secondary classroom. As Janeczko says, “Poetry gives kids a chance to fool around with language. Poetry gives kids a chance to be a musician with words” (as cited in Franco, 2005, p. 3).

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

“It is better to read a little and ponder a lot than to read a lot and ponder a little.”  
~Denis Parsons Burkitt

I carefully designed my data collection plan and submitted the proposal to the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) of Moravian College. After making the required corrections, the HSIRB officially accepted my proposal and my research was ready to begin (Appendix A). Upon the acceptance of the HSIRB, I then submitted my research consent form (Appendix B) to my principal, who excitedly signed off and permitted me to begin my study.

### Setting

The research took place over a series of twelve weeks in a rural New Jersey community where the socioeconomic status ranges from lower class to upper middle class. There are about 300 students in this mainly Caucasian K-8 elementary school. This particular study took place in a first grade full inclusion classroom.

### Participants

Seven boys and six girls participated in this twelve-week teacher research study. All the participants were in the first grade class and range from the ages of six to seven years old.

Upon entering the classroom, I found that there were a variety of leveled readers. Two of my students were already reading at close to a mid-second grade

level. They already had experience reading chapter books and had an extensive range of vocabulary. Five of the students were considered at an independent reading level, but would still need guidance from me when working in small groups. The remaining six students entered my classroom at a struggling reading level. They had a difficult time identifying letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. While my study will focus upon the use of poetry to motivate readers, regular instruction in language arts including guided, shared, and independent reading, spelling, interactive and independent writing, phonics, and vocabulary will continue as usual. These skills will be targeted at times through the poetry activities used in my study, as well as during the other lessons within my language arts literacy block.

#### Data Collection

The following are the data collection methods that I used for my research study.

**Field notes:** According to Hendricks (2006), “field notes are kept throughout the study and include detailed information about implementation of the intervention, participant responses, and surprising events” (p. 83). Journaling all of the events that centered on my research was very important to my study. During my lessons, I made sure to document student behavior and conversations. I kept a notebook with me at all times and jotted down simple, but meaningful observations. If I had any personal feelings about my observations, I made sure to

place them in brackets to keep them separated. By documenting student behaviors, I was able to review and reflect on all of my lessons. I was able to decide on changes that needed to be made for future activities and target specific students who were struggling with important concepts.

**Surveys:** At the beginning of my research, I developed a survey that I conducted orally with my first grade students (Appendix C). These surveys were used to help me gain insights on what my students thought about poetry (pre-study) and if they knew why we used it in the classroom (post-study). Hendricks (2006) feels that “surveys and questionnaires are good alternatives to interviews and focus groups when time constraints are such that interviewing is impossible or when the researcher is seeking responses to a predetermined set of questions” (p. 94). My pre-study survey consisted of five specific questions:

1. What is a poem?
2. Have you ever read a poem?
3. Do you have a favorite poem?
4. Do you like poetry?
5. How do you feel when you read a poem?

**DRAs:** The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) provides teachers with a method for assessing and documenting primary students' development as readers over time within a literature-based instructional reading program. The assessments are conducted during one-on-one reading conferences as children

read specially selected assessment texts. A set of 20 stories, which increase in difficulty, are used for the assessment. The DRA evaluates two major aspects of reading: accuracy of oral reading and comprehension through reading and retelling of narrative stories. Both aspects of reading are critical to independence as a reader.

**Sight Word Evaluations:** The students participated several times in the sight word evaluation assessment. The sight words were generated from a list provided by Fountas and Pinnell as well as suggested words from the Scott Foresman reading series. Before the study began, I correlated the words from the poems to the sight word assessments to guarantee the students were not being tested on unfamiliar vocabulary. Students were called up individually and asked to read words from flash cards while I marked their response on the assessment sheet. This allowed me to determine how many words the students already recognize at first sight. It also helped me decide which common sight words cause the most difficulty for the students and therefore will receive more attention throughout my lessons.

**Student Work:** There were a variety of samples of student work that I collected throughout my study. Mainly, I chose student work that focused on sight word review and reading skills. Through these samples, I was able to determine reading strengths and weaknesses of individual students. I was also able to distinguish any patterns with difficulty of word recognition. Bogdan & Biklen

(1998) feel that data analysis can help increase your own understanding of materials and enables teachers to present what we have discovered to others.

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

Holly, Arhar, & Kasten (2005) explain that, “Open communication, trust, and reciprocity are the cornerstones of action research” As a teacher, I wanted to make my students feel comfortable throughout my research study. To accomplish this, I became determined to follow their constantly referred six standards to develop trust from the participants in my study.

First, I made sure to involve my participants. This means, “To encourage full participation of those who will be affected by the study, and give them credit for their work” (Holly, Arhar, and Kasten, 2005). I also made sure to include all my students’ work at least once in my data collection. Since the students are all willing to help me with my study, I want to prove to them that their hard work and efforts are important to me.

The next step to promoting trust within my study was to ensure confidentiality and I had to “Build a classroom environment based on respect. My students and other participants needed to trust that what they said in private, would remain in private” (Holly, Arhar, and Kasten, 2005). Providing anonymity, which is “preserving through the use of pseudonyms or the exclusion of student names from any documents or examples used in a report”, was very important (Holly, Arhar, and Kasten, 2005). I was careful to change all names when I discussed results or wrote in my field log entries. Along with the above mentioned, I blocked out all names on any work that I use for my data collection.

Continuing on with Holly, Arhar, and Kasten's (2005) advice, I made students aware of the choice to withdraw from the study. "Students need to know that they may withdraw from the study at any time without the fear of negative consequences" (Holly, Arhar, and Kasten, 2005). When I developed the parental consent letter, I made sure to include this as a main component. A section was included that explained students could withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty.

I also discussed with the parents that the students would be participating in activities that related to the standard language arts curriculum. This helped me to build a relationship of trust with the parents and the students. As Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2005) said, "Whether we like to admit it or not, as teachers we are in positions of power, and we may intimidate students into complying with our research agenda" (p. 177). By writing the consent letter, I was facilitating a relationship of trust with the students and parents.

Finally, my last means of trustworthiness was to constantly reflect on everything I do in my classroom. This study had been created to develop an intervention that would facilitate student learning. It would be unjust of me to just provide the students with activities and not reflect upon those strategies to see if they helped. Reflection creates trust between the student and teacher because it demonstrates a caring for student learning. Without trust, there would be no study.



## **THIS YEAR'S STORY**

### The Beginning

As a teacher, I have found that my students all learn to read at different times and in different ways. No one child reads in quite the same way as another child. I have become fascinated by the process of reading. In my six years of teaching, I have encountered many types of readers. Those who struggle often cannot recognize high frequency words and tend to lose focus with the reading content because much of their time is spent deciphering these difficult words. Independent readers, on the other hand, may read an unfamiliar story without needing the support of a teacher. The students I call challenge readers can read some of the most difficult books the reading series has to offer with great enjoyment and strong comprehension.

I have come to learn that all students benefit from differentiated instruction, no matter what reading level they have attained. Hence, I chose to focus my research on a strategy that would support all of my students as readers. I pondered what the observed and reported experiences of students would be when poetry is used in an attempt to develop reading fluency. By using poetry, I hoped that the simple rhyme and repetition would make words easier to remember and thereby help students to read more fluently.

### They're Back!

8:35. Five minutes until thirteen new students enter my classroom for the first time.

8:36. Am I completely ready? I glance over the classroom one more time to make sure I didn't forget anything. I spy a sheet of "Welcome to First Grade" stickers on my desk. The stickers! I completely forgot about them. I grab the sheet from my desk and walk to the front door of my classroom.

8:37. Three minutes to go and counting. I decide to travel out to the hallway and chat with my colleagues while I wait eagerly for students to arrive.

Julie is the first student to enter my classroom. I met her the week before when her mother brought her by to take a "peek" at the classroom. Julie already told me how much she loves to read and how much she loves school. I have high hopes for Julie and I welcome her into the classroom and place a sticker on her shirt. "Hang your backpack in the closet and try to find your desk."

Julie heads over to the closet as other students arrive.

RT enters next with this huge smile on his face. "Hello, Miss Umholtz. How are you?"

I reply with, "I'm great! Welcome to first grade!" I give RT his sticker and repeat the same directions I gave to Julie. RT is off into the classroom while Scott and Tom are walking in the door. "Welcome," I say. Neither student responds as I place their stickers onto their shirts. I notice that Tom looks very unhappy. Would

I be able to change his demeanor by the end of the school day? I certainly hoped so. Scott smiles as he looks at the sticker on his shirt. I ask Scott if he knows what the sticker says. He hangs his head down and shakes his head “no.” As he walks over to the closet, I notice that he doesn’t look at anyone else in the classroom, even though they are saying hello to him. Scott just keeps to himself and takes care of his morning tasks.

The rest of the students pile on into the classroom. I greet each child and share a sticker to wear for the first day. There is much chatter within the classroom, as all of the students are sharing their summer activities. I observe two students, though, who are not conversing much. Nancy is looking through her “Welcome Back” goodie bag that I have placed on every desk. She silently places her pencils, crayons, and erasers into the bag, seemingly oblivious to the students at her table group.

Sitting across from Nancy is MaryAnn, the only new student this year. She has a huge smile on her face as she too looks through her goodie bag. She shouts every item out loud, but does not direct her litany to any specific child at her table group. She pulls out a spiral notebook from her desk and starts to color in it, completely content with her illustrations and stays occupied until I interrupt her activity.

For the next ten minutes, I introduce the students to our daily morning activities (calendar binder, lunch count, pledge, months of the year). Then, calling

tables at a time, I gather the students on the reading carpet. The students eagerly sit down facing my easel, which has a poem written on it. The poem reads:

*Lining Up*

*I'm giving myself a great big hug,*

*I'm standing straight and tall.*

*I'm looking right ahead of me,*

*I'm ready for the hall.*

I read the poem aloud to the students and explain that this poem will help us when we get ready to leave the classroom. I go over each line with the students and ask them to repeat after me to provide practice with the unfamiliar words. I instruct students to retrieve the binders they have brought with them and explain, “These are going to be our poetry binders. We will put important poems in the binder every time we read them in class.”

Cathy asks, “Are we going to get a poem today?”

“Yes,” I reply. “You are going to get a new one right now.” I hand out the “Lining Up” poem typed on plain white paper in a larger font to make it easier for the students to read. The holes are already punched in the paper, so I instruct the students to place their new poem into their binders.

I take out a pack of miniature apple stickers from a box on my front reading table, telling the students that I am going to place an apple sticker on their pointer finger, which I do. “We are going to read the poem again,” I say. “I want

you to point to each word Miss Umholtz reads with your apple finger. Make sure you are following along with me.”

I read the poem aloud one more time with the students and they repeat lines of the poem that I read. Upon completion, I ask the students what is missing from the poem. Karen raises her hand and says, “There aren’t any pictures.”

I commend Karen on her observation and tell the students, “Today, you are going to be artists. You need to draw pictures for this poem. This poem is about getting ready to leave the classroom. What could you draw?”

I call on Kevin, “People standing in line.”

“Great idea!” I reply. “Now, you may begin drawing your pictures. While you are drawing, I will call students one at a time to work on something with Miss Umholtz at the reading table.”

My classroom aide keeps an eye on the class, while I call one child at a time to complete initial sight word assessments to help me learn the words students already recognize on sight. I would also be able to determine if there were any common words with which the class had difficulty. The results of the sight word assessment (Appendix D) can be found in Table 1.

As a result of the first sight word assessment, I realize that almost half of my students are performing below average ( $\leq 69\%$ ). My initial relief lay in the fact that seven of my students could correctly identify more than half, if not all, of their words.

Table 1. First assessment sight word scores

Student	<u>Words Right</u> Total Number of Words
Doreen	21/24
Julie	20/24
Karen	22/24
Tom	13/24
Brad	9/24
RT	9/24
Jamie	24/24
Nat	13/24
Nancy	2/24
Kevin	5/24
MaryAnn	5/24
Cathy	24/24
Scott	3/24

### Survey Says!

The second week of our new school year is sure to be busy with school activities. As the students enter my classroom, I remind them to hang up their belongings and start working on their calendar binders. After all morning activities are complete, I gather the students on the reading carpet. On my lap, I hold up a picture of Moravian College and I ask, “Do you know what this is a picture of?” Many hands quickly rise to the air.

“It’s a house!” replies Tom.

“Well, it looks like a house, but it’s not a house people can live in. This is actually a building where students go to school. It’s called a college. This is where Miss Umholtz goes to school.” The students look quite confused.

MaryAnn raises her hand, “Didn’t you already go to school?”

I laugh and glance at my aide. “Yes. I did go to school. But, now I am going again so I can be a better teacher for you. In fact, I’m going to ask all of you to help me with Miss Umholtz’s homework. If your parents say it’s okay, sometimes I will need to look at your work and use it for my project that I am working on. My classmates and teacher will see your work too and I can’t wait to show it to them, but if your mom or dad would like to just keep it for you and would rather that I didn’t share it, that’s okay too!” I tell the students that I will be sending an important paper home (Appendix E), and a person in charge of them (Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa) will need to read this paper and send it back to school. I continue, “This paper will let me know that it is okay for me to use your work as part of my big project.”

“What if we forget to bring it back?” asks RT.

