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**CULTIVATING RESPONSIVE READERS: STRENGTHENING  
READING COMPREHENSION AND CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION  
FOR THE BASIC AND BELOW-BASIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNER**

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*Treat a person as he is, and he will remain as he is.  
Treat him as he could be, and he will become what he should be.*

~ Jimmy Johnson

## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research study examined how a highly-structured reading program like Read 180 would impact reading comprehension and classroom participation for the identified basic and below-basic performing English language learner (ELL). The participants included five ELLs: two females and three males enrolled in two of my three 9<sup>th</sup> grade Read 180 classes. My research approach involved a variety of methods including small, cooperative grouping, teacher-directed instruction, and individualized computer work. Reading instruction employed various reading strategies, paired with suitable learner modifications to better promote student engagement in large and small group discourse and increase reading comprehension.

The study suggests that by incorporating teacher-modeled and guided reading within a small group setting, supported by scaffolded instruction, the teacher can provide the ELL with greater opportunity for reading success, thus leading to improved reading comfort and increased reading comprehension. This explicit instructional approach will help the ELL view himself or herself as equally valued and rewarded as the English-speaking student. In addition, the ELL will be able to better express his or her reading prowess within a reading community.

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## RESEARCHER'S STORY

*I meant what I said, and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful, one hundred percent.* –Dr. Seuss

Some enter in silence; others arrive with voices as big and bulky as their backpacks carrying overwhelming cultural and educational burdens: another school year. So, with a conciliatory smile, I welcome a new adventure with a new group of modest language learners who saunter into the classroom. These are the struggling readers: the students who lack language sophistication and require my attention. Well, that's what the scores say. So, I begin. But where? My initial thoughts, preoccupied with my love of reading, ignore the rigid, academic awareness of language goals, reading strategies, differentiated instruction or even possible reading achievement. Instead, my mind fills with thoughts of a little girl who always loved to read.

For me, my fondest memories of reading consist of spending hours perusing the stacks at my local library looking for the perfect book: the one that would transport me to another world, to another time, onto yet another extraordinary journey. Just like the young girl who would spend hours in search of the perfect book—a perfect pleasure—I still find simple satisfaction in this quest at my local library, the bookstore, or wherever a book might be found. Sometimes, I even laugh at how I consider the pursuit to be much more enticing than the book itself; but then I start to read, and the book's charm fascinates me as

the words flow along every page. To some, this idea can sound silly, especially coming from a grown woman, but I believe it is this sentiment towards reading that made me want to teach.

This simple silliness, this love of reading, is what I have always wanted for my students. This is why I am now teaching in a Read 180 classroom designed for the struggling reader. I want every one of my students to experience the same delight and comfort I experienced as a child and, to this day, still find in the basic act of reading. I want my students to understand that regardless of what happens in my life, or wherever I may be, reading remains the one constant, pleasurable distraction in my somewhat chaotic life.

With this love of learning, I set out to teach; and teach I did. I taught every grade and ability level in high school. I taught the classics like Chaucer and Shakespeare, guided hundreds of students through the research paper, instructed students with special needs or with a gifted potential, and managed numerous classes full of reluctant readers. What I quickly discovered, through twelve short years of teaching, is that it is not necessarily all about teaching, but, more importantly, it is all about learning. Incredibly, what I had learned up to this point was that I did not know much about how to facilitate learning. I am not talking about the rules of writing and grammar when it comes to teaching the honors student, or how to get young people to think critically, or even how to teach a junior-year student proper parenthetical citation. What I mean is knowing how to

teach a child the one skill I have always considered most important throughout my life: reading! I guess, like many English teachers who have come before me, and like so many who will come after me, I have spent a great deal of time relying on assumptions.

For far too long, I made assumptions that all of my students would read, know how to read, and want to read—as I always had. Eventually, however, I discovered something very different to be true, which prompted a realization—far too many of my students either struggled with reading or saw no reason to read. With this realization, I better understood my passion and my purpose for teaching, and began to appreciate why so many of my students failed to grasp a skill I believed to be a natural process. As a result, I wanted to help the struggling and reluctant reader feel more effective in school, experience more success and less failure, as well as, help improve his or her academic prowess and reading independence. Even though I frequently remember my previous assumptions regarding reading, I believe my recent work with English language learners (ELLs) has provided me with ample occasions for assisting students to build stronger opportunities for better learning and academic success. I can now say with confidence, that after more than a decade of teaching, my appreciation for reading remediation has developed. It is through this desire to help the struggling reader that my research has grown: and I wonder how a highly-structured reading

program like Read 180 will impact reading comprehension and classroom participation for the identified basic and below-basic performing ELL.

Looking back on my teaching career, I question why I allowed my concern for the struggling reader to persist instead of audaciously taking action. In truth, I continually struggled with the idea of changing my teaching focus or resigning from my newly appointed role of teaching honors English. As a result, my instruction continued in its normal status quo. Nevertheless, I remained faithful to questioning my role in education, as I repeatedly felt restless when working with the high-achieving student. I also found my restlessness to be somewhat comical since I had previously regarded teaching the high-level, gifted students to be the most desirable position I could have attained as an English teacher. So, instead of abandoning this coveted role, I put my unsettling thoughts aside and continued teaching those students who many of my colleagues considered to be the best of the best. After two years of living with this uncertainty, I had had enough. From this point on, I decided that I needed to cultivate the idealistic role within my teaching that I had once had at the onset of my career. I made the decision to the dismay of some—administrators, fellow teachers, and students alike—and opted to focus my efforts on the reluctant readers—the students who sometimes are given labels like remedial readers or low-achievers. I had admired the struggling reader—especially the English

language learner—and with an enhanced awareness of a controlled reading program, my new efforts took hold.

Two years into the process and I have finally begun to find my niche. My impact on helping the ELLs learn to master more formal skills, interact more effectively with the English language, and participate more actively in their education has become an exciting undertaking. By utilizing the tools of explicit instruction within the Read 180 program, I guide and support the ELL as he or she works toward mastery of the intricacies of the English language. Activities such as anticipatory sets, video stories, small group discussions, and the incorporation of realia, allow students to engage in various modes of informal and formal discourse. Because of these means, my classroom has now become a community where the ELL shares in similar high quality educational opportunities like his or her native speaking (NS) counterparts and where the ELLs' efforts reflect similar values bequeathed to all students regardless of their culture.

So, is this what we shall become by the end of the school year? Will this community of English language learners exhibit their academic prowess through verbal and linguistic proficiency by June? Will a smile be visible upon my face reflecting this audacious journey? Or, will my head just throb from disappointment and discontent? My hope is, in the end, my ELLs' entrance into mainstream education will be as loud as an elephant is big, and that a once silent ELL will enter my classroom with a greater sense of language: a sophistication

born from motivation, active participation, and clear thought. With these thoughts in mind, I plan to increase my ELLs' reading confidence and success with continual attentiveness and responsiveness to their literacy needs while hearing their cultural and educational voice. Now, I hope I will better hear each ELL's voice as it echoes back the strengths of a learning community. Well, that is how I hope my students' journey will go this year. I do not think my goal is too lofty, considering I have always wanted success for my students. Since my first day of teaching, it has been my ambition to guide and support all my learners in becoming proficient readers, allowing the "chips on their shoulders" to be healed, and for each child to feel as though he or she knows how to read, and what it means to read.

So, with a worthy expectation and emphasis on rich language development, I realize that I will need to support this process with a strong survival kit. For all my ELLs, daily reading instruction will stem from a well built, participatory, yet, resilient environment. Furthermore, class instruction will demand that I approach linguistics from a very user-friendly perspective and not just scratch the surface where difficulties in reading exist. To assist the English language learner in achieving greater educational success in and out of our reading classroom, I will offer multiple and varied opportunities for social and academic interaction, making available multiple occasions for increasingly demanding levels of cognition. It is also of utmost importance that the learning of

the English language occur in a non-threatening, comprehensible manner, with many opportunities for students to share their old and new knowledge free of ridicule and continuous correction. I trust our relaxed and engaging classroom, free from prejudice and disapproval—regardless of ability level or cultural difference—will allow each child to share in a fulfilling educational process. In fostering this positive learning environment, my ELLs will sit side-by-side their English-speaking classmates in small heterogeneous groups, moving throughout the classroom from one center to another as they engage in strong social and academic conversation. Within these centers, students will participate in both teacher-directed and student-centered instruction where explicit instruction will guide and support each student as he or she works toward greater mastery of the English language, aiding in the effectiveness of second language (L2) acquisition success.

Finally, by employing a variety of explicit language activities to activate prior knowledge and generate new learning, I believe the context of the Read 180 program will propel the English language learner toward a more socially and linguistically constructed meaning of language. Likewise, the reading program will encourage greater social interaction, resulting in greater reading achievement and participation. Activities such as read-alouds, choral and/or cloze reading, partner-reading, reader-response prompts and end-unit projects, graphic organizers, vocabulary builders, questioning, and a multitude of cooperative

learning exercises—just to name a few—will be utilized to actively engage the ELL. In turn, the student will gather and use his or her improved linguistic means to construct a more comprehensive understanding of L2. At the forefront of my study will be how the development of academic language proficiency facilitates academic achievement. To accomplish this goal, I will provide a consistent means of extending language, employ various modes of assessments, and expand upon the learning processes related to knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis. In the end, I hope my research findings confirm what is required of the previously labeled low-achieving, or low-ability, reader to better realize and communicate his or her academic potentiality. In the end, I hope the elephant in the room is so large that no one will be able to ignore it.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

The idea that every student should be able to read fluently by the time he or she reaches high school seems an achievable goal or seems quite simple to many. How often, though, have we heard colleagues express bewilderment at the student who struggles with reading, only to ask, “*why* can’t that student read?” One danger with this type of thinking is the lack of consideration given to an increasing population of diverse language learners in our schools. Many teachers may be ignorant of what the subsequent research will reveal regarding the linguistic complexities and the genuine academic demands essential to acquiring language proficiency. These same teachers may work from the premise that author, Forget (2004) calls, “assumptive teaching: thinking that because [teachers] themselves understand certain concepts, the students will also understand [these concepts] in the same ways” (p. 13). Hence, this author worries that the teacher perceives the process of learning the coursework and understanding the concepts as being nothing more than a habitual function, thereupon ignoring the collaborative efforts required of student and teacher when working toward proficiency.

Instruction provided within a Read 180 classroom considers the student’s linguistic needs and includes differentiated lessons. Lesson delivery integrates all language domains to help increase language proficiency, but to date, there is

an absence of published studies for examining the program's practice. While the subsequent research includes accessible, leading research on language acquisition and development common to the English language learner, significant attention will ensue to the structures and procedures common, and essential, to reading instruction and curriculum practice for all students.

### **Teaching Diverse Language Learners**

In addition to the general educational demands placed on today's teachers, educators are also faced with meeting the needs and the demands of an ever-growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, whose culture and language differ from the societal norms within the United States (Herrera & Murry, 2005). While the term *LEP* (limited English proficient) was common in the 1960s and 1970s, Herrera and Murry explain how the terms CLD and ELL (English language learner) have become more widely accepted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One major reason for this change of terminology is that *LEP* "does not emphasize the asset of multilingualism that the student may demonstrate in school (p. 7). Likewise, the authors state that the frequently used terms *LM* (language minority) or *LMS* (language minority student) were also awkward and presumed the student who spoke another language, other than English, represented the minority and not the majority of speakers in the school district.

With the growing nature of our schools' CLD populations, Herrera and Murry remind teachers that such assumptions are outdated.

At present, adjusting instruction to meet the needs of an ELL requires that a teacher perceive this language learner as a capable student while also giving consideration to the complex processes and adjustments these students must make in their new cultural environment (Herrera & Murry, 2005). Realizing teachers may consider this approach exhausting and overwhelming, the authors further advise teachers against teaching to the whole class as a whole entity because of its detrimental effects on meaningful language learning and reading comprehension.

### **Elements of Language Acquisition**

#### ***Communication: Comprehensible Input***

To learn the English language, or improve it, requires a language learner to work side-by-side with a native speaker while manipulating the targeted language multiple times and in multiple ways in order to generate intended meanings (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997). Behaviorists view this process as a way of meeting a desired goal, which ultimately rewards the learner with a better sense of a second—or for some a third or fourth—language (VanPatten, 2003). According to VanPatten, the rewards for language learning can only exist, however, when the input is “comprehensible” and the “message [is] retrievable in some way from the input utterance” (p. 27). Subsequently, Herrera and Murry

(2005) believe in order for the message to be acceptable to the language learner, the teacher, along with the other students, need to guide communication through authentic interaction. Van Patten (2003) describes this as a process of contextual negotiation in which communication occurs.

At the secondary level, many teachers expect their students to engage in formal communication regardless of the content; however, learning demands that the targeted language materialize in a participatory environment (Herrera & Murry, 2005). Before any skillful academic communication can begin, an English language learner must be encouraged to communicate socially. So for the ELL to acquire his or her second language (L2), or be expected to function at a rate of proficiency, VanPatten (2003) believes this system demands “a variety of linguistic components that interact in complex ways: lexicon (words), phonology (the sound system), morphology (how words are formed), syntax (rules that govern sentence structure), and so on” (p. 44). On the other hand, Herrera and Murry (2005) point out that in order for the ELL to effectively produce and employ greater English language understanding, the educator is responsible for implementing the nuances of language in a natural, progressive manner. Additionally, Herrera and Murry consider the process of a non-native speaker successfully acquiring the English language, and functioning at a level of academic proficiency, to demand greater involvement of, and thought from, both student and teacher.

Law and Eckes (2000) identify the sequence of learning language as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The teacher must first achieve strong lines of communication within the classroom to start the process of successful language processing. The teacher should instruct from what Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2000) define as Krashen's term, "comprehensible input": the method of "making adjustments to speech so that the message to the student is understandable" (pp. 60-61). VanPatten (2003) describes the procedure of developing understanding through communication as both "conversational input, the language that learners hear in the context of some kind of communicative exchange with other people," and as "nonconversational input, the language that a learner hears when he or she is not part of the interaction" (p. 27).

Language processing becomes a great task for the ELL, and VanPatten (2003) suggests having language instruction be personal and interactive so the ELL can experiment with the target language while receiving continuous feedback from the teacher and other students. From this feedback, the ELL can make necessary adjustments to solidify meaning. At last, the ELL begins to gain confidence, while still requiring instructional modification. VanPatten endorses having the teacher use simplified communication with the ELL. For example, the teacher instructs by chunking information, therefore, breaking whole information into manageable parts. VanPatten's research also states that by taking advantage

of a modified, instructional approach, the ELL will make future gains in language proficiency.

***Communication: Comprehensible Output***

Acquisition of the English language demands much more from the ELL than simply speaking the language (VanPatten, 2003). Too often, teachers define fluency through speech and overlook the intricacies that go into oral production or *output*. VanPatten adds, “output refers to just about anything that emerges from something else, normally something that is purposefully produced” (p. 61). For the ELL, this refers to the production of a very comprehensive, purposeful language—in this case English—and not just the production of imitated speech. This involvement is a momentous task for both the teacher and student. Quite simply, the ELL needs to focus on two things in order to become adept at the English language. The first factor involves thinking about *what* is to be said, while the second element focuses on *how* it will be said.

What teachers need to know, however, is the ELL operates under two processes when organizing this new language: *access* and *production strategies*. When the ELL speaks, he or she produces thoughts and meaning based on his or her word knowledge. He or she assesses speech through “activating the lexical items and grammatical forms necessary to express particular meanings” (VanPatten, 2003, p. 63). A native speaker generates words rather quickly

because he or she can simultaneously think and evaluate, and then produce the utterance most often in full-blown sentences. For an ELL, this process is more complicated and the student must employ two strategies for fluent production. During this process, the ELL utilizes the production strategies of his or her first language (L1) and then “[reconstructs] the procedures with appropriate L2 rules and constraints” (p. 63). Furthermore, the ELL must develop greater control of the lexical and grammatical components of the English language if he or she is to develop fluency.

For the ELL, the next step in the development of the English language is merging the two systems together: using L1-based production with L2 strategies to form a new language system. According to VanPatten, (2003) this is the *communication strategy*; “a way of using what you know to express yourself when you really can’t” (p. 63). For the native-speaking listener, the produced utterances from the ELL sound very similar to L2, but with a distinct L1 quality. One more component in the production of a new language is the attention the ELL gives to not only *what* is being said, but also to *how* this something is being said. VanPatten explains this process as “moving from purely semantic processing to more syntactic processing” (p. 69). Regardless of the ELL’s quality of L2 sound, the ELL is on his or her way to using standard lexical and grammatical functions in developing greater English fluency.

## **Best Practices in Building Language Processes for Improved Reading Comprehension**

### ***Language Processing: Four Language Domains***

Research supports the idea that the manipulation of language is a challenging process, and successful language learning demands the incorporation of all language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Echevarria, 2000; Eckes, 2000; Freeman and Freeman, 1998; Law, 2000; Short, 2000; VanPatten, 2003; Vogt, 2000). For a native speaker, these domains “are complex, cognitive language processes that are interrelated and integrated” and students “move through the processes in a natural way, reading what [they] write, talking about what [they’ve] read, and listening to others talk about what they’ve read and written” (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000, p. 123). Based on the ESL (English as a Second Language) TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) standards (1997), learning language skills requires an interrelated approach where each part works independently but fits into the whole (Law and Eckes, 2000).

Recognizing the intricacy of language development for the ELL, Echevarria, et al. (2000) support the teacher in providing the ELL with multiple opportunities to practice language processes, as well as guiding and assisting the student toward greater verbal and non-verbal linguistic success. Furthermore, Echevarria, et al. believe heightened student input and quality student work is a

reflection of quality lessons steeped in clear communication. Freeman and Freeman (1998) further discuss how acquiring the use of meaningful language necessitates purposeful instruction. Lessons need to minimize struggles for the ELL so he or she can gain and deepen his or her language understanding.

Freeman and Freeman extend this belief stating that effective teaching supports skillful learning. With this said, the teacher recognizes the problematic nature of traditional lecture or dense textbook assignments and understands that content instruction must provide rich experiences utilizing listening, speaking, reading and writing.

### ***Language Processing: Listening***

Much of a student's day is spent in conversational listening at home and at play, but at school, the level of listening demands academic skill. Law and Eckes (2000) believe that listening should occur naturally and not be used simply as a reason to speak. One strategy they advocate for extending language acquisition is Total Physical Response (TPR), which follows the belief that whenever a student is physically active in learning, the degree of language acquisition greatly increases. While Law and Eckes appreciate the uneasiness or awkwardness that may accompany this process at the secondary level, they suggest adapting activities to meet the needs of the particular content area. They also encourage increased student participation in listening through games that review content area

knowledge or vocabulary, listing or categorizing of subject material, interviews where students converse telling one another about each other, and viewing of films with extended reaction and response.

According to Fillmore (1979), an ELL will fully understand the structural basis of language when he or she becomes part of the language process and dissects the parts being communicated and can then duplicate what is being said. To further increase listening comprehension, Bardorvi-Harlig and Hartford (1997) propose that the teacher assists the ELL through notable listening-related work to help place comprehensible input into memory. At this point, the teacher understands the concept of phonology as being a system related to “the sound patterns of a language or the pronunciation patterns of speakers of a language” (p. 68). While class work may not necessitate extensive examination of the basics of phonology for the ELL to understand content, class activities should be both reflective of, and responsive to, language performance. Law and Eckes (2000) view this as an experimental process in which meaningful teacher/student interaction guides achievement.

### ***Language Processing: Speaking***

In addition to the cognitive involvement necessary in listening, Law and Eckes (2000) find oral production to be similarly demanding for the ELL. In order that oral language processing leads to greater reading proficiency, the ELL

must practice L2 language structures on many occasions, while utilizing L1 to bring together his or her native background knowledge to support his or her L2 more formal academic school language (Freeman and Freeman, 1998; Herrera and Murry, 2005; Law and Eckes, 2000). The ELL demonstrates this successful transfer when verbally applying L1 knowledge and skills to the learning and understanding of the new L2 content (Herrera & Murry, 2005).

Oral fluency becomes a balancing act where “unrehearsed speech is a process of negotiation of meanings between speaker and listener” (Gibbons, 1991, p. 42). For the ELL, negotiating through L2 requires substantial interactive clarification since assessment occurs during speech, and further achievement or failure depends upon either the strengths or weaknesses of their oral production. Gibbons further asserts that assessment be contextual and realistic, thus providing time for the ELL to work naturally within his or her new environment. Ultimately, this communication encourages purposeful L2 discourse among students and teacher and provides opportunity for greater control of developing language.

Dong (2004) regards the functional process of “checking for understanding, summarizing, and defining” to be necessary within classroom discussion in order to increase the ELL’s degree of participation (p. 15). The degree of involvement then allows the ELL to progress with his or her language processing. Understanding gradually develops through *automatization* as the

learner instinctively speaks in the target language (VanPatten, 2003). Finally, for Law and Eckes (2000) learning is talking—the foundational structure from which competency develops.

### ***Language Processing: Reading***

Manyak and Bauer (2008) believe teachers can help ELLs increase reading comprehension through pre-reading activities. By incorporating this strategy, ELLs expand their prior background knowledge while increasing their new knowledge. Additionally, this pre-reading exercise should include whole group text synopsis, question posing, and vocabulary frontloading for heightened reading comprehension. Regardless of the strategy, Dong (2004) believes that paying attention to the linguistic needs of the ELL is paramount. Likewise, Denton (2000) views the teacher's role as a prevailing factor in improved comprehension and suggests the teacher differentiate learning to meet each student's reading needs. Denton also claims that at the secondary level, especially in the higher content courses, gaps in comprehension drastically affect the quality of academic achievement. Denton's research suggests, however, that even at the secondary level, students who receive appropriate reading instruction have a strong chance of overcoming reading difficulties.

Nonetheless, Law and Eckes (2000) warn teachers about making assumptions with regard to reading. Quite often an ELL can be "calling out

words correctly in English, but not [be] able to tell you what they understood from the text; [this is not] reading;” it is nothing more than “barking at print” (p. 111). As the ELL is challenged by the text, the teacher is also challenged, which in turn, requires greater instructional flexibility. Tovani (2000) reaffirms how complicated reading material greatly influences comprehension and simply decoding the words does not necessarily equate to an ELL’s understanding of the text. Law and Eckes (2000) believe instructional flexibility includes arming the ELL with level-appropriate books, modeling reading with explanations, demonstrations, and read-alouds, as well as involving all students in shared reading, utilizing graphic organizers, and identifying sight-word vocabulary. Truly, reading is a multifaceted procedure that “requires a variety of thinking processes, many of which need to be taught” (Tovani, 2000, p. 14).