“It’s alright. You have plenty of time to bring it back to Miss Umholtz,” I reply. “Now, there is one more thing I need help with. I want to find out what all of you know about poetry. In a little bit, I will have you meet with me to answer some questions.”

“Are they hard questions?” asks Julie.

“No,” I reply. “They are not hard at all. Will you help me?” With heads nodding, I know that my students are eager to begin.

I decide to call up the students one at a time, while my aide keeps a close eye on the rest of the class doing independent work. To find out what the students already know about poetry, I ask them a series of questions, including:

1. What is a poem?
2. Have you ever read a poem?
3. Do you have a favorite poem?
4. Do you like poetry?
5. How do you feel when you read a poem?

For the most part, I am both shocked by and pleased with the answers of the students.

Students define poetry in many different ways. Located on p. 38 is a pastiche created by the words my students used to explain poetry.

All students report having encountered poetry before. All of the students claim to have a favorite poem and all mention one we have read together, except for one student, who chooses a poem that we never read in the classroom, but she insists that we have! She selects the poem called “Flowers,” and I wonder if she had read this poem at her old school, since she is a transfer student. All students tell me they like poetry and that it makes them feel happy, or silly, or funny. One



student in particular intrigues me throughout the oral survey. Kevin is the only one of my children who does not know how to explain what a poem is. He says that he likes reading poetry and is also able to identify his favorite poem, but he can not yet put a definition into words.

These surveys prove to be very useful, suggesting that students are indeed enjoying the poetry I had shared with them to date. Before I could proceed further, however, I would need to determine the reading levels of my students. Over the course of a week, I take time to conduct DRAs with the class. The Developmental Reading Assessment, Second Addition (DRA2) is intended to identify students' independent reading levels. This is defined as "a text on which students meet specific criteria in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension" (Rathvon, 2006, p. 1). Other purposes of the DRA2 include identifying students' reading strengths and weaknesses, planning instruction, and monitoring reading growth. My elementary school has initiated their own program stating the following benchmarks:

Beginning of first grade (September)-Level 4

Middle of first grade (February)-Level 6-10

End of first grade (May) - Level 12-14

A routine DRA assessment is provided in the dramatization found on p. 39.

*What is a poem?*

“Something you let us sing songs with.”

“Something that you say.”

“Words that are on paper.”

“Things that rhyme.”

“Something we read.”

“Something that you write.”

“Something you talk about.”

“I don’t know.”

“A thing that you sing.”

“A little book that you read.”

“Words that rhyme.”

“A book.”

Figure 1. Student pastiche created from the question: What is poetry?

### I Can See

*Scene 1: Nancy is sitting at the reading table with Miss Umholtz, where she scans the cover of the book, I Can See while Miss Umholtz prepares the DRA form for the student (Appendix F).*

Miss Umholtz: “Nancy, do you like to read?”

Nancy: *(Shakes her head no)*

Miss Umholtz: “Really? I love to read. One of my favorite books is by Eric Carle.

It’s called The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Have you ever read that book?”

Nancy: *(Nods her head yes)*

Miss Umholtz: “Do you have a favorite book?”

Nancy: *(Shakes her head no)*

Miss Umholtz: “Okay Nancy. Today, you get to read a book to Miss Umholtz. I am so excited that you are going to read to me! First, I am going to tell you a little about this book. Do you see the pond on the cover? *(Nods her head yes)* Well, in this book, we are going to look at things that can be found by a pond. What do you see by the pond?”

Nancy: *(in a very quiet voice)* “A frog, a tree, and a sun.”

Miss Umholtz: “Very good. I see those things too. Now, we are going to start reading the story together. I’ll read the first page. As I read, I will point to each word with my finger. Watch and listen. *(Reading the story out loud)* I can see a blue pond. Now Nancy, it is your turn to read.

*Scene 2: Nancy is completing her DRA. In bold, is what the sentence actually says. The non bold print is what Nancy reads.*

**I can see a green frog.**

Nancy: "I see a frog."

**I can see a red flower.**

Nancy: "I see a flower."

**I can see a brown tree.**

Nancy: "I see a tree."

**I can see a black bird.**

Nancy: "I see a bird."

**I can see a yellow sun.**

Nancy: "I see a sun."

**and I can see a rainbow.**

Nancy: "I see a rainbow."

Miss Umholtz: "Very good Nancy. You did a wonderful job. Now, look at this index card. *(The card has the letter g on it)* What letter is this?"

Nancy: "G"

Miss Umholtz: "Very good. Turn to page four. Can you find a word that begins with this letter?"

Nancy: *(Points to the word green, but then says the word frog instead)*

Miss Umholtz: “Good. Now look at this index card. *(The card has the letter r on it)* What letter is this?”

Nancy: “R”

Miss Umholtz: “Very good. Turn to page six. Can you find a word that ends with this letter?”

Nancy: *(Points to the word red, but then said the word flower instead)*

Miss Umholtz: “Very good Nancy. I am so proud of you for reading to Miss Umholtz. You are all done now. You can go back to your seat.”

I take the time to jot notes regarding the positive and negative observations during Nancy’s DRA.

**Positives:** Nancy is a determined reader. Although there is much hesitation during the reading of the story, not once does she let it affect her performance. She also recognizes most letters of the alphabet. Nancy is able to identify the letters *r* and *g* when they were shown on an index card.

**Negatives:** The fact that Nancy does not point to the words as she read to me suggests that she is not yet aware of counting words in a sentence, nor can she yet realize that she is skipping words on the page. Second, Nancy is not matching the beginning sounds to the words that she is reading. For example, when she says the word *see*, she is pointing at the word *can*. This helps me to realize that Nancy does not yet recognize that the word starts with a different letter than what she is

saying. My third observation relates to the color words that are mentioned on almost all of the pages. Nancy can not yet read the colors that are used to describe each object that is found near the farm. This is especially significant because color words are the most basic beginning sight words that students learn to recognize. They are mentioned in almost every story that the students read in the first few weeks of school. Lastly, while Nancy is reading, I observe the fact that she does not look at the pictures or other text in the story to help her determine unfamiliar words. In order to assist Nancy, as well as other students who display the same difficulty, I decide to begin with a poem that focuses on these words. In order to familiarize the students with basic color words, they need the opportunity to experience these words in our classroom.

The results of the class DRA assessments are located in the table below.

Table 2. Pre-study DRA reading levels

<b>Name</b>	<b>DRA Level</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>
Doreen	3	Emergent Kindergarten
Julie	3	Emergent Kindergarten
Karen	10	Early First Grade
Tom	1	Emergent Kindergarten
Brad	3	Emergent Kindergarten
RT	2	Emergent Kindergarten
Jamie	12	Early First Grade
Nat	2	Emergent Kindergarten
Nancy	1	Emergent Kindergarten
Kevin	2	Emergent Kindergarten
MaryAnn	2	Emergent Kindergarten
Cathy	6	Early First Grade
Scott	2	Emergent Kindergarten

### Consulting Cooper

Cooper (2000) feels that “The ultimate goal of reading words is fluency” (p. 165). In order to accomplish this goal, students need to accurately and rapidly recognize words. If students come across words that they do not recognize, they must implement decoding to help with the pronunciation of the words. Cooper suggests introducing and educating students on six critical elements as they learn to decode unfamiliar words. They are:

1. Concepts of print
2. Oral language
3. Phonemic awareness
4. Letter-sound associations
5. Analogy
6. Learning to think about words

Throughout my research, I plan to gear my poetry lessons specifically around the above listed elements. Since the goal of my research is to motivate and develop young readers, I feel that Cooper provides a strategically appropriate plan for my course of action in the classroom.

### Eyeball Sticks

Children need to develop some **concepts about print** as they learn to identify words. Beginning readers should be taught that books convey meaning through print. This process includes introducing left-right, top-bottom orientation

on a page as well as developing an understanding of the sentences on a page (Cooper, 2002, p. 169).

After conducting the DRAs with the class, I come to the conclusion that some students have a difficult time understanding how to follow along during an oral reading. Some students become so distracted with the illustrations on a page, they don't follow along with the text.

Holding a popsicle stick with a googly eyeball attached to the end, I introduce the students to my "eye" buddy. I explain that my "eye" buddy helps me to read. I use my "eye" buddy to help me follow along when reading a poem or story. Handing out the eyeball sticks to the rest of the class, I instruct the students to walk over to the reading carpet with their buddy. Hanging on the wall is a new poem for the class titled "Apples" (Appendix G). This time there aren't any illustrations to help students make meaning of text or to cause distractions.

Introducing the title of the poem to the students, I ask them to discuss with a buddy what they think the poem is going to be about. After several minutes of partner discussion, I direct the students' attention back to the poem. I begin to read it aloud, using my "eye" buddy to point to each word. I want the students to observe the need to follow a sentence from left to right. At the end of the first sentence, I ask Doreen to use her eyeball stick to point where I need to continue reading. She comes up and points to the next consecutive sentence. I commend her efforts and explain to the students the concept of following the direction of



reading from left to right and from top to bottom. I provide an example for the students by reading the poem out of order by starting from the bottom and reading the sentences from right to left. Giggles and wild laughter fill the room, and I ask the students if what I just read made sense. Shouts of “no” fill the air! I redirect the students’ attention back to the beginning of the poem and read it entirely, still using my eyeball stick.

After reading the poem, I ask the students to return to their seats and take out their poetry binders. I hand each student a copy of “Apples” and observe the children place their copies of the poem into their binders. I tell the students they will now practice using their “eye” buddy to read the poem. I remind them to point to each word as they read it out loud. As the students begin, I walk around to observe. I am quite impressed with the ability to follow along in the correct word order and direction. Scott does a fine job with his eyeball stick, but no words seem to exit his mouth while he is pointing. There is insecurity about reading out loud. Although I am aware that all students need my attention, I am curious to find out more about Scott. I pull a chair to his desk and begin reading the words aloud that he is pointing to. He tries to read the words along with me, but stumbles quite often. He gets frustrated, but with much encouragement, he works his way through the whole poem.

### Color Words

According to Cooper (2000), children begin to learn **oral language** from the minute they are born (p. 167). Students should be provided with language development activities such as read-alouds, pictures, learning centers, field trips, class visitor, etc.

I decide to use the poem “The Crayon Box” (Appendix H) with the students because it focuses on the color words we use in our classroom and that they encounter regularly in their reading. I also know that the pictures for the poem will provide a wonderful discussion to expand the students’ vocabulary.

I gather the students on the carpet and hang the poem from my corkboard strips. I begin by asking the students to look at the pictures that surround the poem. I call on volunteers to describe what they see. Immediately, almost everyone points to the student holding a picture of a pumpkin in front of his head and they find it to be rather humorous. One student notes, “I see a crayon box.”

“There is a girl drawing some pictures.”

“There is a man flying with a cape.”

“I see a picture of a pumpkin.”

As the students volunteer their observations, I take the time to write some of the vocabulary words they use. I try to expand the students’ thoughts by asking them to describe more specifically what they see, for example, color, shape, size, etc. After gathering more than enough words, I read the title aloud to the students

by sounding out each word for them, helping the students piece sounds together. Then I read the whole poem out loud to the students making sure to stop and discuss each color word. I have the students repeat the color word after me. After I read the whole poem, I then reread the poem, having the students repeat each line after me. I observe the whole class as I conduct this activity. After the whole class finishes repeating the poem after me, I take out the index cards with the words that the students had volunteered. One at a time, I hold a card in the air and ask the students to volunteer if they know the word. If a child correctly identifies the word, I send him or her back to the seat with the card. If a child volunteers but cannot identify the word, I help the student to sound it out.

Kevin raises his hand for the word “the.” He had practiced this word last week, but he can still not identify it successfully. I work on sounding it out with him, but he keeps making the /c/ sound for the letter *t*. When I sound out each letter, he replies with the word *can*.

Nancy also has some difficulty sounding out her word *or*. I separate each letter sound, but she can not yet piece it together.

When all of the students get back to their seats, I have the students review their word one more time. My aide and I walk around to help out any students who might be unsure of the word on their card. Then, the students pass their word card to the student next to them and so on until every student has read all of the words. I notice that there are several words that cause difficulty for some students,

including *makes*, *box*, *or*, and *black*. All of these words have different vowel sounds, which are not a targeted skill in the reading series until late October. In order to help the students become better readers, they need to know their vowel sounds, so I made the decision to introduce vowel sounds now rather than waiting any longer.

### Elkonin Boxes

**Phonemic awareness** is an important element that helps children to decode. Phonemic awareness is the “knowledge that spoken words are composed of a sequence of sounds or phonemes (Cooper, 2000, p. 167). Phonemic awareness is a part of a broader category known as phonological awareness, which includes all the aspects of the sounds of language. **Letter-sound association** (phonics and structural analysis) is the concept of studying the relationship between speech sounds and the letters that represent them (Cooper, 2000). I decide to use the poem “My Cat Sam” (Appendix I) to introduce one element of phonemic awareness, how to count phonemes in words (knowing how many sounds there are in a word) and a mini-lesson on phonics. Since this poem also identifies the short /a/ vowel sound, I decide to teach both concepts together.

To begin the lesson, I gather the students on the reading carpet. Before reading the poem, I ask the students to look at the pictures that surround the poem and describe what they see. Students volunteer a myriad of answers.

“I see a cat.”