### **Reading Instruction: A Cautionary Tale**

#### ***Hidden Messages***

Providing students with a singular, real world reason to read is not enough to ensure a satisfying reading experience. Furthermore, research has shown that simply putting a book within students’ hands will not automatically produce avid, or skilled, readers (Allen, 2000; Denton, 2000; Tovani, 2000). Even the best-structured plan for reading improvement may not generate the desired result—improved reading comprehension. This could be due to the differing reasons as to

why the teacher and students would want to read. Batraw (2002) explored reading practices in a junior high school over four years. During this period she identified ways the school personnel could provide more literacy exposure for improved reading comprehension using three instructional modes: realignment of reading curriculum, implementation of daily sustained silent reading (SSR), and utilization of computerized reading software. As Batraw observed and interviewed one teacher group (including library staff, aides, and reading teachers) and one student group (including Batraw's remedial 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class), the "cultural tensions" related to the purpose of reading and the act of reading quickly surfaced (p. 5).

During meetings with Batraw (2002), students suggested that the "conflicts [they] faced...as they [tried] to balance the teacher requirement to read against the hidden messages of the reading program itself and the difficulties posed by complex text" steered the students away from independent reading (p. 6). These same students said that reading had never become a part of their daily, personal lives because they had never viewed reading as something to do for enjoyment or to expand their reading abilities, but rather it was something they had to do. On the other hand, the teacher group could not agree on the purpose of why students should read. Some stated "the vast majority of [their] kids are not reading at grade level" and "are operating in the casual language register," so "[teachers] need to teach [students] specialized vocabulary" (pp. 15-16). The

reading teachers, however, viewed the motivation of reading as a pleasurable and enjoyable act. Battraw (2002) questioned this attitude especially when these same teachers “teach students to read in order to improve their comprehension and build their vocabularies, strictly academic tasks with no more appeal than studying for a test in geography” (p. 18). The unfortunate result of these conflicting attitudes among the teaching staff and the student population was students continued to view reading as menacing and risky, and state reading scores remained stagnant.

### ***Teaching All Children to Read***

The notion that reading is a basic task, and that every school and teacher has the ability to teach every child to read, seems quite straightforward. This idea, however, is anything but clear-cut according to a supposition presented by Denton (2000) from partial session notes at the 1999 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) annual meeting. He stated that teaching successful reading requires control with appropriate teaching methods based on students’ learning needs. As discussed in the SREB document, the states of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and Texas instituted effective instructional programs for improved reading (and also addressed concerns with its professional development and teacher education) because of an overwhelming problem with underachieving reading populations.

Based on Denton's interpretation (2000), the document indicates elementary students require a lot of attention with reading instruction, along with their middle school and high school counterparts. One underlying concern noted by Denton was that too many schools promoted the struggling reader, regardless of age and grade level, to the next grade level without effectively addressing the problem of their reading needs. By neglecting the child's actual reading needs, Denton's report indicates that the school falls short in its mode of reading instruction. Denton authenticates this issue and states while promotion is seen as valuable "it is [also] important to recognize that repeating the same instruction that failed the first time dooms children to continued failure as surely as does promoting them when they have not achieved grade-level objectives" (p. 5).

At the core of this multi-faceted issue with reading performance is appropriate assessment and teacher training: the two components of a high-quality reading program which Denton (2000) views as essential for establishing reading achievement. The process of quality reading instruction demands sufficient teacher education in both assessment and the process of reading, but this differs from state to state. Adopting a new approach to the teaching of reading requires instructional dexterity beginning with a keen sense of the students' reading needs. Since all children possess various challenges that originate from different causes, early assessment becomes a critical first step in this journey towards successful literacy. However, adjusting instruction to meet these differing needs does not

literally mean one-to-one instruction, but it does require differentiating instruction in a meaningful way. Denton (2000) describes this meaningful instruction as the teacher being attentive to reaching students' reading needs based on their expansive range of skills and knowledge, while incorporating instruction permissible of flexible, learning rates. Additionally, reading instruction does not need to follow any specific formula. However, it must consider the manner in which students understand the communication of speech and writing, and should be taught by a teacher who is knowledgeable and understanding of the needs of each student.

The solution for proficient reading is far from easy, and learning to read is a complex process (Denton, 2000). There is a definite need for immediate and effective instruction in order for students to show significant reading achievement. Denton notes the longer a reading problem persists, the more difficult it is to correct. Furthermore, "Years of reading difficulties not only make grade-level material far too difficult but also leave students with significant gaps in the basic knowledge needed to comprehend advanced content" (p. 6). On the other hand, teachers must be careful not to expect too much, too soon, because the child may not be linguistically ready for increased reading. Denton continues his argument by cautioning teachers about the complexities of reading and noting they need to understand the process does not happen as naturally as with speech and writing. Regardless of whichever approach is employed, Denton (2000)

states that early intervention is the key to success. Students who fail to meet reading proficiency tend to fall behind their peers and, as a result, the problem persists, making reading much more difficult for the student. The message all teachers should gain from Denton is that a student's reading shortfall cannot, and should not, be ignored. Last of all, Denton validates the need for change as it is vital for worthwhile reading improvement.

### ***Language Processing: Writing***

According to Law and Eckes (2000), writing is the final phase of language processing and is where a significant amount of learning takes place. This is the only point where students' actions with language are altogether measurable and where the teacher can visualize thought. Law and Eckes remind the teacher that writing is, in some way, part of every subject and the process of revision and reaction should be part of weekly instruction. Additionally, Law and Eckes recommend that the teacher:

Provide time for both intensive and extensive writing. *Intensive writing* is structured and written for a specific purpose. This is writing to be revised, writing where the specific skills of organization, mechanics, and editing can be taught. *Extensive writing* is not to be revised or corrected; it is used to articulate

thoughts, explore ideas, and gain fluency without the need to stop and worry about correctness. (p. 169)

Herrera and Murry (2005) specify that during each lesson, the ELL should have the opportunity to share and make connections to his or her native culture to enhance his or her linguistic competence, which will ultimately deepen the ELL's understanding of the English language. Law and Eckes (2000) consider this a time for ELLs to “sink their teeth into” topics of personal interest, because “students who are captivated by the need to say something about a topic that interests them will be carried along by their enthusiasm” (p. 165). These authors also think writing should be a time to model, guide, share, and celebrate, along with taking risks with different forms of writing from poetry to essays. Finally, Echevarria, et al. (2000) state when the ELL begins to utilize old forms of information (L1) to express new ideas (L2) using various writing modes (journals, graphic organizers, etc.), he or she is making authentic connections and is making considerable gains towards greater second language acquisition (SLA).

### **Social Components of Language Processing**

#### ***Language Processing: Classroom Participation***

Central to classroom contribution is verbal and non-verbal communication, which is “the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning in a given context” (VanPatten, 2003, p. 44). However, for a student to

be effective in this communication, VanPatten recognizes there is a need for more teacher direction and that the student has to be consciously involved throughout the process while constantly maintaining a balancing act between prior knowledge and the new knowledge under study. Presenting the ELL with applicable, realistic material is necessary for increased learning and what Echevarria, et al. (2000) deem critical when moving the student from the concrete to more abstract thinking. Clearly, this may provide a complex struggle for the ELL, and perhaps an equally challenging task for the teacher. The teacher must now create favorable conditions from which the “message [is] retrievable in some way from the input utterance...thus becoming input for acquisition” (VanPatten, 2003, p. 27).

VanPatten (2003) further examines the means of communication and views input in two forms: *conversational* and *non-conversational*. He defines conversational input as “language directed to the [learner] to which some kind of response is expected,” and where “the learner has to be part of the interaction for language to be conversational input” (p. 27). VanPatten maintains that for the ELL to function successfully within his or her English-speaking environment, learning activities need to provide frequent opportunities where the ELL can practice and refine the conversational input. On the other hand, *non-conversational input* are conversations which exist beyond the student’s immediate involvement. Though these non-conversational inputs do not demand

any of the student's physical participation, they are also crucial to the development of language. Without such exposure, VanPatten argues the ELL who is isolated from communication can endure devastating emotional and intellectual effects, thus diminishing opportunities for valid language contribution during instructional time, and reducing the odds of the ELL's achievement with language.

According to numerous researchers (Krashen, Dulay, and Burt ), this comprehensible input is negated when, and if, met with the "affective filter hypothesis: [arguing] that the amount of input reaching the [ELL] is influenced by a number of affective variables, including anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation" (Herrera and Murry, 2005, p. 18). In the end, the phenomenon of an affective filter "will profoundly influence the student levels of performance in the classroom, collaboration with peers, and success in school" and teachers must consider these outcomes during instruction to offset setbacks (p. 19). Once the student can perceive learning language as a comfortable, achievable, and purposeful activity, Herrera and Murry suggest the student can then progress through Krashen's theory of "natural order hypothesis... a predictable sequence of progression" where "language learners tend to progress from listening to speaking and then [ultimately] developing capacities for reading and writing" (p. 70).

### *Language Processing: Collaboration*

During this social phase of language acquisition, the student moves from the participatory stage and begins to combine efforts with others to extend his or her language abilities. According to Freeman and Freeman's findings in Essential Linguistics (2004), behaviorists' studies:

... indicate that learning is not only the result of the environment acting on the individual. Instead, the new view [is] that humans are born with innate cognitive abilities, and learning is the result of the child acting on the environment much like a scientist making and testing hypotheses. (pp. 2-3)

The research of Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez, and Rascon (2007) further suggests the formation of small-group instruction is one of the most significant influences for developing comprehension. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1997) define comprehension as "the process of relating new or incoming information to information already stored in memory" (p. 164). Avalos, et al. (2007) also support the instructional form of small group instruction as a prime opportunity to adjust rate, and they recognize this approach should also include questioning methods to provide continued support for ELLs, enabling them to extend all of their new language domains. In addition, Herrera and Murry (2005) recognize the teacher can strengthen this understanding through reinforcement while extending language learning in small group settings by utilizing higher-order processes such

as summarizing, predicting, questioning, and clarifying. Furthermore, Vygotskian theory, as noted in Vygotsky's Mind in Society (1978), targets this form of instruction and considers its approach as a way to “[awaken] a variety of developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in [his or her] environment and in collaboration with [his or her] peers” (p. 90).

As the ELL continues on his or her path toward proficient comprehension, the findings in Essential Linguistics by Freeman and Freeman (2004) illustrate how behaviorists view language acquisition as a process of responses developed from environmental stimuli. Changes in language occur based on the individual's attitude and motivation to learn, as well as, the positive and negative reinforcement of circumstances. The authors emphasize that according to Vygotskian theory, if a student is to acquire a new language, where the most significant development occurs, then instruction must occur in the child's *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). Based on the term from Echevarria, et al. (2000), “ZPD is the difference between what a child can accomplish alone and what he or she can accomplish with the assistance of a more experienced individual” (p. 83). Thus, the teacher, being cognizant of what a child can independently produce in relation to what areas still require assistance, adjusts prompting and discussion according to the ELL's needs, so he or she can achieve greater mastery of comprehension and thinking.

Central to the process of achievement is scaffolding. Scaffolding, according to Herrera and Murry (2005), is an approach to instruction that “enables the student [the ELL], with support, to engage in literacy activities that build on prior skill or knowledge base while stretching toward the development of new literacy skills” (p. 69). When they reference this literacy development, Echevarria, et al. (2000) state that group work must also contribute to the ELLs’ language practice. Classroom activity must foster multiple opportunities for language application: students must engage in constructive discourse along with meaningful writing.

The research of Gokhale (1995) describes the instructional method of collaboration as a forum where “students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another’s learning as well as their own; thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful” (p. 1). When incorporating this method, Echevarria, et al. (2000) warn teachers of stagnant grouping and suggest that students work in a variety of designs to meet the diverse needs of the ELL. In contrast, Harper and De Jong (2004) advise teachers of an overwhelming misconception and implication regarding collaboration and language development. They caution that simply because an ELL is exposed to comprehensible English, does not necessarily mean he or she can instinctively match the proficient English-language level or rate at which his or her English-

speaking counterparts can. The authors stress “that unless teachers address [this misconception] their curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices will only partially meet the needs of ELLs in their classroom and will only superficially include ELLs” (p. 160). Finally, when an ELL views language learning in a favorable light, his or her learning becomes worthwhile and the array of comprehensible experiences lead to extended language growth, and in the end, the ELL gains genuine mastery of his or her new language (Herrera & Murry, 2005).

### **Final Reflection**

The challenges common to learning a new language involve both the dexterity of Standard English manipulation by the ELL along with quality teacher-driven instruction built from valuable assessment (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Denton, 2000; Echevarria, et al., 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Herrera & Murry, 2005; Law & Eckes, 2000). For an ELL to gain mastery in the target language, instruction must be meaningful, purposeful, and comprehensible. Additionally, class time should include multiple opportunities for guided and independent practice; incorporate explanation, demonstration, and modeling; and support diverse learning rates through instructional flexibility. Engaging the ELL in a collaborative, participatory environment, while monitoring the proficiency of comprehensible output, is necessary for successful language performance. Lastly, and most expressively noted by Herrera and Murry (2005),

“our journey pursues the road less traveled, and along the way we gain new insights into and reflective perspectives on ourselves and the rich cultural and linguistic assets our [ELL] students bring to the classroom” (p. xiii).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Purpose**

I conducted my research to determine if a highly-structured reading program, like Read 180, would impact reading comprehension and classroom participation for the identified basic and below-basic performing ELL. It should be noted that the study was not designed to evaluate or review the components of the program, but rather use these devices to better determine the program's effectiveness in developing English language fluency. My research approach involved a variety of methods utilizing small cooperative heterogeneous grouping, teacher-directed instruction, and individualized computer work. With Krashen in mind, and to better increase the ELLs' reading confidence within a classroom setting, students sat side-by-side their English-speaking peers in small groups, moving throughout the classroom from center to center as they engaged in social and academic conversation.

By incorporating teacher-modeled and guided reading within these small groups, the ELL had more opportunities for assistance from other students that would, hopefully, increase their reading comprehension and reading comfort. I realized, nonetheless, that my efforts might not produce avid readers. What I hoped, however, was that the English language learner could more innately and successfully develop greater L2 reading comprehension and classroom

participation if I established a strong language-based environment. The following research elements and procedures helped direct my study.

### **Setting**

My study took place in two out of my three 9<sup>th</sup> grade specialized Reading classes at a highly diverse public school district in northeastern Pennsylvania. The high school serves approximately 3,100 students in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and includes students from all socio-economic levels, from the very poor inner city student to the very wealthy suburban student. This population's demographics represent approximately 59.5% Caucasian students, 14.5% Hispanic, 23.5% Black (non-Hispanic), 2.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .2% American Indian, with approximately nine languages represented at the high school.

My students came from either the district's middle school or the district's alternative educational site. The Read 180 intervention program is in its first year at the high school for ninth grade students. The program has been in place over the past two school years for the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes. After a thorough review of the school's state-mandated test scores, the administration decided to extend the Scholastic based reading program to ninth graders in response to the district's and, more importantly, the high school's failing PSSA test scores.

This year my Reading classes are block-scheduled (84 minutes) and students attend Read 180 everyday for the entire academic year. The two classes

I studied are part of a new co-teaching initiative at the high school, designed to provide instructional support for students with special needs. The period 1 and 2 block consists of 17 students: seven boys, ten girls—eight students are identified with learning needs, and three students are English language learners. The period 6 and 7 block consists of 14 students: ten boys, four girls—seven students identified with learning needs, and two students who are exited/monitored ELLs. These students have exited the ESL program. ESL teachers do not see these students unless academic problems or concerns arise. Every student enrolled in my Read 180 classes are first time ninth-graders with reading levels ranging from second grade up to seventh grade. The reading levels were determined at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year through an English language literacy test administered in my Read 180 classroom.

My classroom arrangement utilized several work stations: three clusters of five to six desks grouped together (for cooperative group work), with several feet between each set of desks; two teacher desks at either end of the room; a long line of six computer stations positioned at the far back wall; one computer station located by my desk at the front of the classroom; and, finally, one large table to the far right of the classroom, which comfortably seated six students and one teacher.

## Participants

Every participant in my study was hand-selected by the district's deputy principal to participate in Read 180 based on the district's analysis of the state-mandated students' PSSA and 4Sight Tests (a benchmark assessment tool that enables school districts to predict students' reading – and in some states, math performance). I chose the five participants based on the new co-teaching initiative. The district had decided that it would be worthwhile to have two teachers co-teach a class: a special education teacher, Mrs. Deb Frace, and a regular education teacher, myself. I believed the instructional conditions would ensure noteworthy results since I would have sufficient opportunity to observe and then compile information from multiple data sources. Furthermore, each study participant represented the entire ELL population within these two classes.

Each ELL in these two selected classes receives or has received ESL supportive services since they entered the country. None of the participants are learning support identified. Two of the three ELLs in my period 1 and 2 class are at ESL proficiency level of 4A (4B is the highest level ESL class). The third student is at an ESL proficiency level of 3B (the highest intermediate level ESL class).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The ESL classes denote the students' class level based on the WIDA English language test-levels, identifying where an ELL is placed. The state of PA uses WIDA to test ELLs' levels and to exit ELLs from the ESL program. Students are then monitored and followed for a two-year period, to ensure that students maintain educational success. Otherwise, intervention is begun.

These three ELLs all come from Mexico and they all speak Spanish in their homes. In addition to the Read 180 class, the two 3A ESL students also attend ESL classes. All students are also enrolled in a general education English class. Two of the three participants from this class attended the alternative site during their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years and report to the school's deputy principal instead of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade principal. The two participants from the period 6 and 7 block no longer receive ESL services at the high school, but did receive services up to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. These students are from Puerto Rico and Ecuador with Spanish as their predominant home language.

Two of the five participants are literate in their native language and have one parent (the father) who is bilingual in Spanish and English. Both students state that their fathers gained fluency in English before the families moved to this country because of frequent business travels to the United States. Once these students moved from Ecuador and Mexico to the United States, during 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, either to the New Jersey school system or to our current school district, both ELLs received academic instruction with the assistance of multiple bilingual teachers and bilingual students within either all ESL or a few general education classes. Of the three remaining participants, one is a native of Mexico who moved to the U.S. in 2000, while the other two students were born in Texas. All three, however, are illiterate in Spanish and are examples of the growing ELL student population phenomenon: students who are illiterate in their home

language. Each student received ESL services starting with 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade and always attended their current school district.

### **Research Elements: Scholastic's Reading Program—Read 180**

Read 180 is an explicit strategy-based instructional program that follows a highly scripted format. The reading intervention system follows a ninety-minute instructional model that includes five components: whole-group instruction, instructional software, modeled and independent reading, small-group instruction, and whole-group wrap-up. Throughout my study, I followed all five components, but narrowed my research to three assessment threads: reading, vocabulary, and contextual comprehension. In adhering to the program guidelines, the classroom arrangement consists of desks organized into three reading groups, a computer area housing seven laptops, a paperback and audio-book library with 50-plus titles ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade reader levels, and an area for quiet reading.

The program follows a ninety-minute instructional model. However, since the high school follows a 42-minute bell schedule, two components of the instructional model required immediate alteration in order to allow for an effective flow of the instructional mode. These two components were the opening and ending segments. The format of the 84-minute class only allowed for a three to five minute warm-up activity, instead of ten minutes, while still involving whole-group teacher-directed instruction, where my special education co-teacher,

Mrs. Frace, and/or I established the day's objectives and reading rotations.

Instruction then followed three, twenty-minute rotations comprised of small group direct-instructional reading (utilizing Read 180's consumable reading and writing workbook, the *rBook*), individualized technology software, and independent reading which either utilized paperbacks or audio books from the classroom library. Each class ended with a brief (two or three minute) whole-group wrap-up segment.

### **Research Procedure: Preparing for the Study**

The first step of this study was to receive consent from my building principal. I met to discuss the purpose of my inquiry and to obtain his signature of approval (Appendix A). In addition, I submitted an application of proposal to the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College for review and approval (Appendix B). I received proposal approval during the initial stages of my data collection.

In addition to these two forms, I also needed parental consent. Before I sent any letters home with my students, I explained the study. If my students were to give me their consent, they needed to understand the process. I presented my study as another assessment tool. However, I explained it was an assessment of how the reading program would benefit reading comprehension and improve confidence in classroom participation. I told my students I wanted to know how

the components of Read 180 would support and guide their reading needs. Likewise, I wanted my students to know that they needed to actively participate in all elements of the program to make gains toward becoming better readers. I sent the letter home with my students (Appendix A). Since my study included the study of non-English speaking participants, I also offered a letter of consent translated into Spanish (Appendix C). Within several weeks, I received 50% of the consent forms from both the parents and/or guardians and my students (including every English language learner).

### **Research Procedure: We Begin**

***SRI Testing:*** The first, and most critical, step of my study was to administer the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) test. This computerized test assessed each student's academic reading level. To determine each student's baseline reading level, this initial test was administered within the second week of the 2008-2009 school year, and the remaining tests to be administered every two months throughout the rest of the school year. This initial test determined students' reading placement for all subsequent computerized work and for the independent novel reading. Before students started the test, I instructed them to put forth effort. I told them not to worry about a grade, but they needed to do their best. I explained that all subsequent computer work and independent reading would be organized based on their beginning of the year scores.

Following this first round of testing, I ran the SRI “Student Yearly Progress Report” through Scholastic Administer Management (SAM) to view the students’ baseline scores (Appendix D). Reports were housed in the field log. Throughout the semester, subsequent reports were printed and used to evaluate increases or decreases in student reading. Analysis of these reports helped gauge the appropriateness of the student’s existing reading ability to the performed computer work. Necessary modifications to the reading software were made whenever the computer’s automatic leveling did not sufficiently meet the students’ needs. Additional reports based on these changes were housed in the field log as a running record of the ELLs’ reading improvements.

***Assigning Reading Groups:*** The group formations for the Read 180 classes consisted of three small groups: period 1 and 2 was arranged into two groups of six students and one group of five students; period 6 and 7 was arranged into two groups of five students and one group of four students. Initially, each ELL was assigned to a group with either one or two fellow ELL classmates. My intention was to generate a level of comfort and ease for all English language learners during class work and class routines. This is even more important at the high school level, since it can be intimidating, uncomfortable and challenging to students. New groups were reconfigured to heterogeneous grouping once all students adopted the Read 180 routine and exhibited greater literary competence

with the program. This better served every students' linguistic needs. During all small group reading rotations, I gathered participant data consisting of informal observation and reading workbook efforts. Data was collected on a daily, weekly, or per reading unit basis and housed in the field log.

***Selecting An Independent Reading Novel:*** Students had the opportunity, within the second week of the school year, to select their first independent novel. For this initial pick, I simply encouraged students to choose a book based on their beginning of the year reading level. Students could choose either a paperback or an audio book based on the reader's interest once the student participated in a book pass. During the book pass, the student selected five book titles from the classroom library, perused the novel, wrote out a few lines of interest based on this cursory read, and then made his or her final independent novel reading choice. I avoided strict rules and made only supportive recommendations for this first independent book assignment in the hope of gaining additional insight to these hesitant readers' initial reading mannerisms. This process lent itself to my study of student reading habits. Subsequent book choices occurred under greater teacher scrutiny to assure improved pairing of reader ability and appropriate book lexile (a unit of measurement used when determining the difficulty of text and the reading level of readers). A variety of reading assessments (examples being housed in the field log) transpired as each student progressed through the novel,

including frequent writing prompts and reading logs, and concluded with either short projects or quizzes.