“There is a rug by the cat.”

“The cat has a yarn ball.”

“There is a can in the picture.”

When the students complete their observations, I tell them that today they are going to learn a new letter sound. I use the title to help with my explanation. I point to the title of the poem, “My Cat Sam.” First, I highlight the word *cat* with my highlighting tape. I ask the students to tell me what letter makes the /ah/ sound in the word *cat*.

Jamie raises his hand and says *a*.

“Very good,” I reply. I have the students repeat the short /a/ sound after me. Then, we say it several more times. I have the students mimic a cha-cha dance after me. The tune to the dance goes like this; /ah/ /ah/ /ah/ /ah/ apple. The students keep repeating this jingle while mimicking the moves of the cha-cha dance. The more you hear it, I reason, the harder it is to forget!

When the class finishes verbalizing the short /a/ sound, I highlight the word *Sam*. This time, I ask the students to identify the sound of short /a/ in the word *Sam*. The students realize that the sound is not the same. I explain to the students, that sometimes, the short /a/ sound does not always make the /ah/ sound. We search through the poem to find more words that had the short /a/ sound like it did in the word *Sam*. The students locate three more words: *am*, *can*, and *ran*.

“Today, you need to be detectives. While I am reading the poem out loud, I want you to look for words with the short /a/ sound.” I read the whole poem to the students, one stanza at a time. Then I have the students read the poem with me, repeating each line after I say it. I ask the class to search through the poem and look for words that have the short /a/ sound.

One by one, students locate words throughout the poem. When they find their word, the students needed to come up and highlight the word with highlighting tape. Many students are successful locating these words. However, an emerging pattern that I notice is that many students just look for a word with the letter *a* in it and not for words that contain the short /a/ sound. For example, Nat volunteers the word *tape*. I tell Nat that he did a great job finding a word with the letter /a/ in it. Then, I sound out the word for Nat. I stretch out the word tape; t-a-p-e. Then I sound out the word cat; c-a-t. I ask Nat if the words had the same /a/ sound. He replies, “No.” I tell Nat to keep up the good work and look some more for words with the short /a/ sound. Many students still do not understand that letters do not always make the same sounds, so I know that I will need to provide the students with more examples of the same vowels producing different sounds.

After the “detective” activity is complete, the students return to their seats so I can introduce Elkonin Boxes, an instructional method used in the early elementary grades to build phonological awareness by segmenting words into

syllables or sounds (Appendix J). They are named after D.B. Elkonin, the Russian psychologist who pioneered their use. The “boxes” are squares drawn on a piece of paper or a chalkboard, with one box for each syllable or phoneme, depending on what kind of segmentation is being done. To use Elkonin boxes, a child listens to a word and writes a letter into a box for each syllable or phoneme.

I distribute an Elkonin Box handout to every student containing ten words all from the poem “My Cat Sam.” I draw a bigger version of the Elkonin box on the blackboard so I can complete the task with the students. The first word the students and I start with is *can*. The following is a mini-dramatization of an Elkonin box lesson.

### **Where Does the Letter Go?**

*Scene: The students are gathered at their desks, pencils prepared to complete an Elkonin activity. Miss Umholtz has drawn an example Elkonin box on the blackboard and is getting prepared to complete an example with the students.*

Miss Umholtz: “Boys and girls. How many boxes do you see under the word *can*?”

Doreen: “Three.”

Miss Umholtz: “Very good. There are three boxes. How many letters are there in the word *can*?”

Jamie: “Three.”

Miss Umholtz: "Let's make each sound for the word can; /c/ /a/ /n/. Can you repeat after me?"

Students: "/c/ /a/ /n/"

Miss Umholtz: "What letter do you think I should put in the first box?"

Brad: "/c/"

Miss Umholtz: "Yes. That sound comes first. Let's all put a /c/ in the first box. (*Waits about 10 seconds*) Now, what letter should we put next?"

Cathy: "/a/"

Miss Umholtz: "Let's see.../c/ /a/...yes, that letter comes next. Put the letter /a/ in the second box. (*Waits about ten seconds again*) Okay, what letter should we put in the last box?"

Julie: "/n/"

Miss Umholtz: "Excellent. Let's put the letter /n/ in the last box. Sound out the word again.../c/ /a/ /n/. Does our box look right? Did we write each sound?"

Students: "Yes."

Miss Umholtz: "Let's move on to the next word. What is the next word?"

RT: "Ran."

Miss Umholtz: "Great! Can you try the word ran all by yourself. Make each sound as you write the letter."



The students complete the rest of the assignment independently. Of course, I don't yet include any words with blends or digraphs, so I am confident that the class will do a good job. My classroom aide, Cindy, monitors student progress while I conference with individual students to explain any mistakes. For the duration of my study, we'll continue to use Elkonin boxes with every poem to provide practice identifying phonemes.

#### Word Family Notebooks

Continuing on with Cooper's (2000) elements to achieve fluency, **analogy** is the process of noting similarities and patterns in words and using this to figure out an unfamiliar word (p. 170). In other words, if a child knows the word *can*, then he or she should be able to use that knowledge to decode the word *ran*, *fan*, *man*, etc.

The word family notebooks are included in my research study to help students gain a sense of knowledge for patterns that can arise in many words. As a lesson starter, I have the students gather on the reading carpet. Reviewing the poem "My Cat Sam" on the reading easel, I show the students index cards that have pictures of objects that contain the short /a/ sound. One at a time, I call on volunteers to identify each picture. I place each index card in a section of my pocket chart. When all of the pictures have been identified, I ask the students to tell me what is the same about all of these pictures.

Student 1: "They are all things."

Teacher: “Very good. They are all things. They are nouns. There is something else special about these pictures. Can someone else give me another idea?”

Student 2: “They are all animals.”

Teacher: “Some of these pictures are animals. But not all of them. Listen to the names of the pictures.” Stressing the letter sounds very heavily, I repeat the words: cat, bat, mat, hat, rat, and fat.”

Student 3: “They all have /a/ in them.”

Teacher: “Very good! They all have the short /a/ sound.”

After the students figure out the pattern of the words, I direct their attention back to the poem. I explain to the students that we are going to practice reading the poem again. First, I reread the poem out loud to the students. The previous day, the students had highlighted the short /a/ words throughout the poem. At each highlighted word, I made a point to stop and have the students repeat that word. I want the students to get used to hearing the short /a/ vowel sound and really feel that meaningful repetition is an important way for them to gain sight recognition of vowel sounds.

Upon the completion of reading, I point out two words that were of a specific importance to my next part of the lesson. The two words that I show to the students are *bag* and *rag*. These words are a part of the *-ag* word family. I explain to the students that they are going to use these words to begin their word

family notebooks. I hand each student a picture of a bag. I instruct the students to return to their seats and glue this picture into the first page of their notebooks. For the next fifteen minutes, the students and I work together to brainstorm other words that contained the *-ag* word family ending. At the end of the lesson, the students had developed 11 new words: *wag, sag, flag, tag, jag, gag, lag, rag, brag, nag* and *drag*. An example is provided below.

Before putting their notebooks away, I buddy up the students to re-read the words two more times.

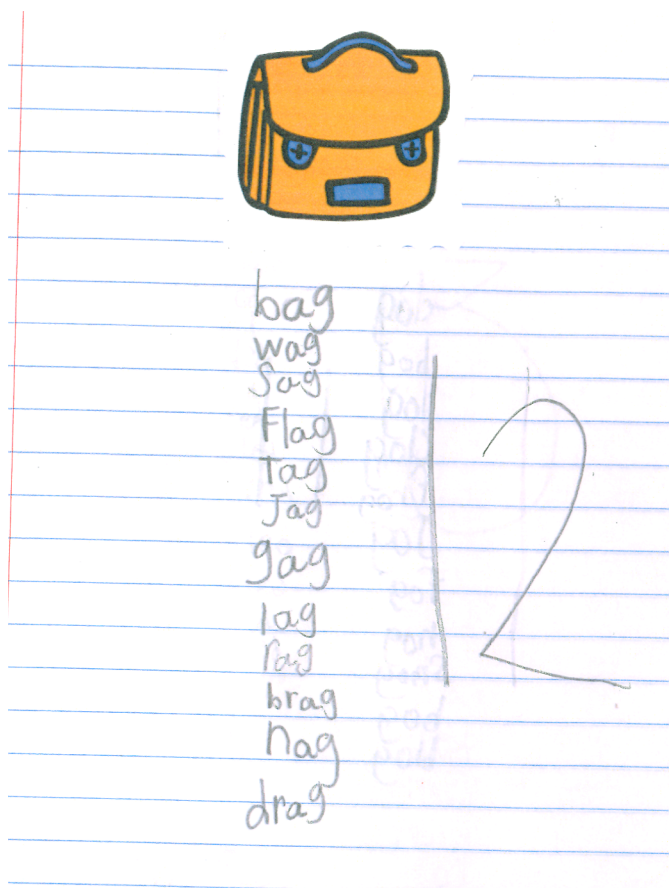


Figure 2. Sample word family list

### Poetry Center

As students learn the elements of effective, independent, decoding, they must develop a strategy to apply what they have learned to future, unfamiliar words (Cooper, 2000). In other words, when students have positive experiences they will continue to learn. This was my hope when implementing the poetry center in my classroom. I want the students to use Cooper's elements for fluency as a way to help them read on their own. I want to remove the training wheels and observe if my students could ride a two-wheeler on their own. As John Dewey says, "The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning" ( p. 48).

After completing our morning activities on the carpet, I display the poem book, which contains copies of the poems that had been introduced the first four weeks of the study (as well as other ones) and are bound together on giant chart paper. I discuss with the students that these poems will be a part of the poetry center.

Displaying a long stick with a wooden star attached to the end, I explain to the students that they are now star readers, and star readers are students who have worked hard on reading poetry.

"This poem book is going to be for our poetry center," I explain. "When you finish your classroom work, you may grab a star stick from my desk and read the poem book."

Cathy asks, “Can we sing the poems too?”

“Of course,” I reply. “If you can remember the tune of the poem, then you may sing it as well.”

Over the next several days, I observe several students participating in the poetry center. Through my observations, I realize that some students can read almost all of the poems in their entirety. Some students, however, use their star to point to the words, but do not read out loud. Sometimes, I even sit by the students and listen to the areas that cause difficulty. In this method, “the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach”(Freire, p. 80). I learn that some students still have a difficult time recognizing basic sight words that have been a part of our in-class reading from day one. Such words as *the, or, what, this, then, am, and it* eventually need to be recognized by the students immediately. How would my struggling students come to read fluently if they could not yet read these words on sight? Before I can begin my next intervention, I decide to conduct my second sight word assessment to determine the progress of my students from the first week of school. The results are summarized below.

Table 3. Second assessment sight word scores

Student	<u>Words Right</u> Total Number of Words
Doreen	24/24
Julie	24/24
Karen	24/24
Tom	19/24
Brad	21/24
RT	20/24
Jamie	24/24
Nat	20/24
Nancy	14/24
Kevin	15/24
MaryAnn	16/24
Cathy	24/24
Scott	16/24

As a result of the second sight word assessment, I was pleased to observe an increase in recognition. All of the students had a higher percentage of immediate recognition compared to the initial sight word assessment. The students were becoming familiar with common words, therefore causing less frustration when completing an oral reading.

### Musical Words

Children build a list of sight word as they become fluent readers. Sight words are words that students recognize instantly, so I decide to focus my next few weeks of lessons on poems that introduce and review these basic sight words to help familiarize the students with them.

“Getting Ready” (Appendix K) is a poem that contains many sight words from Fountas and Pinnell. I begin the lesson by having the students gather on the carpet as a whole group. The poem is displayed on an easel and I use my eyeball stick to point and discuss the pictures I had added in. I ask the students to describe what they see in each picture. Many students contribute:

“I see a school bus.”

“I see a boy looking through the dryer.”

“The bus is coming towards a house.”

“The boy is scared that he will miss his bus.”

“The boy doesn’t want to go to school.”

As always, I commend their thoughts and ideas. Then, I use my eyeball stick to have the students follow my one-to-one correspondence of the words in the poem. I read a line and have the students repeat the line after me.

After we read through the poem twice, I hand out an index card to each student. Each index card has a high frequency word from the poem on it. I show one card to each student and have them read me the word, then take their card

back to their seat. The majority of the students do a great job with recognizing the words. Scott and Kevin need me to sound out the words with them. Once all of the students return to their seats, I explain the next activity.

“In a few minutes, I will turn on some music. When the music begins, I want all of you to stand up and walk around the room. When the music stops, you need to stop at a desk other than yours, and read the new word on the index card.” I have the students repeat the directions back to me, and then we begin the activity. The first time around, Nancy opts not to stop at another student’s desk but remains at her own. I wonder if she is nervous to read the other words because she is not yet familiar enough with them or she does not know them. I give the students time to figure out their words and then have them all read their word out loud. I repeat this activity two more times.

I note that Nancy can not yet sound out the other words, even when I do it for her. Tom tends to stop at the desks that have words he definitely knows. MaryAnn reads her words backwards. Instead of beginning with the first letter of the word *cat*, she starts with the last starting with *t* and sounded it out as /t/ /a/ /c/...*tac*. I make a mental note to continue to point to each letter as I sound out words with the students. With more practice, MaryAnn may eventually catches on to the pattern of left-to-right directionality.