***Getting Comfortable at the Computer:*** Before any independent work began at the computer, students received several quick tutorials for each section of the software. While the software provided a multitude of interactive activities, my study focused on three areas: reading, vocabulary, and context passage comprehension. Since the software utilizes the assistance of an interactive reading coach, and is adapted to the ELLs' reading level, all students progress independently through all reading, vocabulary, and context segments. To check the accuracy of reading levels (making adjustments where needed) and to verify student effort, I periodically ran the SAM "Student Reading Report" (Appendix E).

### **Data Collection: My Field Log**

***Participant Observation:*** As students sat side-by-side in small groups, moving throughout the classroom from center to center and engaging in social and academic conversation, I jotted quick notes regarding participation, conversations between, and among, teacher and student(s), and student-to-student dialogue. Since there was a co-teacher present, I was able to sit back and more objectively observe student behavior. During these observations, I would use my laptop,

freely writing about various ELL reading mannerisms as the student moved from center to center: participating in teacher-directed oral reading; collaborating in student-led discussion (with the teacher as facilitator); engaging in independent writing (supported by whole-group recognition); or completing the technology-driven literacy and audio-supported literature. I would jot down quick notes whenever I was leading the readings or discussions, and then reflect on these notes immediately following class. Since responding to our reading in written form was commonplace during the rotations, students were accustomed to seeing me write notes as we read. Consequently, no one ever questioned why I was taking notes. On a weekly basis, I would reflect upon these journal entries, adding personal opinion and analysis in my dated field log.

***Student Work:*** I gathered samples for the field log, as students engaged in *rBook* writing assignments including graphic organizers, vocabulary building exercises, questioning the text, and teacher-generated worksheets and writing prompts. Various student examples from outside sources such as the newspaper, technology-based assignments, supplemental literary activities, vocabulary and workshop quizzes and tests were also stored in the field log. Periodically, I would examine these pieces of work to better direct future instruction. If I noticed a decrease in either student effort or assignment completion, I would have a conference with the ELL to trouble-shoot existing problems in the hopes of

alleviating future struggles, thus adding these conference notes to the field log. I would date the information from each conference and use this data to further my research on improved reading comprehension and classroom participation.

***Interviews:*** I conducted three informal interview sessions throughout this study. All the interviews occurred during the small-group reading rotation or during teacher-student conferences. Any additional interviews were impromptu and occurred because I prompted the ELL to expand on an impulsive comment he or she made during class. For scheduled interviews, I had paper in hand to jot down notes. If a spontaneous discussion surfaced, I would make every attempt to quickly and discreetly write down the student's comments either on paper or in my laptop. Most often, I penned these natural conversations onto an index card or a scrap piece of paper, eventually taking the time during class or immediately after class to type these new findings into my laptop. The most salient interview questions were combined into a one-page document (Appendix F). I would expand upon these student comments with personal reflection and analysis within the same week, adding my comments to the field log. I kept a running log in my laptop with all new data dated according to each conversation.

***SAM Reports:*** Through daily, computerized instruction, I was able to elicit feedback regarding the ELLs' work on vocabulary and reading

comprehension. I printed bi-monthly reports regarding reading progress using the SAM “Student Reading Report.” (See sample, Appendix E). I also jotted notes regarding verbal fluency whenever the student completed the final recording in the *Success Zone* found at the end of each computerized reading segment. These notes were informal observations of the student’s recorded oral fluency. I always shared my evaluation of these recordings with my students and discussed any concerns, provided instructional support, and set future goals.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was critical to my study. Before the study began, I explained my research intent to my principal, my co-teacher, my students and their parents/guardians to alleviate any concerns and increase their confidence in both my research and research practice. Everyone understood that my overall intent was to examine how a language-based instructional reading program like Read 180 would benefit the struggling reader. (It should be noted that none of the students took offense to this term. Each admitted he or she had troubles in reading and recognized that he or she required additional support regardless of being identified as a basic or below-basic reader.) Each student received a consent form requiring a signature from either a parent or guardian. Two consent forms were made available to the student: one written in English and one translated in Spanish (Appendixes A and C). I explained that I also wanted the

student to provide me with his or her signature giving consent to his or her participation in the study. My consent letter explained the use of anonymity and that pseudonyms would exist in place of participant birth names within the documents of my field log.

In addition, each participant was told he or she could remove himself or herself from the trial, or the parents, and/or guardians, could remove their child from the study at any time. I also received written consent to conduct my study from Moravian College's Human Subject Internal Review Board (Appendix B).

With my study underway, I kept a daily field log as suggested by Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2005). My field log included participant observations, teacher reflection, and analysis. My field log housed a variety of data for examination and analysis including informal participant observations, computer data reports, student interviews, and student work. I made every attempt to conduct participant observation at least every other day, twice a week, or as frequently as warranted by the program progression and school schedule. I coded my observations and arranged the data into thematic bins based on common assessment threads (Figures 1 and 2). To further validate my study, my field log included a diverse collection of data: bi-monthly computer data reports, periodic student interviews and samples of student work (Appendix D & E). This process of triangulation, which compares multiple sources, follows the recommendation of Hendricks (2006) among other researchers.

My greatest responsibility was to my students. They knew this reading intervention program existed to help improve the school's failing PSSA Test scores. Consequently, many of my students were angry they were part of the class. What I wanted them to know (and most importantly for the ELL to understand) was that I hoped each student would achieve his or her greatest potential with language and learning. I further allowed the focus of each student's reading objectives to target his or her reading weaknesses and to help him or her become a more proficient reader. All my students knew the outcome of my study would be the eventual publication, along with access to the document, in the Moravian College Library. With this in mind, I reminded my students to be themselves, since my study's results needed to be authentic and genuine.

Daily class work would follow specific Read 180 routines with constant reading achievement goals based on core subject content, while measuring progress using assessments aligned to state standards. The work done in the classroom would follow all the elements of the program, and the only adjustments made to the program would occur to benefit each student's overall reading proficiency, and not my study. I reiterated that every student would have equal access to the benefits of the reading program regardless of his or her participation in my study. Moreover, at no time would any student's grades, reading scores, or overall reading progress results be altered because of the student's participation or non-participation in the study. All grades, reading scores, and reading results

would be authentic and valid based on each student's actual academic performance.

## **MY STORY**

### **Anticipation**

As the summer winded down, I looked forward to another school year with high hopes and great expectations. This was going to be another productive year! As I contained my excitement, I busily prepared, alongside my co-teacher, Mrs. Frace, for this new batch of students by decorating the room, organizing materials, deciding on the exact placement of desks, and mentally drafting my “Welcome Back to School” speech. I wanted this speech to capture my audience’s attention, or I risked losing them within the first few days—maybe even within the first few minutes. I knew that the Read 180 class was not on the list of favorite classes. It was assigned; and it was for the identified poor-performing reader. I also understood that as far as the students were concerned, their placement was unjustifiable and unreasonable. These attitudes were not anything new to me, and neither were the feelings of uneasiness, embarrassment, and disappointment that I had found common to the reluctant or struggling reader.

So armed with high spirits, a highly-structured reading program steeped in generous reading strategies, and an energetic co-teacher, I was ready for this challenge—aiding literacy improvement. At least that was the initiative set by the school district—get the scores up! For me, however, I wanted more. While I vowed to help and support all students achieve their greatest academic potentiality, the conditions affecting the English language learner strengthened

my resolve when working with the misunderstood, but all too often, unenthusiastic student.

My co-teacher, Mrs. Frace, and I believed we had assembled a very welcoming environment full of student-centered activities and expected rich language development from all our students—especially the ELLs. While the delivery of instruction guided by the Scholastic reading program, Read 180, promotes a logically controlled and ordered routine, Mrs. Frace and I planned to supplement the program with enrichment activities that would encourage a fully participatory, yet, resilient environment for maximum ELL involvement. Class instruction would follow linguistically based lessons ranging from short reading workbook articles and individualized computer sessions to lengthier novels. No matter the assignment, the reading lessons would involve the complexities of syntax, lexicon, phonology, and morphology for maximum improvements in academic oral, aural, and written communication. Moreover, lessons were designed to incorporate all language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in order to substantiate the quality and degree of reading improvement and classroom participation achieved by the ELL student.

I also considered the harsh realities of lesson delivery. I understood there were definite challenges that lay ahead. For instance, the class met every day for 84-minutes throughout the entire academic year. This meant the students and I, and my co-teacher, were stuck with each other until June. This also meant a lot of

hard work and effort would lead to solid improvements, but I also wondered if enough of my students would be willing and eager to roll up their sleeves and get the work done. Secondly, the students had to follow the established Read 180 routines and adhere to the set curriculum in order to ensure noticeable improvement in reading comprehension for future state-mandated tests. While this sounded simple enough, I knew this was the reason the high school had instituted the program. I also understood the reality. The monotony of the program, and how easy it could be to lose a student, was due to the repetitive nature of the lessons. Too many students could get bored with the routines, the rotations, and the standardization of the reading workbook activities. For this reason, I planned to expand upon the program and use an assortment of outside materials. I hoped that these additional sources would provide the ELL with a fresh outlook to the daily routines, while allowing for the most effective implementation of the program's instruction and thus enhancing the ELLs' learning experience.

After all the intensive preparation, all that remained were huge, yet unanswered questions: What would this year be like? Would I like my students? Would my students like me? Would I know what to do, know what to say? Would I have the answers? Would I know the questions?

*Dramatization: Day One*

**Teacher:** Good morning everyone. Welcome to Read 180 class. I'm Mrs. Hughes and this is Mrs. Frace, my co-teacher. We're very glad to see each and every one of you, and we're ready to tell you all about the class and what we will be doing this year.

**Student 1:** I'm not supposed to be here. My guidance counselor said I could take an elective instead of Reading class.

**Teacher:** Now we realize that many of you are curious as to why you've been assigned to the class...

**Student 2:** Yeah! My old English teacher said I didn't need this class anymore.

**Teacher:** Well, I can't speak for your previous teachers, but I will start by saying this class will be one of the most important classes you take here at the high school. Your schedule is full of challenging classes. You're going to have a lot of work to do and there will be a lot of reading. What we do in this class will help you be able to handle it all. This class will help you become a better reader and a better...

**Student 3:** So what? I don't want to be stuck in here. I already know how to read.

**Teacher:** I understand your concerns, but I would also like you to give this class a chance. Many of the students from last year said the very same things, but left at the end of the school year feeling as though they had learned a lot. I think in time

most, if not all, of you, will feel the same way. All I can ask is that you give me a few weeks to show you what this class will be like. It's very difficult to know what we will do in this class based on the first few days of this new school year. Give it a few weeks and you'll know what's expected of you, and you'll become more comfortable with the routines. So for now, let's get started.

### **The First Few Weeks**

As we settled into our first week, to no surprise, this school year started out very much like last year. Some students were hesitant to walk through the classroom doorway, while others were simply going through the motions typical of a freshman student who is merely lost in the shuffle. Others meandered aimlessly among a few outspoken voices, while the rest continued to express their dislike with this Reading class. Routines were established following Scholastic's instructional model. Brightly colored posters hung on the walls for quick reference so each student could visualize the process and purpose of the rotations. As the students literally walked from one station to the next, I referred back to these posters reinforcing the major elements of each station while answering questions and clarifying further misconceptions regarding the program. Student response was a mixed bag. Some students still grumbled, while others flat out complained and told me how "this class was stupid," but they further explained, "I'm not, and I don't need the class." At this moment, I considered myself the

class cheerleader, and my responsibilities would include organizing the routines, directing the spectators of this event (the students) to cheer for the team (themselves and their classmates), while competing at numerous events (class work). With no time to waste, I needed to organize my squad. Now!