### Moving Right Along

Over the next four weeks, I continue to use poems that focus on sight words. However, I do not want to use the same closing activity for each poem. Just as teachers need variation when instructing, so do students when they are learning. “In other words, the less stress and the more fun connected to the process, the more easily it is accomplished” (Dowdy, p 40).

For my second week of sight word instruction, I use a poem that focuses on the theme of the fall season. “Choosing” (Appendix L) is a poem that discusses a child’s desire to pick the perfect pumpkin. This poem contains numerous sight words, new ones that could be introduced to the students and old ones that provide practice and reinforcement.

The process of introducing the poem follows closely what we have done before. Once the students have completed their predictions on what the poem is about, I start to read the poem out loud. After each stanza, I stop and ask the students if their predictions have changed at all. For the first and second stanza, the students keep their original ideas. However, after the third stanza is read, many students change their minds. The two ideas volunteered are that the child is choosing a pumpkin or a pumpkin patch. Upon completion of reading the fourth and final stanza, the students find out that the child did indeed choose a pumpkin. I still like to concentrate much discussion on the poems to revisit Cooper’s (2000) element of oral language.

As a review, I reread the poem, having the students repeat each line after me. Nancy and Scott barely repeat the words out loud. Their mouths are moving, but no sound comes forth. I wonder what will help them to read out loud. They aren't reading all by themselves. Why is there still a fear? When the whole poem is complete, I tell the students about a new game called "Pass the Ball".

I explain the instructions:

"One at a time, we are going to pass the beach ball around the circle (the students have a circle time song that we always sing). When we stop singing our song, the person who has the beach ball needs to go up to the poem, point to two known words, and say the words out loud. I decide to give the students freedom of choice due to the fact that they don't yet know all of their words. I want them to feel successful with this activity. Prior experiences with the poetry activities in this classroom have shown me that many students like to identify words that they know. I provide an example for the students by choosing my word from the poem and saying it out loud.

After my example, I start the activity with the whole class. One by one, the students begin passing the beach ball around and singing their song to the tune of "Ten Little Indians:" "Tell me, tell me, tell me a word. Tell me, tell me, tell me a word. Tell me, tell me, tell me a word. Who's going next?" I am very impressed with the students, many of whom are choosing new words that are difficult for them. I'm excited watching the students challenging themselves.

Some students, however, still have a difficult time identifying any words. When it is Scott's turn, he shyly walks up to the poem. I ask him if he can point to two words that he knows. Since he says that he cannot, I point to the word *I*, knowing that he can identify this word. He is able to do so immediately but still can not find a second word. I allow Scott to take as much time that he needed to locate his word. As teachers, we must constantly demonstrate our compassion for student needs. As Dewey says, "He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning" (p. 39).

While Scott is searching, other students take their turns at reading two words. Often, Scott listens to their words and repeats them to me. I want to accept these words as his own, but I also want Scott to try and sound out his own word. Finally, he points to the word *at*, but, he reads it as *it*. He looks at the word again, and we sound it out together. He says *at*. I praise him for his hard work and ask Scott to return to his seat.

When it comes time for MaryAnn, she immediately knows the two words she wants: *pumpkin* and *patch*. Earlier, she had commented on how much she likes pumpkin patches, so it comes as no surprise that she chooses those two words.

During this activity, I keep a close eye on Nancy. I notice that she carefully listens to the other students as they read their words to me. This is a very

good technique. She has a difficult time reading. I am assuming that she listens to these children so she would know words. When it is her turn to read two words from the poem, she points to *I* and says it correctly. Then, she points to *patch* and says *pumpkin*. I ask Nancy what letter she hears at the end of *pumpkin*. I repeat the ending sound of *pumpkin* several times. She tells me *n*. I ask Nancy if she can point to the word that ends with that letter. She looks at the final lines of the poem for some time, until finally pointing to the word *pumpkin*. Even though Nancy incorrectly identifies the word *pumpkin*, she is still able to correct her mistake. Nancy knows the ending sound of *pumpkin* and she uses those sounds to locate the correct word. This is a positive step forward and I am extremely excited about this.

### Let's Go Fishing

During the fourth week of focusing on sight words, I introduce the students to an activity called fishing for words. Earlier in the week, the students had begun a poem titled "Hip, Hop, Hip." (Appendix M) The poem not only focuses on analogy of words, but also on the targeted sight words for the week.

Holding a make-shift fishing pole (a yard stick, long piece of string, and magnet) I scatter paper fish all over the reading carpet. I explain to the students that our carpet has now become a fishing pond. The fish in our pond have special words written on them.

"What kind of words?" asks Julie.

“The fish have words from our poem Hip, Hop, Hip” I reply.

I demonstrate how to fish for a word. Carefully, I try to place my magnet onto one of the paper clips that are attached to a fish. Once my magnet catches, I pull my fishing pole back and remove the word. I look at the word and sound it out, letter by letter.

“/s/ /h/ /i/ /p/” I say. The word is *ship*.” I modeled my word this way in hopes that the students will copy my example.

One at a time, the students pass the fishing pole around the outside circle of the pond. At times, there are students who need my assistance. However, a new observation has emerged during this whole process. I notice that other students begin to help a struggling student sound out the word as well. Typically I would not allow this interaction; however, it signifies that wonderful new learning has taken place for other students and I am observing it happen. Even Kevin, who usually has more difficulty than other students who participate in this event, helps when he is confident that he knows a word. It amazes me the different skills that emerge when the students work together. As Dewey says, “Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time.” (p. 48). During this particular activity, the goal was reinforcement of sight words. However, a skill that blossomed is the ability for students to help each other when sounding out words. They are learning to assist, rather than just telling their peers the word. At this moment, I decide to include

fishing for words as a learning center. Students can learn much from each other, and why would I stop this wondrous happening?

#### The End is Near

For the last few weeks of my study, I continue to introduce one new poem each week. Students continue to receive copies of these poems and place them into their poetry binders. We continue to use the activities that are explored with the previous poems as we read the new ones. Keeping consistency is important with young students, and it provides reinforcement of targeted skills.

The last assessment I use before the holidays is the third and final sight word assessment (Appendix N) based on the *Scott Foresman* reading series. Each week, the program recommends five new sight words be added to the students' vocabulary. Along with introducing the words through poetry, I also place these words on flash cards that the students may take home and practice. The results of the final sight word assessment are found on p. 67.

My last sight word assessment focused on forty-four words rather than twenty-four due to the fact that the sight word range had increased over the course of study. Despite the fact that several students could recognize half, or less, of the words, I was still thrilled with the outcome. While I sat with students individually during the assessment, I found that students were sounding out the words using phoneme knowledge and word family patterns. They were using the skills I taught

them to help pronounce words. This last assessment demonstrates the maturity of my students over the duration of my study.

Table 4. Final assessment sight word scores

Student	<u>Words Right</u> Total Number of Words
Doreen	39/44
Julie	43/44
Karen	44/44
Tom	33/44
Brad	37/44
RT	36/44
Jamie	44/44
Nat	40/44
Nancy	20/44
Kevin	22/44
MaryAnn	28/44
Cathy	44/44
Scott	23/44

Another example of the maturity of my students is a pastiche created by the students in my first grade class. Even though I surveyed their opinions on poetry at the beginning of my study, I wanted to establish any change of opinions. I added one to question to my survey:

Why do we use poetry in the classroom? (Appendix O)

The results of this question are found in the pastiche on p. 68.

*Why do you think we use poetry in the classroom?*

“To learn how to read.”

“To make us learn sounds that are alike.”

“So you can remember them.”

“So we can learn to read.”

“So we can learn a bunch of words.”

“So we can read.”

“To learn how to read more.”

“So we can learn a lot.”

“To learn how to read.”

Figure 3. Student pastiche created from the question: Why do you think we use poetry in the classroom?



### Concluding the Study

Due to the craziness of the Christmas holiday, I was not able to conduct my second DRA assessments. I had limited time, and parent presents to create! Over the duration of two weeks, the students worked with me on their DRA assessments. The following is a DRA dramatization for Nancy, who was introduced at the beginning of the study. I couldn't think of a better way to end, than show the dramatic result of her second assessment.

#### Where Is My Hat?

*Scene 1: Nancy is sitting at the reading table with Miss Umholtz, where she scans the cover of the book, Where Is My Hat? while Miss Umholtz prepares the DRA form for the student. (Appendix P)*

Miss Umholtz: "Do you remember when we first started school and I had you read a book to Miss Umholtz?"

Nancy: "Yes."

Miss Umholtz: "Well today you are going to read to me again, but it's going to be a different story. (*Sliding book towards Nancy*) This story is called Where Is My Hat? It is about a little boy named Ben and he doesn't know where his hat is.

Before you start reading, take a picture walk through the story."

Nancy: (*Looks thorough all the pictures and then smiles*)

Miss Umholtz: "Now that you have looked through the pictures, tell me what you think is going to happen in the story."

Nancy: "He's looking under his bed to find his hat."

Miss Umholtz: "Very good. Now let's start reading. Instead of Miss Umholtz reading the first page, this time you are going to read everything to me. Are you ready?"

Nancy: *(Nods her head yes)*

Miss Umholtz: "Okay Nancy. You may begin."

*Scene 2: Nancy is completing her DRA. In bold, is what the sentence actually says. The non bold print is what Nancy reads.*

**"Where is my hat," said Ben.**

"Where is my hat," said Ben.

**Ben looked under his bed. "It is not here," he said.**

Ben looked *(Teacher told the word)* under his bed. "It is not here," he said.

**Mom looked in the closet. "It is not here," she said.**

Mom looked in the closet. "It is not here," she said.

**Ben looked in his toy box. "It is not here," he said. He looked and looked.**

Ben looked in his toy box. "It is not here," he said. He looked and looked.

**Mom looked behind the chair.**

Mom looked behind *(teacher told the word)* the chair.

**"Here it is!" she said.**

"Here it is!" she said.

Miss Umholtz: “Very good Nancy. You did an excellent job reading the story.

Now I want you to pretend that Miss Umholtz didn’t read the book with you. Can you tell me what the book is about? Start from the beginning.”

Nancy: “Ben doesn’t know where his hat is.”

Miss Umholtz: “And…”

Nancy: “Mom finds the hat behind a chair.”

Miss Umholtz: “Is that all?”

Nancy: *(Nods her head yes)*

Miss Umholtz: “Okay. Nancy, did you have a favorite part to this story?”

Nancy: “When he found his hat.”

Miss Umholtz: “Why?”

Nancy: *(Shrugs her shoulders)*

Miss Umholtz: “Did this story remind you of anything that has happened to you?”

Nancy: “Yeah. I couldn’t find my toy bunny one time. Then I did.”

Miss Umholtz: “Great job Nancy. You are all done now.”

I could not have been any prouder of Nancy during her second DRA reading with me. Although her retelling needs much work since she only focused on the beginning and end of the story, Nancy jumped four levels on the DRA scale. She is reading words that would have been impossible for her at the beginning of the year. These words didn’t all come easy to decode, but she uses knowledge of letter sounds and analogy to determine the pronunciation. One of

the most exciting moments of her DRA is when she decodes the word *couch*. All of the previous students read the word as *chair*. However, Nancy realizes the ending –ch sound and uses it to determine that the word was not *chair*, but *couch* instead.

Table 5. Concluding DRA reading levels

<b>Name</b>	<b>DRA Level</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>
Doreen	4	Early First Grade
Julie	10	Early First Grade
Karen	16	Transitional First Grade
Tom	4	Early First Grade
Brad	4	Early First Grade
RT	4	Early First Grade
Jamie	28	Extending Second Grade
Nat	4	Early First Grade
Nancy	6	Early First Grade
Kevin	3	Emergent Kindergarten
MaryAnn	4	Early First Grade
Cathy	10	Early First Grade
Scott	3	Emergent Kindergarten

Nancy is now following the directionality of text on a page, and using the illustrations to help decode and for pure enjoyment. Nancy is also verbalizing more of her responses rather than using non-verbal cues. Another positive aspect is the fact that Nancy can make text-to-self connections. She is able to relate the

incident of the missing hat to a time when she had lost something at home as well. This was a more mature and confident Nancy, a different girl from the first few days of school. Nancy is not the only student who progressed over the weeks of my research. The DRA results of the whole class are listed in Table 5.

As a result of the final DRA assessment score, I decide to continue the use of poetry in my classroom. While teaching students reading skills through poetry instruction, I find that students are more receptive to learning. They are unaware that reading poetry is considered learning instruction. The many activities that the children participate in are fun and exciting, something different than the typical teaching that occurs from reading a story. In the case of my study, repetition of common sight words, vowel sounds, word patterns, and repeated readings allow my students to become aware of their reading skills. I observe that children take notice of the sounds in words, rather than just saying a whole word because it looks like the correct pronunciation.

Using poetry is one component of my literacy block. There are many skills that I have yet to introduce to my students. With the help of poetry, I plan on teaching all of these skills. I truly do believe that poetry encourages my students to read with expression and excitement. Many of my students are proud of their reading ability, which is more of a gift than I could ever imagine.

## METHODS OF ANALYSIS

### **Observational Data**

Like Hendricks (2006), I believe that, “Observational data are the most important source of information in an action research study. Observational data can help determine why an intervention was successful or unsuccessful and how the context of the setting impacted the study” (p 82). Analyzing all student DRAs helped steer my reflection-for-action in the right direction. Hendricks’ (2006) defines reflection-for-action as “reflection that occurs as a result of reflecting in and on action” (p 24). Hence, I reflected on my DRA observations and developed a new plan to help my students become fluent readers. Along with using the DRAs for reflection, I also use them to track the progress of the students. By comparing the first DRA scores to the second DRA scores, I was able to examine changes in my students’ fluency and comprehension.

I also analyzed my student sight word assessments. These words were based on Fountas and Pinnel’s common sight words for students. I conducted this assessment three times to track the growth of my students’ ability to recognize words on sight. Besides analyzing progress, I also consulted the assessments to search for patterns of words that caused the most difficulty for my students. By doing this, I could focus on these words, rather than reinforcing words the students already identified.

I included both my DRA and sight word assessments within my teacher researcher field log. My field log is a collection of everything that I found to be

important throughout my study. First, I will begin with the types of observations that I used: both participant and non-participant observation that I wrote about based upon my observational records or field notes. According to Hendricks (2006), “Field notes are kept throughout the study and include detailed information about implementation of the intervention, participant responses, and surprising events” (p. 83). I kept my field notes on journaling paper. When I read back through my field notes, I found that they provided me with a wealth of information. For example, my observations were very important to my research study, helping me to reflect on my lessons and decide if I needed to make any improvements, create a new intervention, or change my lesson entirely the next time I introduced a concept to my students.

### **Survey and Interview Data**

Surveys or questionnaires were another part of my data collection. Hendricks (2006) feels that “surveys and questionnaires are good alternatives to interviews and focus groups when time constraints are such that interviewing is impossible or when the researcher is seeking responses to a predetermined set of questions” (p. 94). My main goal with my surveys was to gain the students’ opinions on reading with poetry. After I conducted the surveys and reviewed them, I was able to use the students’ dialogue to help create a pastiche that dealt with their perspective on poetry. Upon the conclusion of my research, I used the

same survey with one added question to determine how the students' opinions about poetry and reading had changed during the study.

Finally, my last form of data collection was the student work, or student-generated artifacts. Hendricks (2006) refers to student-generated artifacts as “work that can be used to measure students' attainment of learning objectives or students progress toward nonacademic goals (p. 74). My data collection plan contained numerous samples of student work. I found it very helpful when I went back and looked at students' finished pieces, which helped me determine which students may have been confused about a concept, or which concepts were understood quite well. To analyze student work, I looked for patterns that caused difficulty such as vowel sounds, letter sounds, words that contained blends or digraphs, etc.

#### **Analytic and Reflective Memos**

Bogdan and Biklen suggest developing summaries of what emerges while going over your data. These memos “can provide a time to reflect on issues related in the setting and how they relate to larger, theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues” (p. 161). After my research, I constantly used these memos to provide me with information about my study that I may have forgotten. Along with memos, I also referred to other literature from authors such as Dewey (1997), Vygotsky (1978), Freire (2006), and Delpit & Dowdy (2002). Their words of wisdom offered many valuable connections that I was able to include within



the memos I wrote. I found that I could relate to all of them when referring to ideas and concepts in education, which therefore influenced my final writing piece.

### **Coding and Organizing Data**

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) refer to coding and organizing data as data analysis. “Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (p. 147). When coding my field logs, I found that they helped me to develop prominent themes throughout my research study. For example, I was able to code sections of the log where I worked with predictions, activated prior knowledge, prompted recall, provided reinforcement, etc. This was a beneficial way to view the different types of strategies that I incorporate in my lessons. As I was coding, I made sure to refer back to Bogdan and Biklen’s (2003) suggestions for data analysis. The first suggestion was to write down many observer comments about ideas I generate (p. 151). My observer comments became valuable records of my own thoughts and feelings. Bogdan and Biklen add, “The idea of observer comments is to stimulate critical thinking about what you see and to become more than a recording machine” (p. 161).

I also took their suggestion to write memos to myself about what I was learning. I developed links between my observer comments. “These memos can provide a time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they relate to

larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues” (p. 161). The more field logs that I coded, the more I found connections between my lessons. It also helped to determine which skills I needed less reinforcement as I moved on to other areas. Additionally, memo writing also helped me to “work through discouragement in the midst of a project, chart my own developing sophistication, and document my reflexivity” (p. 163).

### **Themes**

“A theme can be defined as a statement of meaning that (1) runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or (2) one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact” (Ely *et al.*, 1991, p.150).

In order to create the themes for my research study, I had to refer back to the data within my field log. Using each code that I commented on throughout the log, I then categorized them into bins. By doing this, I was able to group my codes together and see where they overlap with each other.

As I reviewed my completed bin organizer (Figure 4), themes began to emerge from each one. As Tesch (1987) phrases it, “In dealing with their data, qualitative researchers ‘search’ for themes, and they ‘find’ themes, or they ‘extract,’ ‘recognize,’ or ‘identify’ them. Most often, however, themes are said to ‘emerge’...” (Ely *et al.*, 1997, p.205). This is just what happened with my theme statements. As I reflected on each lesson that my bin codes derived from, I began to see the results of my study.



Figure 4. Bins and emerging codes throughout the study

## FINDINGS

As Newman (1998) said, “Teacher/action research is about discovering ourselves, about uncovering our assumptions-assumptions about learning, about teaching, about values and beliefs” (p. 25). My focus of this research surrounded the concept of reading and the skills children need to assist with fluency. Instead of referring to the basic read alouds and typical question answer worksheets, I wanted to observe how poetry might accomplish the goal of helping students learn to read fluently. As Dewey said, “he must survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individuals with whom he is dealing and must at the same time arrange the conditions which provide the subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and develop these capacities” (p. 58). I hoped that by observing and assessing my students through class work and interactions, I would be able to provide them with beneficial activities that would promote reading. Throughout the course of my study, I constantly reflected upon the needs of all of my students and geared specific lessons to aide in their learning.

During the first weeks of my study, I observed and documented the literacy content that caused the most difficulty for the students in my class. I found that **evaluation of student work enabled me to target specific areas of weakness in reading ability**. The work I chose to evaluate were the student Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs). Upon the conclusion of each assessment, I carefully dissected each letter, word, sentence, and action of the

student. I looked for patterns of misdirection during reading. Some of the questions I began to ask included:

1. Is the student following directionality of text?
2. Could the student recognize beginning, middle, and ending sounds?
3. Is the child matching the oral reading of words to the actual words on the page?
4. Does the child use pictures to help decode unfamiliar words?
5. Does the child use strategies to help decode unfamiliar words?

By reviewing the data from the DRAs, I was able to determine the most beneficial poems that would target the struggling areas. I then focused on a specific task for each poem such as vowel sounds, word families, letter sounds, etc. When my study had been completed, I conducted the DRA assessment one more time with the students. Figure 5 shows students' improvements in DRA scores during the time of the study.

Many of the students in my class had improved their DRA scores upon the conclusion of my study. Although some students were below level for mid-year first grade, reading growth had clearly occurred. According to Dewey, "a primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth" (page 40). Throughout my research, I made sure

to provide a literate environment that would promote literacy and the reading skills that encourage it.

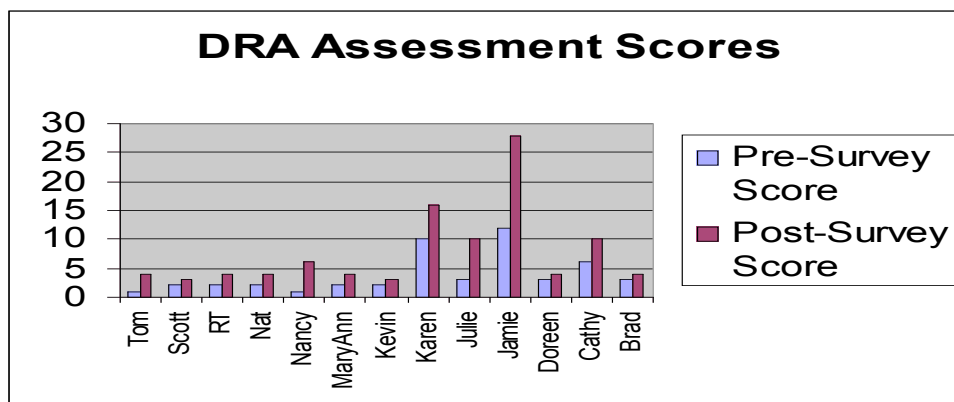


Figure 5. DRA comparison scores for individual students

Part of my literate environment included exposure to known and unknown words. The poems that I chose to introduce to the class constantly focused on these words. As a result, I found that **repetition of high frequency words increased sight recognition of specific words when reading them in text.**

Over the twelve weeks of research, I conducted three separate sight word assessments to observe whether or not my interventions had a positive effect on my students. Figure 6 on p. 82 demonstrates the change in the number of words that students recognized at the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

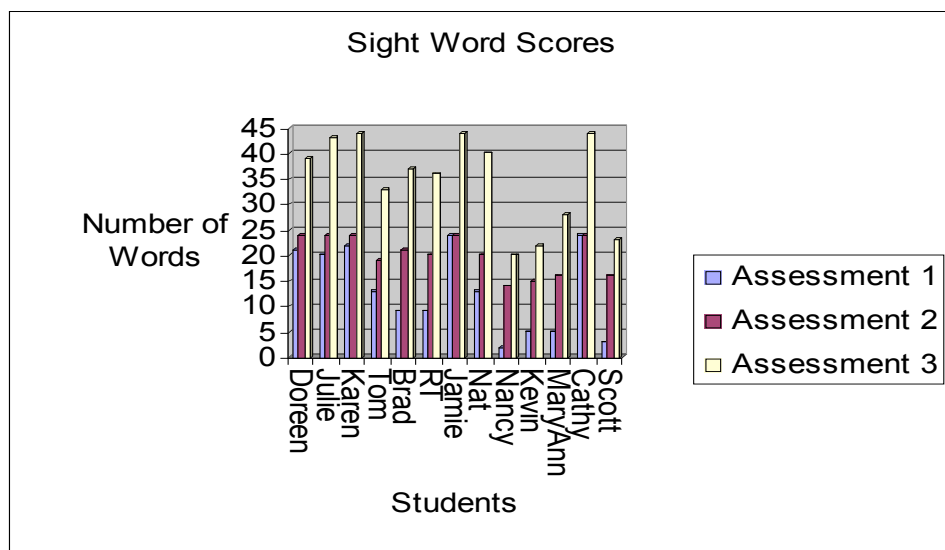


Figure 6. Sight word comparison scores for individual students

Overall, all students who participated in the study demonstrated a positive change in their sight word recognition. As Cooper (2000) stated, as students become fluent readers, they build a pile of sight words. The more students can recognize, the better they become at reading them.

Delpit says, “the less stress and the more fun connected to the process, the more easily it is accomplished” (p. 42). Following Delpit’s advice, I worked to ensure that my students did not feel intimidated by words. I wanted them to view words and the letters that make them as something fun and interesting, not as a challenge. Over the weeks of my study, I introduced new sight words and

developed games and activities to help students become familiar with common high frequency words. Whether the students fished for these words, went on a scavenger hunt, played a board game, or participated in musical words, I made sure the students had fun while learning. I found that **the use of games to revisit an important reading concept decreased student frustration.** One of the favorite games my students loved to participate in was “Musical Words.” While the students were gallivanting around to the music of my CD player, I can recall the goofy gestures and constant smiles. One student commented, “I like it when we aren’t doing work.” Smugly laughing to myself, I remember thinking, “Ah, but you are working. You just don’t realize it!”

Even though the task at hand for this activity was to read common sight words off flash cards, the students did not feel intimidated when faced with a challenging word. The reason why was mostly due to the fact that my aide and I walked around during this activity, and leant a helping hand to struggling students. They felt comfortable, instead of embarrassed. This makes all the difference when encouraging students to read aloud.

When aiding students to read unfamiliar words, one strategy is to use prior knowledge of word family endings to help decode. For example, the word *fan*, can help students to sound out the words *can*, *man*, etc. One intervention during my study was the use of word family notebooks. Each week, the students would add a new family and practice reading the words with a buddy. Through



observations, I noticed that **word families familiarize students with common word endings, which helped students to decode unknown words.** During poetry instruction, I taught my students how to box out a word that they already knew. For example, the word *plant*, has the word *-an* inside of it. I would tell the students to lightly draw a box in pencil around the word they already knew, and sound out the rest. Taking my advice, the students learned that boxing out word chunks can help when reading unknown words. It's as Dewey suggests, "the teacher's suggestion is not a mold for a cast-iron result but is a starting point to be developed into a plan through contributions from the experience of all engaged in the learning process" (p. 72).