I explained the double-block, eighty-four minute class. I explained how the students would participate in four major rotations: whole-group warm-up, teacher-led small-group reading, independent reading, and individualized computer work. I also explained that within the second week of school, each student would take a reading test, the SRI, to determine his or her current reading level. Two of the ELLs' eyes glazed over; it certainly was a lot to digest especially when they had to sit in the classroom for two periods and process everything in English. I continued with my explanation of the SRI tests. This was important and, let's face it, there was just a lot of stuff to cover in this class. I tried my best to keep my explanation short and simple as I encouraged each student to put forth effort when he or she took the initial test. I tried to emphasize the idea that in order for the computer to accurately map out the computer reading work, the student needed to work at his or her greatest potential. These weren't exactly my words, but I was that all important class cheerleader. By now there were some heads on desks, one ELL from each class, and two other ELLs just look tired. Something told me this was going to be a long year.

### ***Reader Interest Survey***

Before the students got too involved in their Read 180 journey, I wanted to know more about their interests and attitudes toward reading, so I administered a beginning of the year reading survey (Appendix G). One startling difference surfaced compared to last year's students. This group of supposed reluctant readers articulated a much more agreeable outlook towards reading than their predecessors did last year. I was delighted to see this new group not only fill out the entire one-page survey with earnest effort, but that the students answered with phrases or complete sentences providing very specific comments regarding their opinions of reading. When asked what types of books they liked to read, many students wrote down popular titles from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading list or provided a title from the *Harry Potter* series. Others simply wrote down a title which they remembered reading at some point in their elementary years. Regardless of their book choices, I was pleasantly surprised at this fresh enthusiasm—no matter if, or when, this enthusiasm might diminish within the next few weeks of school. I was optimistic, so I kept on *cheering*. I really thought that over the next few months, these students would find comfort within the class, the program and its routines, along with more appreciation for their reading abilities.

### *Introducing the Study*

Before too much work began, and too much data were lost, I introduced my research study to the students. I explained I was a student at Moravian College currently working towards my masters in Curriculum and Instruction. “What’s that?” several students asked. I felt the best way to describe my program of study was to tell them I was always thinking about the way I teach, so I was taking classes to learn how to be an even better teacher. I also explained that one of the program’s requirements was to do a huge research paper. I informed the students that I would be studying the reading program and how it can help students become better readers. I also explained that I would like as many students as possible to help me with my homework for my research paper. “Teachers have homework? That’s crazy.” Others asked if they would have to do any homework for this study, while others simply nodded their heads, and others smiled.

In addition to telling the class I would not change anything in the reading program because of this study, I also told the students that their grades would not be affected in any way due to student participation or lack of student participation. Additionally, I explained that whoever provided me with a signed parental consent form, then decided to remove himself, or herself, from the study (or by a parent’s or guardian’s directive) would not be penalized in any way. I reassured my students repeatedly, that no student needed to worry about negative

consequences if he or she chose to stop his or her participation in the study. He or she, along with all of the other students, would continue to receive the same instruction promised to him or her on the very first day of school. Furthermore, no participant birth names would be written anywhere in this study: not in my field log notes, not in the final thesis, and all names would be kept confidential. I told them I would use pseudonyms throughout my field log and the thesis. I re-emphasized the value of our reading class, the efforts I knew they would put into their class work, and how the results of their energy and time would show in their reading improvements. That is what my study would convey. Again, I gave my word to my students that I would not let my study get in the way of my teaching, or their learning. I concluded by explaining that this study would be one way to understand if the Read 180 program was effective in helping students become better readers. “When will it be done? Can we read it?” Finally, I let each student know my study would be available to anyone who wanted to read it at the Moravian College library, or online, after June 2009.

### ***The Parental Consent Form***

I handed every student a parental consent form, along with a Spanish version, in hopes that I would receive speedy approvals for the ELLs’ participation (Appendixes A and C). I anxiously awaited the quick return of these forms for the next few weeks, and continued teaching as usual. Every student

received an *rBook* (Scholastic's reading workbook), a folder to house all of their ongoing writing assignments, worksheets, handouts, etc., and took the SRI during the computer rotation. Each class started with a warm-up activity of either a writing prompt, or a short video clip, which corresponded to the nine reading workshops, then students began their work through the rotations becoming more familiar with the work as the days progressed.

Within two weeks, I received 50% of the parental consent forms. All five of my English language learners were part of this 50%. I could officially begin my research on the struggling ELL reader.

### ***Establishing My Goals***

I started by providing more direction, more support to the ELL, moving him or her beyond a basic understanding of language and more toward greater language development. At the same time, I set my first goal: to create a participatory environment for achieving linguistic success. At its core, I wanted the ELL to feel relaxed, regardless of ability level or cultural difference, and to engage in class activities, because I believed that only limited progress would ensue if the student continued to endure further reading hardship or misfortune. I recognized, and could appreciate, the scope of this objective. I considered this objective as a prerequisite to successful learning and successful reading comprehension. Therefore, my lessons had to be meaning-based so proficient

language could evolve from interactive and meaningful experiences. To achieve this goal, I would employ a variety of explicit language activities during, and after, all rBook work. Strategies such as read-alouds, choral and/or cloze reading, partner-reading, and questioning would lead the reading process; and cognitive learning exercises like reader-response prompts, graphic organizers, and vocabulary builders would actively engage the ELL, and in turn, allow the student to garner new linguistic means while constructing understanding of second language (L2). First, however, it was essential that I assessed the ELLs' current reading levels so all future reading goals could be based on the initial reading level. This first step was critical if they were to achieve greater mastery of the English language.

***SRI: Establishing Baseline Data***

In order to observe authentic linguistic progress throughout this study, each student first completed the initial, baseline SRI test. (These data, along with data from two subsequent tests administered over the course of this study, would guide and support the course of instruction, with the hope of effectively illustrating linguistic development by the end of the research.) The students' reactions to this test represented an assortment of responses.

Lisa quickly finished the test. She spent much of the test time talking aloud to herself or turning to the students sitting to her left and her right. She finished within ten minutes. (On average, the test took 30 minutes.)

John mirrored Lisa's behavior, but with even more disgust. He plodded over to the computer after two encouraging remarks from both Mrs. Frace and me. Once at the computer, he sat, cross-armed, staring at the computer screen. When John did start, his disgust manifested itself through endless huffs, teeth clicking, and verbal outbursts referencing how awful and stupid the test was. After fifteen minutes, he finished. Returning to his assigned seat, John forcefully slumped into the chair. He looked around the room and made eye contact with me; rolling his eyes, clicking his teeth, putting his head down on the desk.

Vera, on the other hand, obediently followed the test-taking directions and quietly began her work. Even though she seemed agreeable to this task, other students easily distracted her throughout the entire testing process. It took Vera approximately the entire 42-minute class period to finish the assessment. During the entire test session, she looked around the room: glancing back and forth from computer screen, to walls, to ceiling and back to her computer screen; gazing at her fellow classmates who were also engaged in the SRI test; or peered at the others who were reading in small groups or silently reading their independent novels.

Winston conveyed the image of a respectful and quiet student, but was very reluctant to go to the computer and start the test. He needed several words of encouragement from Mrs. Frace and me before he started his work. For the first few minutes, Winston sat in front of the computer screen, test initiated, but looked at his classmates. He was quiet. When he started the test, his eyes remained on the computer screen, hands on the keyboard, until he finished the test. He quietly got up from the computer, returned to his desk, and without talking to anyone, Winston put his head down on the desk.

As soon as Tyler headed for the computer, he was asking me question after question. “Do I have to do that? Why? Are you serious?” Once Tyler settled at the computer, he quietly took the test without any interruptions. When he finished, he called me over and asked, “What else do I need to do?” I let him know he was done for now. Again, he asked another question. “What do we do now?” I noticed one thing for sure—Tyler was certainly inquisitive.

The following chart identifies each student’s preliminary test scores with the corresponding reading/grade level and PSSA assigned performance standard.

Table 1: Initial SRI Scores

Student Name	SRI Score	Reading/Grade Level	Corresponding PSSA Performance Standard
Lisa	248	1.6	Below Basic
John	608	3.3	Below Basic
Winston	651	3.7	Basic
Vera	842	5.3	Basic
Tyler	977	7.0	Basic

After reviewing these scores, I speculated that Lisa, John, and Winston's scores did not ring true to the students' actual reading abilities. (Especially since Lisa and John approached the test with such disgust, haste, and irritation.) What I considered true about these poor-performing scores was that all three of these students had the capability to achieve, but felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable with the task-at-hand, and currently lacked the mental dexterity and academic fortitude to overcome this educational challenge.

Winston, on the other hand, appeared to make an earnest effort at the test, but most likely had just gone through the motions to entertain yet another teacher. In spite of Tyler's relentless questioning, and Vera's drifting eyes, their test results seemed, at first glance, the most accurate compared to any of the other students. Considering these two students made a greater overall effort on the test, I believed their work gave legitimacy to their test results. Nevertheless, I continued to be anxious for all five students. I believed, in time, they would find

comfort within our classroom. On the other hand, I knew that I would need to do more than just follow Scholastic's routines and rotations if these ELLs were to thrive in these unfamiliar surroundings.

### **With the Class Up and Running**

Over the next two weeks, the students read three pieces related to the theme of survival. The students first viewed the workshop's video clip before venturing onto small group discussion, computer time, and independent reading rotations. As the video played, Tyler busied himself looking around the room. He looked from classmate to classmate throughout the entire video and continued to look around during class directions, explanation of assignments, and the introduction of the day's rotation activities. It seemed as though Tyler was looking for some sort of reaction from the other students before he started his work.

I prompted the students to move to their assigned rotation, and Tyler asked a question, mumbling under his breath. "What do we need to do?" (At this point in the school year, I interpreted Tyler's unrelenting stream of questions as a need for clarification and not as complaining.) When Tyler did settle into his reading rotation, he put his book on his lap, turned his body away from the desk, and sat with a clenched hand to his cheek and his elbow on his leg. Occasionally he would turn his head and look around the room at the other students. Satisfied that

enough people were working, Tyler would return to his book. Though he looked sleepy, his eyes were moving along the pages.

Winston was also reading his independent book. He was very quiet and almost seemed withdrawn. He scowled at me when I circulated around the room and stopped by his side. He put the book down, announced he was done, and put his head on the desktop. Just as quick as I reminded Winston to try and read a bit more, he announced, “I know. I know. I’m reading. But why do we have to read?” Before I could answer, his eyes returned to the text. As soon as I turned my back and walked away from Winston, I noticed he had returned the book to the desk. When he noticed I saw the closed book, he shrugged his shoulders, and respectfully opened it again. Even though I was not certain he had opened the book to the appropriate page, I was happy he was willing to comply with the class routines and give the book another try.

John, too, seemed very reluctant and chose not to work with the others in the small group. Instead, he clicked his teeth, rolled his eyes, and put his head down on his desk. I repeated my directions. Students began answering the comprehension questions, but John’s eyes lingered on the page. He did not move. I asked him if he wanted help. Instantly he blinked, the blank stare broken, and he announced, “Alright, alright. I’ll try it.” He finished quickly, writing a short answer to the question, and then slammed his reading workbook shut. Before I could redirect John’s attention, he was getting up from the reading group, his

folder in one hand, to put his work away. I softly reminded him that the rotation was not over and that he needed to rejoin the group. He recovered his materials, returned to the group, dropping his workbook on the desk, clicking his teeth, and slamming back into his seat. The group continued their discussion as John looked from student to student. He seemed attentive to the conversation, and quickly wrote in his workbook. When the last question was answered, and I announced that we were done, John, again, slammed his book shut, not wasting any time to jump up from his seat. He was *free* from this *oppressive* situation. Finally, he could return to his seat, put his head down, and be his normal self—an indifferent adolescent.