My advice was a starting point for the students to decode words. While conducting a DRA lesson, Doreen came across the word *chin*. Using her knowledge, she boxed out the word *-in* and sounded out the rest accordingly. Not only have I noticed the boxing out technique during DRA lessons, but also during poetry reading and sight word activities. The students have learned to pass on my advice to each other when completing activities together. Hence, another theme throughout my study, **student observations of each other during classroom activities enable children to develop one another's understandings and provide clarifications.**

Throughout my study, students participated in many activities. Misunderstandings were consistent happenings, but are not unusual when

teaching students how to read. I remember specifically one day coming to the realization that my efforts with reading instruction had indeed rubbed off on my students. During a buddy reading lesson, the students were partnered up to practice reading a story to each other. As usual, I was making my way to each group, observing the reading that was taking place. Jamie and Scott were sitting together by the front door. I pulled up a chair and just listened, not really sure what was going to happen due to the huge gap in their reading abilities. It was Scott's turn to read, and immediately he struggled over the first paragraph. As he continued to read, he came across the word *what* and just stopped. He stared at the word for a while, lips moving but not a sound exiting. I edged my chair closer to Scott, ready to intervene and help with this troubling word, but Jamie stopped me. He began sounding the word out for Scott.

“How does the /wh/ sound go? We learned it with our question words” he said.

Keeping his eyes on the book, Scott made the /wh/ sound. Jamie expressed his happiness with the correct answer and then helped Scott with the remaining sounds. This demonstrated that along with observations, **buddy reading provided opportunities for peer helpers to emerge. Although at a young age, these peer-helpers guide students through the proper conventions of reading.**

This process thrilled me, because it is something that I usually help the students with. Through example, I was able to model a positive behavior for the

class. The fact that I showed students I cared when I was helping them with reading, carried on to the students now caring for each other. I was no longer the only teacher in the classroom. It's as Freire concludes, "the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 80).

Basically, teachers and students both assume the roles of teaching. Not only do students learn from their teachers, but teachers can learn much from their students. An example of this learning occurred during a guided reading lesson with one of my reading groups. I had asked the students to take a picture walk through the story, as a way to help gather ideas about the content. As the students were quietly "walking," I happened to notice that MaryAnn was sitting at the poetry center. She had turned to the poem "I Like Popcorn" and I thought this would be a wonderful moment to observe. MaryAnn read the title and started to sing the poem to the tune that I had taught. She sang each line carefully, despite hesitating at words briefly when she was unsure, but never breaking the tune to the song. I remember listening to her sing the poem, and thinking to myself how wonderful it sounded. MaryAnn was reading with expression and excitement. An effect of her performance was the realization that **the repeated readings of poems expose students to the rhyme and repetition of poetry, therefore allowing them to read with intonation and expression.** The more familiar the students became with a poem, the more their personality emerged through the oral

reading. I started to pay closer attention to the other students who participated in the poetry center and was excited by their willingness to read. The students modeled their own readings on our shared readings. This would include softer voices for quiet words, stronger voices for louder words, yawning, laughing, sighing, and so forth. Vivian Gussin Paley once said, “to invent is to come alive” (p. 50). Through the readings of the poems, the students indeed came alive. They invent all of the characteristics that emerge during reading, and expose the creative minds of themselves. It is a truly exhilarating process, one that I continue to look forward to everyday.

When every learner is targeted, students are included in every aspect of the lesson. I found that **when incorporating all modalities with poetry lessons, every learner is positively targeted within the classroom.** Over the course of a week, the students participated in several activities that focused on the poem being taught. The reading aloud and repeated readings of the poem targeted visual and auditory learners. Word games associated with the poem focused on the kinesthetic, which allowed them to move around while learning an important concept.

Speaking from personal experience, I use a combination of all three modalities when I learn. I need a visual, enjoy the auditory, but rely on the kinesthetic aspect to keep me functioning. The same applies for all of my students. As a teacher, I want to keep children engaged in the learning process.

When I consider the needs of each child, my lessons produce better results. Kevin is one of my students who benefits from gearing lessons toward multiple modalities. I have observed Kevin during the group readings of poems when he seems quite distracted, looking at a space on the carpet, barely listening to my instruction. However, the minute I begin to sing our poem to a familiar tune, he gets this excited look on his face, and when I have the students stand to participate with the motions, a giddiness emerges. It is like he is a totally different person, ready to embark on a new journey. This is what our lessons are about— helping the child to enjoy learning, rather than trying to avoid it.

Paying attention to the needs of my students definitely aided in designing a meaningful reading environment. Tied closely was the way I managed my classroom. **Successful classroom management is essential in creating and fostering a positive reading environment.** During the course of my study, the students were constantly aware of the rules in the classroom. Before activities and lessons were executed, regulations were discussed to ensure proper behavior while the students were engaged in learning.

As an educator, paying close attention to the classroom environment and how it best benefits the students is a crucial responsibility. Utilizing objects in the classroom and transforming them into learning areas helps students to view the room as friendly, rather than intimidating. Keeping students abreast of how to act in their room of learning demonstrates a genuine respect for what surrounds them.

When students realize that teachers consider the classroom an area that makes learning fun, the incentive to learn becomes more desirable. According to Dewey, “the most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning” (p. 48). What better gift can we provide our students?

## NEXT STEPS

### And the Beat Goes On

*“The educator more than the member of any other profession is concerned to have a long look ahead.” (Dewey, 1938, p. 75)*

Writing the research story taught me three amazing lessons.

1. Never underestimate the power of your students.

My pastiche opened up a whole new meaning for me to the idea that “words are powerful.” I chose to create a pastiche centering on the thoughts and ideas of how my students felt about poetry. My study focused on using poetry to teach everyday reading skills. Since these activities focused on poetry, I thought it would be beneficial to dig down deep into the minds of the young readers in my classroom. I know that I can define a poem. However, my definition is different those of the children. I wanted to gain perspective on my students’ feelings about poetry. Many students felt poems were just words that rhyme, or songs that we sing. A goal of my project was to help students to realize that these WORDS are powerful. These words help us become better, stronger readers. These WORDS are for enjoyment.

2. View your world from a child’s perspective.

My DRA dramatization focused on a struggling reader in my classroom. As I observed, surveyed, and interviewed this child, I transferred into her shoes. I began to feel all her insecurities about reading and comprehension. As Nancy read

aloud to me, each word that caused a struggle became difficult for me as well. It's so easy for an educator to suffer from impatience when a child is weak on reading techniques. At these times, I try to relate a personal experience to what the child is going through. While conducting Nancy's DRA, I remembered a time my father and I were painting my basement. I was working on the ceiling, using a very long pole, which was quite difficult due to my height advantage. Therefore, I kept leaving all these white spots, which my dad had to repaint for me. He kept on trying to show me how to hold the pole, and all I kept thinking was, "I know Dad. I am trying!" I can only imagine how Nancy was feeling. Every time I sounded out a letter for her and said, "Now, put it all together," she was probably thinking the same as me. "I know Miss Umholtz. I am trying!"

I found that viewing my classroom from the child's perspective really helped me to gain knowledge on student attitude and feelings. Teachers need to realize that the students have feelings about every aspect of their education. How can we help a child, if we are unaware of these true feelings? Just as we like to feel comfortable, so do students. As Vygotsky noted, "what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (p. 87). Easing students into learning allows them to work at their own pace.

### 3. Expect the unexpected and live in the moment of a lesson.

The dramatization of the DRA lessons in my classroom reinforced the fact that teachers need to be prepared for everything. As teachers, we have to be prepared



for the unexpected and face the challenges ahead of us. A lesson will not always go according to plan. We can't let this get us distracted. At the beginning of my study, I wasn't fully aware of what the students would benefit from educationally. The individual DRA lessons provided me with reading skills that needed reinforcement. Even though I had to rearrange some of my lessons, I knew that my planning would benefit all of the students in my classroom. As educators, we need to be prepared to make alterations to influence the future learning of our students.

Along with being prepared for the unexpected is the need to live within the moment of our teaching. Due to the array of learning abilities, my lessons sometimes exceeded the allotted time. Usually, I would have wrapped up the lesson and moved on to the next block of my lesson plans. However, I learned to live in the moment as I helped my students to succeed to their fullest potential.

To summarize my whole research experience, I would describe it in one word: **meaningful**. Not only have I found meaning to my teaching experience, but I have also found meaning in my students' experience in my classroom. While I am not yet certain what the next path will be in my course of study, I found several ideas while I was conducting this research.

I am still fascinated with the process of reading and am aware that I don't know everything I'd like to know about it. With Moravian offering a master's

course in Reading, I could further my knowledge of the strategies that best benefit all levels of readers without ever leaving campus.

Sight words are still an important part of reading instruction. I would like to implement a research study that just focuses on activities that aide in mastering sight word recognition. I considered involving parents in the study as well, using flash cards at home to help with the review. If students don't recognize common words on sight, this causes a huge delay with their reading fluency.

Along with the theme of reading, I noticed that many basal reading stories follow a specific pattern. For example, on every page, the sentence will begin "I like to see..." On every following page, a word is filled in the blank, but a picture is provided to help the students determine the unknown word. I would like to conduct a study that determines the benefit of using predictable text. Do the students really learn the words, or are they memorized? What would happen if I showed the words out of order? Would the students be able to read them still?

Referring back to Dewey and his idea of educators having the "long look ahead," I truly feel that teacher research does cause teachers to constantly reflect and look ahead. We need to be aware of what works, what doesn't work, and what will we do in the future. It is almost impossible to follow our daily plans, when education is forever changing. We are in a profession that gets redesigned every year. At times while stressful, it is exciting to know that teachers will always learn something new, something meaningful to students and our profession.

## REFERENCES

- Ayers, W. (1993). *To Teach: The journey of a teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Benton, M. (1990). *Importance of poetry in children's learning*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED390292)
- Blau, L. (2001). 5 surefire strategies for reading fluency [Electronic Version]. *Instructor*, 110(7).
- Cooper, J.D. (2000). *Literacy: Helping children construct meaning*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Delpit, L. & Dowdy, J.K. (Eds.). (2002). *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience and Education*. New York: Touchstone (Original work published 1938)
- Durham, J. (1997). Teaching reading: On time and poetry. *The Reading Teacher*, 51(1), 76-79.
- Ediger, M. (1999). *Phonics and poetry in the curriculum*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED432763)
- Ediger, M. (1999). *Using poetry to teach phonics*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED435961)
- Ediger, M. (2000). *Reading poetry in the language arts*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED438565)

- Feller Bauer, C. (1995). *The Poetry Break: An Annotated Anthology with Ideas for Introducing Children to Poetry*. Printed in the United States of America: First Printing.
- Ford, M. (1987). *Young children's concepts about attitudes about poetry*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED309456)
- Fountas I., & Pinnell, G. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Freire, P. (2006). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M.B. Ramos, Trans., 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970)
- Franco, B. (2005). *Conversations with a Poet: Inviting Poetry into K-12 Classrooms*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.
- Gable, S. (1999). Promote children's literacy with poetry. *Young Children*, 54(5), 12-15.
- Galda, L., & West, J. (1993). Giving the gift of words: reading poetry with children. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(7), 588-595.
- Heil, L. (1993). *Poetic mini-drama: A way for children to discover dramatic form*. Richmond, VA: Paper Presented at the Annual Spring Conference of the National Council of Teachers of English. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED357395)
- Heitman, J. (2003). *Rhymes and Reasons: Librarians & Teachers Using Poetry to*

*Foster Literacy*. Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing, Inc.

- Higgins, N., & Cox, P. (1998). *The effects of animation cues on third grade children's ability to learn the meanings of unfamiliar words*. Oakdale, NY: Educational Leadership and Technology School of Education-Dowling College. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED418686)
- Holly, M.L., Arhar, J., & Kasten, W. (2001). *Action research for teachers: Traveling the yellow brick road*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Honeyghan, G. (1999). Exploring literacy through poetry: Poems that celebrate poetry [Electronic Version]. *The Florida Reading Quarterly*, 36(2), 26-31.
- Kolb, G. (1996). Read with a beat: Developing literacy through music and song. *The Reading Teacher*, 50(1), 76-79.
- Kutiper, K., & Wilson, P. (1993). Updating poetry preferences: A look at the poetry children really like. *The Reading Teacher*, 47(1), 28-34.
- Love, F. (1995). *Using children's literature to build literacy: A cooperative learning approach*. Nashville, TN: Paper Presented at the Great Lakes Regional and the Southeast Regional International Reading Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED393062)
- Miguez, B. (2005). Bring back the poetry [Electronic Version]. *Teacher Librarian*, 32(4), 6pp.
- Newman, J. (1998). Tensions of teaching: Beyond tips to critical reflection. New

York: Teachers College Press.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching Children To Read: An Evidenced-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading And Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. Jessup, MD: National Institute for Literacy.

Opitz, M. (2000). *Rhymes & Reasons: Literature and Language Play for Phonological Awareness*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Perfect, K. (1999). Rhyme and reason: Poetry for the heart and head. *Reading Teacher*, 52(7), 728-737.

Pikulski, J. & Chard, D. (2005). Fluency: Bridge between decoding and reading Comprehension. *International Reading Association*, 58(6), 510-519.

Rasinski, T. (2000). Speed does matter in reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 54(2), 146-151.

Rathvon, N. (2006, August 25). Developmental Reading Assessment: DRA Review. Retrieved April 26, 2008 from [www.natalierathvon.com/images/DRA\\_Review-08-25-2006.pdf](http://www.natalierathvon.com/images/DRA_Review-08-25-2006.pdf)

Sepura, B. (1994). Read it again! A study of young children and poetry. *Reading Horizons*, 35(2), 121-137.

Sloan, G. (2000). *In bringing children and poetry together, teaching matters*.

Milwaukee, WI: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED451516)

Smith, C. (2003). *ERIC topical bibliography and commentary*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED480893)

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wienczek, B., Vazzano, J., & Reizian, S. (1999). *Balanced literacy in a first grade classroom: Practices, tensions, and potentials*. Orlando, FL: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED435972)

## RESOURCES

- Afflerbach, P., Beers, J., Blachowicz, C., Boyd, C., & Diffily, D. (2000).  
*Scott Foresman Reading*. Glenview, IL: Addison-Wesley Educational  
Publishers, Inc.
- Beaver, J. (2006). *Developmental Reading Assessment*. Parsippany, NJ:  
Pearson Education Inc.
- Jordano, K., & Callella T. (1998). *Fall Phonemic Awareness Songs and Rhymes*.  
Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press, Inc.
- Jordano, K., & Callella T. (1998). *Winter Phonemic Awareness Songs and  
Rhymes*. Cypress, CA: Creative Teaching Press, Inc.
- McCracken, R., & McCracken, M. (2002). *Stories, Songs & Poetry to Teach  
Reading & Writing*. Winnipeg, MB Canada: Peguis Publishers Limited.
- Reynolds, L. (2004). *Poems for Sight-Word Practice*. Peterborough, NH: Crystal  
Springs Books.



APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A



## MORAVIAN COLLEGE

August 30, 2007

Kerri Umholtz  
305 South Oak Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18017

Dear Kerri Umholtz:


The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has accepted your proposal: "Using Poetry to Increase Literacy in a First Grade Classroom." Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

Although this matters did not affect the decision regarding your proposal, the committee requests that you revise your Informed Consent form to include directions about how to withdraw from the study for those who wish to do so after your research has begun.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter has been sent to you through U.S. Mail and e-mail. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-861-1415) or through e-mail should you have any questions about the committee's requests.

  
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board  
Moravian College  
610-861-1415

## APPENDIX B

September 13, 2007



MORAVIAN COLLEGE  
A SMALL NATIONAL TREASURE

1742

Department of Education  
1200 Main Street  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018-6650

TEL 610 861-1558  
FAX 610 861-1696  
WEB [www.moravian.edu](http://www.moravian.edu)

Dear [REDACTED]

As an educator, I believe that my main goal is to provide students with the best practices in education. In order to accomplish my goal, I need to further my knowledge in education. Currently I am enrolled in a Master of Education Program at Moravian College. Moravian has provided me with a valuable learning experience that I can continue to carry on and share with my classroom.

This semester, I will begin an exciting process for my Master's Thesis titled Using Poetry to Increase Literacy in a First Grade Classroom. A requirement of this process is to conduct a twelve week research study within my classroom. The focus of my research will center on using poetry to increase reading fluency. Reading fluency is the ability to read aloud expressively and with understanding. A fluent reader reads in a way that the text flows together nice and smoothly rather than choppy. One suggested way to increase fluency in readers is to expose students to a wide variety of poetry. My goal for this research is to foster an appreciation for reading a variety of literature while increasing sight word recognition for the students.

All students in my classroom will be introduced to a variety of poems that will practice word recognition. The students will be monitored to provide me with information as to whether they are using various strategies they have learned throughout opportunities to read (syllabication, rhyming, phoneme isolation and segmentation, etc). I will conduct sight word evaluation assessments and keep a DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) inventory on all students. Another means of data will be my observations of the students during oral reading. Also, the students will participate in a final survey that will express their feelings on reading poetry and their likes/dislikes about the skills they were introduced to.

In order for me to use this information for my research, I ask permission to use my students' work for my study and to send out the attached consent forms asking for parent permission. Participation is completely voluntary and the students may withdraw from the research with parental consent at any time. As a way to protect student confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in the finished copy of this research. Only my name and the names of participating Moravian faculty will be released in the study.

As a superintendent and fellow educator, I know the level of importance that you feel towards putting the children first and providing the best educational experience possible. If you have any questions, my Moravian sponsor, whom has approved my study, is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be reached at [jshosh@moravian.edu](mailto:jshosh@moravian.edu).

Sincerely,  
Kerri A. Umholtz

APPENDIX C

↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘

↙

Name \_\_\_\_\_

↘

Poetry Interview

↙

1. What is a poem? \_\_\_\_\_

↘

\_\_\_\_\_

↙

\_\_\_\_\_

↘

\_\_\_\_\_

↙

2. Have you ever read a poem? \_\_\_\_\_

↘

3. Do you have a favorite poem? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, can you

↙

explain what the poem is about: \_\_\_\_\_

↘

\_\_\_\_\_

↙

\_\_\_\_\_

↘

4. Do you like poetry? \_\_\_\_\_

↙

5. How do you feel when you read a poem? \_\_\_\_\_

↘

\_\_\_\_\_

↙

\_\_\_\_\_

↘

↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘ ↙ ↘

## APPENDIX D

## Sight Words 1-24 (Fountas &amp; Pinnell)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

a	she
I	at
like	up
he	see
am	it
to	go
no	and
is	the
do	my
an	in
so	can
me	we

## APPENDIX E

September 13, 2007



MORAVIAN COLLEGE  
A SMALL NATIONAL TREASURE

1742

Department of Education  
1200 Main Street  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018-6650

TEL 610 861-1558  
FAX 610 861-1696  
WEB www.moravian.edu

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As an educator, I believe that my main goal is to provide students with the best practices in education. In order to accomplish my goal, I need to further my knowledge in education. Currently I am enrolled in a Master of Education Program at Moravian College. Moravian has provided me with a valuable learning experience that I can continue to carry on and share with my classroom.

This semester, I will begin an exciting process for my Master's Thesis titled Using Poetry to Increase Literacy in a First Grade Classroom. A requirement of this process is to conduct a twelve week research study within my classroom. The focus of my research will center on using poetry to increase reading fluency. Reading fluency is the ability to read aloud expressively and with understanding. A fluent reader reads in a way that the text flows together nice and smoothly rather than choppy. One suggested way to increase fluency in readers is to expose students to a wide variety of poetry. My goal for this research is to foster an appreciation for reading a variety of literature while increasing sight word recognition for the students.

All students in my classroom will be introduced to a variety of poems that will practice word recognition. The students will be monitored to provide me with information as to whether they are using various strategies they have learned throughout opportunities to read (syllabication, rhyming, phoneme isolation and segmentation, etc). I will conduct sight word evaluation assessments and keep a DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) inventory on all students. Another means of data will be my observations of the students during oral reading. Also, the students will participate in a final survey that will express their feelings on reading poetry and their likes/dislikes about the skills they were introduced to.

In order for me to use this information for my research report, I must ask permission for your consent. Participation in my research study is completely voluntary and your child may withdraw from the research at any time. As a way to protect student confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in the finished copy of this research. Only my name and the names of participating Moravian faculty will be released in the study. At the conclusion of my study, all data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns with my research study, please contact me at [umholtzk@warrennet.org](mailto:umholtzk@warrennet.org) or [umholtzk@moravian.edu](mailto:umholtzk@moravian.edu). Our guidance counselor, [shosh@moravian.edu](mailto:shosh@moravian.edu) is also available for support. He can be reached at [shosh@moravian.edu](mailto:shosh@moravian.edu). My Moravian sponsor, whom has approved my study, is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be reached at [jshosh@moravian.edu](mailto:jshosh@moravian.edu).

Sincerely,

Kerri A. Umholtz

Please detach and return.

I \_\_\_\_\_, have read and fully understand this consent form.

I give my child \_\_\_\_\_ permission to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ yes

\_\_\_\_\_ no

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F

<b>LEVEL 2</b> ID: A1111111	Teacher Observation Guide	<b>I Can See</b>	Level 2, Page 1
--------------------------------	---------------------------	------------------	-----------------

Name/Date _____	Teacher/Grade _____
-----------------	---------------------

<b>Scores:</b> Reading Engagement ___/9	Oral Reading ___/9	Printed Language Concepts ___/9
<b>Independent Range:</b> _____	_____	_____

**Book Selection** Text selected by:  teacher

### 1. READING ENGAGEMENT

(If the student has recently answered these questions, skip this section.)

**T:** Who reads with you or to you at home? \_\_\_\_\_

**T:** Tell me about one of your favorite books. \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. ORAL READING

#### INTRODUCTION AND PREVIEW

**T:** This story, *I Can See*, is about things you can see by a pond. Each thing is a different color. Look at the pictures, and tell me what you can see by the pond.

Note the student's ability to hold the book and turn pages. If the student names fewer than half of the objects, use your best judgment to decide whether you should proceed with the text.

**T:** Point to and read the title, and then say: *I'll read the first page. As I read, I will point to each word with my finger. Watch and listen.* Read page 2.

**T:** Point to the first word on page 4, and say: *Now, you point to the words as you read what else can be seen.*

#### RECORD OF ORAL READING

Record the student's oral reading behaviors on the Record of Oral Reading below and on the following page.

##### Page 4

I can see a green frog.

##### Page 6

I can see a red flower.

##### Page 8

I can see a brown tree.

**Page 10**

I can see a black bird.

**Page 12**

I can see a yellow sun . . .

**Page 14**

and I can see a rainbow.

After the student has read the last page, go back to the following pages and note the student's responses.

**T:** Turn to page 4. After showing the letter *g* on a card, say: *Find a word that begins with this letter.*

**T:** Turn to page 6. After showing the letter *r* on a card, say: *Find a word that ends with this letter.*

**3. TEACHER ANALYSIS****ORAL READING, PERCENT OF ACCURACY**

Count the number of miscues that are not self-corrected. Circle the percent of accuracy based on the number of miscues.

Word Count: 36

<b>Number of Miscues</b>	4 or more	3	2	1	0
<b>Percent of Accuracy</b>	89 or less	92	94	97	100

- If the student's number of miscues is 3 or less, continue the assessment with a Level 3 text.
- If the student's number of miscues is 4 or more, complete the *DRA2* Continuum and Focus for Instruction.

***DRA2* Continuum and Focus for Instruction**

1. Circle the descriptors on the *DRA2* Continuum that best describe the student's reading behaviors and responses.
2. Use the student's profile of reading behaviors to identify instructional needs on the *DRA2* Focus for Instruction.

At another time, administer *DRA Word Analysis*, Tasks 1 through 7.



Name/Date \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher/Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Level 2, Page 3

DRA2 CONTINUUM		LEVEL 2			EMERGENT READER				
	EMERGING			DEVELOPING			INDEPENDENT		
<b>Reading Engagement</b>									
Literacy Support	1 No response or is uncertain			2 Names at least one person who reads with him or her at home			3 Names several people who read with him or her at home		
Favorite Book	1 No response or is uncertain			2 Tells something about a favorite book			3 Gives title and shares some specific details about favorite book		
Book-Handling Skills	1 Relies on others to hold and turn pages of a book			2 Holds and/or turns pages of a book when prompted			3 Holds and turns pages of a book independently		
Score	3 4 5			6 7 8			9		
<b>Oral Reading</b>									
Monitoring/Self-Corrections	1 Detects no miscues			2 Self-corrects at least 1 miscue and neglects to self-correct other miscues			3 Self-corrects 2 or more miscues or reads accurately (no miscues or self-corrects all miscues)		
Use of Cues	1 Often neglects cues (e.g., pictures, sentence pattern, visual information)			2 Uses cues (e.g., pictures, sentence pattern, visual information) at times			3 Uses cues (e.g., pictures, sentence pattern, visual information) most of the time		
Accuracy	1 89% or less			2 92% or 94%			3 97% or 100%		
Score	3 4 5			6 7 8			9		
<b>Printed Language Concepts</b>									
Directionality	1 No/little control of directionality on one line of text			2 Inconsistent control of directionality on one line of text			3 Controls directionality on one line of text		
One-to-One Correspondence	1 Slides finger; no one-to-one match			2 Points to words; inconsistent one-to-one match			3 Points to words; consistent one-to-one match		
Words/Letters	1 Demonstrates little understanding of the terms <i>begins</i> , <i>ends</i> , and <i>letter</i> ; unable to locate either word			2 Demonstrates some understanding of the terms <i>begins</i> , <i>ends</i> , and <i>letter</i> by locating 1 of the words			3 Demonstrates an understanding of the terms <i>begins</i> , <i>ends</i> , and <i>letter</i> by locating both words		
Score	3 4 5			6 7 8			9		

**DRA2 FOCUS FOR INSTRUCTION FOR EMERGENT READERS**

**Reading Engagement**

- Create structures and routines to support reading at home
- Model and support holding a book while previewing and reading
- Model and support turning the pages of a book while previewing and reading

**Oral Reading**

**Teach how to:**

- Monitor using one-to-one correspondence
- Monitor using known words
- Problem-solve unknown words by using beginning letter/sound relationships, pictures, and language structures
- Confirm word choice by using beginning letter/sound relationships, pictures, and language structures
- Self-correct miscues

**Printed Language Concepts**

**Model and support:**

- Directionality
- Concept of a letter and a word
- Concept of first and last letter of a word
- Concept of the terms *begins* and *ends*
- Concept of the terms *letter* and/or *sound*
- One-to-one correspondence

**OTHER**

---



---



---



---



---

2

Beaver, J. (2006). *Developmental Reading Assessment*. Parsippany, NJ:

Pearson Education Inc.