Another point noted during this observation period was the groups' continued lack of grace and style as they moved from station to station. Too many students wasted time between the rotations. I realized, however, that this, too, was part of the learning process, and in order for the ELL to find his or her identity in class, he or she would continue to need time to explore the routines and learn the processes. I felt confident the ELLs would triumph within the confines of these routines in due time. Again, I reminded myself that this was just the beginning of a new school year full of new rules and new procedures, and regardless of reading ability, scholarly potential or cultural individuality, conformity is tough for any teen. For this reason, I sat back and patiently watched

and taught. I worked. I watched. I worked. I watched. Through it all, I tried to understand.

***Becoming Acquainted with the ELL: “I” Stories***

***Lisa***

*I hate it here. The Academy is better. I’d rather talk about Academy stuff than these stories. I don’t like talking to these kids. They don’t know me. I hate to read, and I don’t want to do this work. I dun’ care. This is stupid. Stop looking at me, kid. I’ll just guess at it so I can get it done and not have the teacher bother me. She still asks me questions. I don’t have the answers. I tell her again; I don’t like to read. Leave me alone. I don’t want to talk to you. I’ll talk when I want to talk. I like the Academy better. Right, John?*

***John***

*I dunno. Tttchhhh! I don’t like it. I think this class is lame! It don’t make no sense to me. I’m not listening to you. Okay. Okay. Tttchhhh! I’ll do it. Okay. Okay. I’ll sit here, but I’m not going to work. Okay. Okay. Tttchhhh! I’ll do it. I’ll do it. Why do I have to do that? I don’t like to write or read. Here, take my paper if you want it. I liked it at the Academy, too. I know. I’m listening. I don’t want to do that. I’m not sure if I can do this. Tttchhhh! I’m confused. What am I*

*supposed to be doing? Ttchhhh! Okay. Okay. I hear you, but I'm putting my head down. I'm done listening for today.*

### **Vera**

*I'd rather sit here and watch everyone. I wonder what everyone is thinking. I'll watch. I'm not sure what to do, like everyone else seems to know. Maybe I'll ask. Maybe I won't. I think I'll just sit and watch for a bit longer. Maybe I'll ask tomorrow. I'm sure someone in my group knows the answer. I wonder what they think? I'll ask tomorrow. I like it when small group time is over and I can talk to my friend. I have the same name as him. I'll call him my brother and tell the teachers that we have something in common. I talk, but it's soft and no one can hear me. I repeat myself, but they don't understand me. They ask me again. I'll be quiet instead.*

### **The Daily Routine**

#### **John's Explanation**

*We sit down. Mrs. Frace or Mrs. Hughes tell us what we gonna do in class. Then we go into our rotation. When we done with our rotation we have about three to five minutes to clean or have free time.*

***Winston's Explanation***

*We do different rotations. We do computers, small group, and independent reading. We do so many different activities.*

***A Native English Speaker's Explanation***

*I walk into the Read 180 classroom and go to my seat, and wait for the bell to ring. Then I get my rBook and composition book. Then I wait for instructions. Sometimes we will watch a video or do a warm-up in the composition book. Or maybe we will get into groups right away like computers for 20 minutes doing Read 180, or small group, or independent reading. When I'm at computers, I put the headphones on and read; then go to "Word Zone" where I have to click on the words as fast as I can. The "Spelling Zone" is my favorite. I usually work ahead in the rBook because I'm impatient waiting for others to finish. In independent reading group, we will get a worksheet or a reading activity. And that's Read 180. The class is fun. It's easy because of the teachers, and the students are okay and cool.*

*Starting with the Warm-Up*

*A Muted Perspective*

*No voice.*

*No likes or dislikes,*

*just attentive eyes.*

*Glancing,*

*searching,*

*following the crowd.*

*-- Susan Hughes*

This poem grew from my desire to give a genuine voice to the ELL. I wanted to grant you, the reader, the opportunity to see and appreciate what I saw, as I worked, and watched John, Lisa, Vera, Winston, and Tyler. What ultimately emerged for me was a deeper sense of empathy for these struggling, reluctant students. The empathy did not simply grow, because I took notes on the students' actions and reactions to class work, and then scribbled some ideas onto paper. Instead, it grew out of concern for the student. Watching all five ELLs struggle, as they coexisted with competent English-speakers, reinforced my instructional goal: to provide the English language learner with engaging, purposeful and rewarding lessons so that he or she could make linguistic and academic gains, equal to his or her English-speaking counterparts.

*Mid-September: Lost in the Crowd*—Mrs. Frace started class with a journal writing prompt: she encouraged students to consider what might be their life motto similar to the life motto, “Nothing Stops A Bullet Like A Job,” found within today’s reading on gang violence and survival. Vera immediately put her pencil to her lips, thinking, she turned to a classmate and asked, “What do you think?” The classmate responded by saying, “I’m not sure.” Vera, seemingly satisfied with this answer, turned to her composition book to begin writing. Her posture was erect and almost energetic as her head bobbed back and forth, as she wrote. A smile grew on her face as she steadily worked. “Time is up,” Mrs. Frace announced. Followed by, “Can I get a volunteer or two to share their writing ideas?” Vera’s eyes nervously darted around the room. Within a few seconds, her posture changed and she slouched into her seat, looking towards her lap. Several students shared their ideas. Vera listened attentively but with a lowered head. As the fourth volunteer recited her answer, Vera began to raise her head. She nervously looked around the room, slowly lifted her hand, as a smile reappeared upon her face, as if timidly professing, *I know an idea; you can call on me*. Mrs. Frace did not notice Vera’s raised hand. This ended the activity. Vera merely looked down at her composition book.

This was a painful experience—for Vera and me. I just wanted to walk up to her, give her a hug and tell her that it was going to be all right; that there would be many more opportunities for her to share her ideas with the class. I wanted to

shout, *Don't give up, Vera! Your ideas are worthwhile and we want to hear them! Let us hear your voice!*

***Mid-October: Still Lost***—Mrs. Frace started class with a vocabulary matching game. Students received an index card: on one side was a vocabulary word; on the other side was another vocabulary word's definition. One student stood as the rest of the class sat looking at their cards. The first student read his or her definition as the seated students tried to match up the appropriate vocabulary word. During the directions, Vera made eye contact with Mrs. Frace; her head turned to teacher with eyes following the teacher as she moved about the room. During the game, Vera made eye contact with her classmates: head turning to the students as they read their definitions. As Vera heard her vocabulary word's definition, she raised her hand. Mrs. Frace directed Vera to stand and read aloud to the class her matching vocabulary word. "What did she say?" I heard several classmates ask as they turned to one another having difficulty hearing, and understanding, her voice and pronunciation. Mrs. Frace stood next to Vera to check her index card before reciting the vocabulary word to the class. Vera crinkled her face as she returned to her seat. The crinkle turned into a frown. Vera looked down towards her lap, shuffled through her notebook, possibly looking for some answers or some help. The activity continued but without further participation from Vera: no eye contact, no looking around the room, she

just looked at her lap. “Okay,” shouted Mrs. Frace. “Thank you everyone for sharing your definition or vocabulary word. Let’s move on to the rotations.”

Warm-up was over, and once again, Vera was less than successful. Even though a faint smile reappeared on Vera’s face, I could almost feel her disappointment and sadness. Again, I wanted to shout, *It’ll be all right. I’ll make sure you get another chance to show how smart you are!* Later in the day, when Mrs. Frace and I had prep, we reflected on the day’s lesson. We discussed its strengths and weaknesses. We each expressed our concerns, our oversights with the lesson, and to both of our surprise, we each stated some slightly different weaknesses with this activity within this particular lesson. Mrs. Frace believed the problem with the activity was that it did not keep enough students’ attention because there were too few vocabulary words and not enough students. I, on the other hand, felt that, while we had taken a lot of time to prepare our lessons, we had not taken enough time to prepare a visually supportive room for the ELL.

Since I was able to sit back and observe the activity, I felt there was enough participation from the overall class. Students were attentive to each other as they tried to match the correct vocabulary word on their index card to another student’s card. What I found to be most disheartening about the activity’s results was that all three ELLs disengaged during the activity. They were constantly looking around the room for support, and it was not there. We immediately decided to make a few adjustments to both the classroom and our lesson delivery

before the next day. Mrs. Frace hung brightly colored vocabulary words on the back whiteboard that spans the entire width of the classroom. We were sure the students would take notice of it everyday, as they worked at the computers or just see it as they looked around the room. I further suggested we have the students work with a partner whenever we do a warm-up activity. The verbal exchange would aid in preparing word pronunciation and verbal delivery, along with creating a more relaxed and favorable learning experience for the ELL. Though we were satisfied with these modifications, we were also anxious to witness new improved results.

### **Working in Small Group**

*September/Mid-October:* This twenty-minute rotation involved teacher-directed instruction where Mrs. Frace or I modeled fluent reading, utilizing activities such as Oral Cloze, Shared Reading, Choral Reading, or Popcorn. As students read aloud passages, students utilized one prominent reading strategy—highlighting—and marked important ideas, names, words, phrases, and targeted vocabulary words. Periodically, students would stop and discuss numerous real-world, issues-based reading comprehension questions or reader reaction prompts to enhance critical thinking skills. Open-ended questions also appeared throughout the text to increase the reluctant reader's reading confidence as he or she participated in small group discourse.

Our work together had provided me with several interesting observations. First, the ELLs' eyes busily tracked the words as I, or an English-speaking student, read the passage aloud. Secondly, the ELLs repeated their classmates' responses, but offered limited original information. Lastly, when asked if they knew where we were in the text, the ELLs accurately pointed to the correct spot in the reading workbook. All three of these observations supported the social constructivists belief "that interpersonal interaction leads to language and cognitive development and that all learning is socially constructed" and Noam Chomsky's perception "that the appropriate role of the educator shifts from purveyor of all knowledge to enabler or facilitator of meaning construction" (Herrera & Murry, 2005, pp.181-183). The following poem and pastiche is my interpretation of the English language learner as he or she worked with me in small group.

### **A Poem and Pastiche: The Reluctant Reader**

Words appear upon a page.

I fumble through my reading workbook. I know Mrs. Hughes wants me to read what's on the page in front of me. She wants me to highlight "important words, interesting phrases." I can see what she's pointing to, but I just can't seem to make it all stick. She repeats many of the words and asks all of us to repeat them. Mrs. Hughes calls my

name again. Do I see what everyone sees as she reads the story? I'm following along. I just can't find the words fast enough like everyone else.

Words like *survival, affliction, addiction*. I see the targeted vocabulary in today's reading. I really do. I'm looking straight at the reading book. I think I've heard that word before. Yes, Mrs. Hughes, I'll make sure that I rate the word from 1 to 4 according to how well I know it. Have I heard that word before? Do I use this word? Do I know it? I circle a lot of 1s or 2s. I don't know the words. They are all too fancy; they're "academic vocabulary" according to Mrs. Hughes. I'm just a simple student just trying to make my way through my freshman year without too much bother; too much disappointment; too much commotion. I need to survive. I need to know what to say. I guess I need to know what these words say.

Words that appear silent to the reader, Mrs. Hughes keeps reading and asking others to read along. They're going fast, so many of these words don't say anything to me. Maybe I'll nod. Mrs. Hughes seems to like that. Maybe she thinks I know the words if I nod. I don't really know what's going on, but I like it when Mrs. Hughes smiles. She probably thinks I'm smart too. Oops! She asks me to read, to share, to tell the rest what I think it means. I'm not smart! I made a mistake. Mrs. Hughes nods and smiles.

needing description to form ideas. I need more time, and I think Mrs.