## APPENDIX G

 **Phoneme Addition, Phoneme Substitution**  
(See Apples in a Basket activity, page 45)



 **Apples** 

(sing to the tune of "On Top of Old Smokey")

I love to eat apples.  
They're juicy and sweet.  
The one thing I don't know,  
Is which one to eat.

Red, yellow, and green,  
They're all good for me.  
If you had to choose one,  
Which one would it be?

I love to eat **b**apples.  
They're **bu**icy and **bw**weet.  
The one thing I don't know,  
Is which one to eat.

**B**ed, **b**ellow, and **b**reen,  
They're all good for me.  
If you had to choose one,  
Which one would it be?

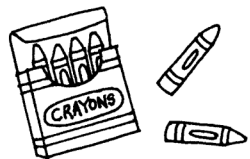
**Additional verses:** Replace the bolded letter with a new letter to continue the song. For example, *I love to eat tapples. They're tuicy and tweet.*

42

Back to School

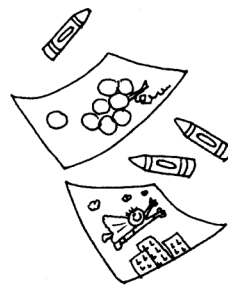
## APPENDIX H

## The Crayon Box



**Let's use blue**  
**To spread the sky.**  
**Brown helps draw**  
**A nest up high.**  
**Green makes grass**  
**In May or June.**  
**White can show**  
**The fullest moon.**

**Purple's for**  
**A juicy grape.**  
**Red shows off**  
**A hero's cape.**  
**Black brings in**  
**The dark of night.**  
**Orange holds**  
**A pumpkin's light.**



Reynolds, L. (2004). *Poems for Sight-Word Practice*. Peterborough, NH: Crystal

Springs Books.

## APPENDIX I

My Cat, Sam

I'm very glad  
Sam is my cat.  
Sam likes to nap  
On his tan mat.

Sam likes to eat  
From his big pan.  
Sam likes to play  
With his red can.

Sam likes to jump  
Into my bag.  
Sam likes to tug.  
On a blue rag.

Åfflerbach, P., Beers, J., Blachowicz, C., Boyd, C., & Diffily, D. (2000).

*Scott Foresman Reading*. Glenview, IL: Addison-Wesley Educational  
Publishers, Inc.

## APPENDIX J

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spelling: Elkonin Boxes

--	--

at

--	--	--

sat

--	--	--

cat

--	--

an

--	--	--

ran

--	--	--

man

--	--	--

will

--	--

no

--	--	--

dad

--	--	--

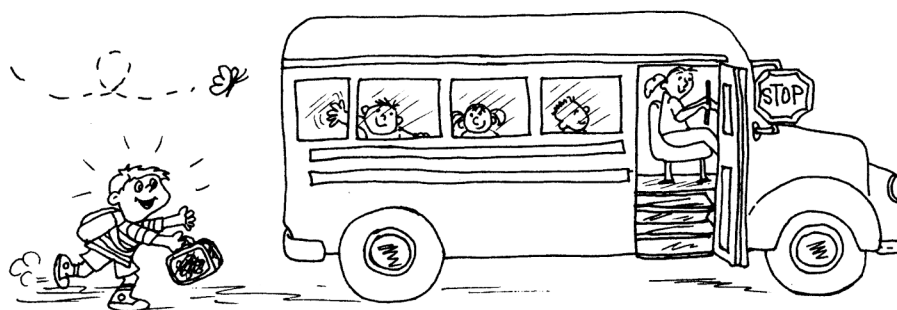
mom

## APPENDIX K



## Getting Ready

**The bus is near,  
 I need my sock.  
 The bus is near,  
 It's up the block!  
 The bus is near,  
 Can't find my shoe.  
 The bus is near,  
 What will I do?  
 The bus is HERE,  
 I've got to run!  
 It's time for school,  
 Let's have some fun!**



## APPENDIX L



## Choosing

**Is this the one?  
I just don't know.  
It must be right,  
And look just so.**

**Should it be short?  
Should it be tall?  
I must choose now,  
It's time, it's fall!**

**I look at each,  
Both up and down,  
To find the best  
In all the town.**

**I've got it now.  
It's quite a catch!  
I found it at  
The pumpkin patch!**





## APPENDIX M

## Hip, Hop, Hip

Hip, hop, hip! In the fog,  
I see frogs hop to a log.  
With a hip, hop, polliwog,  
Hopping to a log.  
How many frogs hop to a log?

Hip, hop, hip! In the fog,  
I see hogs jog to a log.  
With a hip, hop, polliwog,  
Jogging to a log.  
How many hogs jog to a log?

Hip, hop, hip! In the fog,  
I see frogs and hogs on a log.  
With a hip, hop, polliwog,  
Sitting on a log.  
I see frogs and hogs on a log.

Åfflerbach, P., Beers, J., Blachowicz, C., Boyd, C., & Diffily, D. (2000).

*Scott Foresman Reading*. Glenview, IL: Addison-Wesley Educational  
Publishers, Inc.

## APPENDIX N

Word	Knows Automatically	Knows with Hesitation	Incorrect Unknown	Word	Knows Automatically	Knows with Hesitation	Incorrect Unknown
red				go			
blue				but			
yellow				up			
I				where			
see				here			
the				am			
a				away			
can				come			
at				down			
and				no			
look				will			
my				all			
big				are			
have				find			
it				make			
is				play			
little							
do							
not							
that							
to							
you							
get							
what							
we							
one							
two							
three							

APPENDIX O

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

↓

↓ Name \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ Poetry Interview ↓

↓ 1. What is a poem? \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ 2. Have you ever read a poem? \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ 3. Do you have a favorite poem? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, can you ↓

↓ explain what the poem is about: \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ 4. Do you like poetry? \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ 5. How do you feel when you read a poem? \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ 6. Why do you think we use poetry in a classroom? \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

APPENDIX P

Teacher Observation Guide

*Where Is My Hat?*

Level 4, Page 1

Name/Date \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher/Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Scores: Reading Engagement \_\_\_/8 Oral Reading Fluency \_\_\_/16 Comprehension \_\_\_/28  
 Independent Range: 6-7 11-14 20-26

Book Selection Text selected by:  teacher  student

**1. READING ENGAGEMENT**

(If the student has recently answered these questions, skip this section.)

T: Who reads with you or to you at home? \_\_\_\_\_

T: Would you rather listen to a story or read a story to someone? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

T: Tell me about one of your favorite books. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. ORAL READING FLUENCY**

**INTRODUCTION AND PREVIEW**

T: In this story, *Where Is My Hat?*, a little boy named Ben doesn't know where his hat is. Look at all of the pictures, and tell me what is happening in this story.

Note the student's use of connecting words (e.g., *and*, *then*, *but*) and vocabulary relevant to the text. You may use general prompts, such as "Now what is happening?" or "Turn the page," but do not ask specific questions. Tally the number of times you prompt.

**RECORD OF ORAL READING**

Record the student's oral reading behaviors on the Record of Oral Reading below and on the following page.

T: *Where Is My Hat?* Now, read to find out where Ben and his mom look for his hat.

Page 2

"Where is my hat?" said Ben.

Page 3

Ben looked under his bed.

"It is not here," he said.

**Page 4**

Mom looked in the closet.  
 "It is not here," she said.

**Page 5**

Ben looked in his toy box.  
 "It is not here," he said.  
 He looked and looked.

**Page 6**

Mom looked behind the chair.

**Page 7**

"Here it is!" she said.

**ORAL READING, PERCENT OF ACCURACY**

Count the number of miscues that are not self-corrected. Circle the percent of accuracy based on the number of miscues.

Word Count: 54

<b>Number of Miscues</b>	6 or more	5	4	3	2	1	0
<b>Percent of Accuracy</b>	89 or less	91	93	94	96	98	100

If the student's score falls in the shaded area, STOP! Reassess with a lower *DRA2* text level. If the student is reading below the grade-level benchmark, administer *DRA Word Analysis*, beginning with Task 8, at another time.

**3. COMPREHENSION****RETELLING**

As the student retells, underline and record on the Story Overview the information included in the student's retelling. Please note the student does not need to use the exact words.

*T:* Close the book, and then say: **Start at the beginning, and tell me what happened in this story.**

**Story Overview****Beginning**

1. Ben said, "Where is my hat?"

**Middle**

2. He looks under the bed, and says, "It is not here."
3. Mom looks in the closet and says, "It is not here."
4. Ben looks in his toy box and says, "It is not here."
5. Mom looks behind a chair and . . .

**End**

6. Mom finds the hat behind a chair with the dog lying on it.
7. Mom says, "Here it is!" and puts the hat on Ben.

If the retelling is limited, use one or more of the following prompts to gain further information. Place a checkmark by a prompt each time it is used.

- Tell me more.*
- What happened at the beginning?*
- What happened before/after* \_\_\_\_\_ *(an event mentioned by the student)?*
- Who else was in the story?*
- How did the story end?*

**REFLECTION**

Record the student's responses to the prompts and questions below.

*T:* **What part did you like best in this story? Tell me why you liked that part.**

**MAKING CONNECTIONS**

**Note:** If the student makes a text-to-self connection in his or her response to the above prompt, skip the following question.

*T:* **What did this story make you think of? or What connections did you make while reading this story?**

Name/Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Level 4, Page 5

DRA2 CONTINUUM	LEVEL 4				EARLY READER
	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	INDEPENDENT	ADVANCED	
<b>Reading Engagement</b>					
Book Selection	1 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets with teacher support; uncertain about a favorite book	2 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets with moderate support; tells about favorite book in general terms	3 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets most of the time; identifies favorite book by title and tells about a particular event	4 Selects a variety of new texts that are "just right"; identifies favorite book by title and gives an overview of the book	
Sustained Reading	1 Sustains independent reading for a short period of time with much encouragement	2 Sustains independent reading with moderate encouragement	3 Sustains independent reading for at least 5 minutes at a time	4 Sustains independent reading for an extended period of time	
Score	2 3	4 5	6 7	8	
<b>Oral Reading Fluency</b>					
Phrasing	1 Reads word-by-word	2 Reads word-by-word with some short phrases	3 Reads in short phrases most of the time	4 Reads in longer phrases at times	
Monitoring/Self-Corrections	1 Self-corrects no miscues	2 Self-corrects at least 1 miscue and neglects to self-correct other miscues	3 Self-corrects 2 or more miscues or only makes 1 uncorrected miscue	4 Self-corrects miscues quickly or reads accurately	
Problem-Solving Unknown Words	1 Stops at difficulty, relying on support to problem-solve unknown words; 3 or more words told by the teacher	2 At difficulty, initiates problem-solving of a few unknown words; 1 or 2 words told by the teacher	3 At difficulty, uses 1 or 2 cues to problem-solve unknown words	4 At difficulty, uses multiple cues to problem-solve unknown words	
Accuracy	1 89% or less	2 91%–93%	3 94%–96%	4 98%–100%	
Score	4 5 6	7 8 9 10	11 12 13 14	15 16	
<b>Comprehension</b>					
Previewing	1 Comments briefly about each event or action only when prompted or is uncertain	2 Identifies and comments briefly about each event or action with some prompting	3 Identifies and connects at least 3 key events without prompting; some relevant vocabulary	4 Identifies and connects at least 4 key events without prompting; relevant vocabulary	
Retelling: Sequence of Events	1 Includes only 1 or 2 events or details (limited retelling)	2 Includes at least 3 events, generally in random order (partial retelling)	3 Includes most of the important events from the beginning, middle, and end, generally in sequence	4 Includes all important events from the beginning, middle, and end in sequence	
Retelling: Characters and Details	1 Refers to characters using general pronouns; may include incorrect information	2 Refers to characters using appropriate pronouns; includes at least 1 detail; may include some misinterpretation	3 Refers to most characters by name and includes some important details	4 Refers to all characters by name and includes most of the important details	
Retelling: Vocabulary	1 Uses general terms or labels; limited understanding of key words/concepts	2 Uses some language/vocabulary from the text; some understanding of key words/concepts	3 Uses language/vocabulary from the text; basic understanding of most key words/concepts	4 Uses important language/vocabulary from the text; good understanding of key words/concepts	
Retelling: Teacher Support	1 Retells with 5 or more questions or prompts	2 Retells with 3 or 4 questions or prompts	3 Retells with 1 or 2 questions or prompts	4 Retells with no questions or prompts	
Reflection	1 Gives an unrelated response, no reason for opinion, or no response	2 Gives a limited response and/or a general reason for opinion	3 Gives a specific story event/action and a relevant reason for response (e.g., personal connection)	4 Gives a response and reason that reflects higher-level thinking (e.g., synthesis/inference)	
Making Connections	1 Makes an unrelated connection, relates an event in the story, or gives no response	2 Makes a connection that reflects a limited understanding of the story	3 Makes a literal connection that reflects a basic understanding of the story	4 Makes a thoughtful connection that reflects a deeper understanding of the story	
Score	7 8 9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16 17 18 19	20 21 22 23 24 25 26	27 28	

DRA2 K-5 © Pearson Education, Inc./Collaboration Press/Pearson Learning Group. All rights reserved.

Choose three to five teaching/learning activities on the DRA2 Focus for Instruction on the next page.

31

Beaver, J. (2006). *Developmental Reading Assessment*. Parsippany, NJ:

Pearson Education Inc.