Hughes knows it. Nothing is really making a lot of sense. I hear the words, I hear everyone talking, but I'm still not sure what it is they are saying. I can't tell you, Mrs. Hughes what I'm thinking yet. She smiles and nods. I'm just thinking that I need more time. Please ask someone else. I'm not ready yet. Mrs. Hughes must be able to read minds; she asks someone else.

Words shared. Words discussed.

Mrs. Hughes keeps reading, but she doesn't stop there. She keeps asking for our opinions, our feelings, our thoughts. I'm not ready. I'll sit and listen. I'll try to follow. A student shares, but it's not me. I need more time. Mrs. Hughes smiles and nods as the students share their ideas. What did he say? What does she think that means? I'll sit and listen as you talk to one another, but I can't promise I know what it all means. Everyone seems to be saying a lot about these words. Why do people talk so much about words? Do they know what the words say? Someone raises her hand. Not me. I don't have anything to say. Not yet; not this time. I'll sit and listen to all of the words.

Words...words...words...

So many fall upon the pages: page after page, word after word, and Mrs. Hughes just sits here with us reading all of them. Some words are big, but they don't really mean anything big at all. The small ones fill up my head, and run on and on and on along the page. Mrs. Hughes asks if we know what this word means. My head

hurts. Someone answers while Mrs. Hughes smiles and nods. Someone always seems to know the words. It's not me; not yet. There are just so many to follow; my head hurts. Talk, talk, talk. Words, words, words. I still don't know what they say.

Needing more time to understand,

What was that? I think I know that word, Mrs. Hughes. Yes! I do! Ask me, Mrs. Hughes! I can answer now. What? The story's done? There are no more words?

As the words fall upon a reader's ear.

I get it now! I can see the picture you all say you see. I can hear the voices you say you hear. Mrs. Hughes? You can call on me now. I know the words. Okay, Mrs. Hughes, I'll put my book away and move to the next rotation.

### **Computer Time**

*September/Mid-October:* As the ELL participated at this rotation, I noticed one of two responses: pure disdain or unemotional regard. For those who disliked the software, they usually refused to go to the computer, and once seated, they argued about the validity of the program. Too often, they expressed verbal criticisms combined with deliberate displays of crossed or flailing arms, shrugged shoulders, and/or abrupt huffs and elbows (cupping chins) smacking against tabletops. Sadly, this type of indifference continued to emerge as Tyler worked. On this particular day, I watched him. After about three minutes of sitting and

staring at the computer, Tyler turned to a classmate, and me, and announced, “I don’t want to read today.” His classmate quickly took the headphones that were dangling from Tyler’s fingertips and offered to read aloud to him the selected reading passage. Tyler hastily turned to me, smiled, and announced that he would read the passage himself: he claimed he didn’t need any help. Immediately, he placed his headphones onto his ears, sighed, and turned to me. I considered this Tyler’s way of seeking words of encouragement. I softly said, “Go ahead. You can do it.” Tyler faced the computer, eagerly tapped the keyboard, and began reading aloud.

As Tyler charged ahead, reading the four pages of text on the computer screen, he appeared to finish as quickly as he began. Filled with pride, he pushed the “stop” key and watched the screen move to the comprehension question section. As if with a new sense of energy, and astonishment, Tyler jerked his head back, looked at me and asked, “How did that work?” I coolly shrugged my shoulders and said, “Magic.” Tyler also shrugged his shoulders, turned back to face the computer and continued working on the comprehension questions. I lingered a bit longer. After Tyler successfully answered three more questions, I left his side. As I helped other students in the class, I occasionally glanced back at Tyler to see if he was still working. He was. When I announced the end of the rotation, I noticed Tyler was up, away from the computer, talking to another student.

### **It's All Up to You: Independent Reading**

*Mid-October:* Winston and Tyler both read their novels with less than energetic stance. Winston puts his head on the desk, the book close to his eyes as he read. Tyler, on the other hand, read with the book in his lap, his body turned away from his desk, and sat with clenched hand to his cheek and his elbow on his leg. John sat with his head down, his book positioned in his lap. Today as the group settled into its reading group formation, something seemed odd. At first, I couldn't put my finger on it, but then it hit me. I believe John was really reading. Originally, I thought he was talking to his neighbor, but after paying close attention to him, I realized the reason his lips were moving was that he was mouthing the words. I considered this his first step toward reading ownership. In the weeks ahead, I witnessed greater strides as John shared ideas in whole group warm up, chatted in small group, and stopped "sucking his teeth."

Being an eyewitness to such progress made me eager for more. Within the next two weeks, the other students followed John's footsteps. It was as if John had spread the word to his English language companions telling them that it was okay to read; it was worth a try. One of my greatest moments occurred late in October, when Lisa arrived to class announcing she needed to "get caught up" on her independent reading. Currently, she was reading Speak. The novel told the tale of Melinda Sordino, a freshman at Merryweather High School, who spends

her freshman year in silence. Somehow, a misunderstanding from the summer has made her transition to high school quite complicated.

Eager to read, Lisa has spent several of her 9<sup>th</sup> period study halls in class with me. On several occasions, Lisa has looked up from her reading, called my name, held up the book and asked, “Mrs. Hughes. See how much I’m getting done?” She’s so excited to learn the “secret” a peer has told her about, that fifty-five minutes into one of our classes, one of Lisa’s group members quizzically shouted, “Oh, you’re here! I didn’t even know you were sitting in the group. You’re so quiet. Are you alright?” Lisa shrugged her shoulders, flipped her hand to the student (as if to brush her away) and continued reading. Three days later, Lisa asked me, “When is it told in the book? The middle or the end?” I told her it was after the middle, but closer to the end. I then followed with, “Keep reading; you’ll figure it out.” Lisa smiled, “I will,” she quickly said, returning to her newfound treasure. What another victory!

### **Let’s Talk**

#### ***A Dramatization—Student Interviews***

I am humbled by these outcomes and am forced to consider an explanation. I knew it would be foolish to think these exceptional strides occurred simply by chance. I looked at my field log. I couldn’t seem to find the answer. My next step included asking the student.

**Mrs. Hughes:** What do we do in class that helps you with reading?

**Lisa:** I like small group. I can hear what's going on in the stories.

**Vera:** You help me. You let me understand the meanings.

**John:** I don't know. I listen now. I didn't before.

**Mrs. Hughes:** Well, why is that different now? Why do you like to listen now?

**John:** (shrugs his shoulders) I dunno. I think it's letting us talk. I hear the story.

It's okay then.

**Mrs. Hughes:** (responding to John) So having time to talk about the characters and everything else in the book helps you understand it better?

**John:** (shrugs shoulders again) I guess. I also like the highlighting. The words stick.

**Vera:** It's the vocab words. They get me mixed up. None of the story make good sense then.

**Mrs. Hughes:** (prompting more from Vera) What do you mean by the vocab words?

**Vera:** If I don't know them the story don't make any sense. The students help me learn the words.

**Mrs. Hughes:** (directed at all ELLs) What else has helped you?

**Tyler:** Reading the stories out loud. I can see the story. That helps.

**Mrs. Hughes:** (to Tyler) Hearing the words helps you understand the story?

**Tyler:** Ahuh. When I listen, I don't have to read all the words. They go by fast when we read. It's better to hear them.

**Winston:** The students help me. When we work, they help me understand.

**Mrs. Hughes:** (to Winston) What helps you understand the best?

**Winston:** Talking it through and highlighting the book. Also you both (referring to the teachers).

**Vera:** Everyone. They let me talk. It helps me a lot.

I was thrilled with their responses. Every comment reinforced what I set out to do—provide the ELL with an equal opportunity to share his or her voice, and learn as they go along. Not being completely satisfied that all our work was done, I quickly returned to my field notes and reviewed more observational data. I understood what the students meant, and I could see why they were “getting it.” In taking a great deal of time to work together—literally in small groups, 84-minutes a day—and in taking the time to discuss what we had read, they had learned, they had changed, and change was good.

Table 2. SRI Growth—Second Reading Assessment

Student Name	SRI Score: 9/02/08	Rdg/ Grade Level	Corresponding PSSA Performance Standard	SRI Score: 11/18/08	Rdg/ Grade Level	Corresponding PSSA Performance Standard	Gain (Pts)
Lisa	248	1.6	Below Basic	419	2.3	Below Basic	171
John	608	3.3	Below Basic	693	4.0	Basic	85
Winston	651	3.7	Basic	707	4.1	Basic	56
Vera	842	5.3	Basic	912	6.2	Basic	70
Tyler	977	7.0	Basic	1224	11.5	Advanced	247

*If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we are not really living.*

– Gail Sheehy

A quick look at the chart shows growth. Each student, regardless of the total points gained, had made improvement with reading comprehension—most progressing at least one grade-level, while Tyler increased four grade-levels (reaching the highest level of reading performance based on PSSA standards). I am quite confident to credit these increases to improved attitude and strengthened work ethic. I still had huge concerns, however, with Winston, since he had produced only marginal results. He had missed a lot of school over the past month—many of these absences being classified as unexcused—and he now vocalized a complete aversion with the program: “This is getting boring. It’s the same thing everyday. Read, talk, and write. When are we going to do something different?” In comparison, the other ELLs have voiced positive opinions. Tyler

for one, almost on a daily basis, has entered class, stating, “I’m ready to learn. Teach me.” (Then he would laugh, as he collected his reading materials, and before he sat in his seat.) Many times John has asked, “What are we doing today?” Lisa would roam the class, but would eventually settle in for independent reading group, asking students, “Who wants to be my reading buddy?” Lastly, Vera showed outstanding improvements with her vocalization and reading comprehension when she shared in independent reading group: “Brent feel he can’t find who he really is. And he can’t reach that goal. Just like you can’t reach stars.”

### **The Times They Are A Changin’**

At the end of this study, the classroom embraced a new look, reminiscent of this Bob Dylan song title. Like Dylan, who sought social change for the American minority, I, too, wanted social change for my English language learners. As we worked together within the English-speaking Read 180 classroom, I did my utmost providing these students with the best educational experience. An experience that, in the end, generated social and linguistic acceptance for the ELL—just like Dylan had hoped to achieve for minorities through his songs. This experience truly demonstrated the qualities of a learning community rich in educational opportunities.

This group of once reluctant, voiceless ELLs now thrived in our text-rich, participatory environment. They arrived to class eager to learn: they settled into their assigned seats just as quickly as they retrieved their reading materials; they solicited help from their classmates whenever confused about a reading; they shared their ideas in whole-group and small-group discussions along with eagerly disputing various classmates' answers. It appeared to me that my ELLs were making progress with their language learning, gaining confidence in their voice, and developing greater language competence as they reacted to, and responded to, environmental stimuli: their classmates, teachers, computers, and textbooks.

There was one exception—regrettably, Winston remained unenthusiastic with the entire reading process, underscored by his frequent class absences, his inattentive stance during reading groups, and his incessant, bold declarations that he's "sick of this work." On a more progressive note, Tyler remained optimistic day after day as he arrived to class announcing that he "loves the class" and was ready to do his "best work ever." Followed by John who regularly publicized, "Oh, that's easy." Likewise, Lisa frequently has asked me, "Ya know what those lines tell me...?" While Vera's linguistic and social evolution involved telling her fellow classmates that "I don't care that I won't leave"—referring to leaving the Read 180 classroom—because, "See, I am smart."

## METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Throughout the entire data collection process, I applied multiple methods of data analysis and assessment, for the purpose of enhanced student learning and teacher involvement. Following a strong methodological process, in order to gain evidence-based data, was most important to my study. The two leading approaches involved analytic and reflective memos. According to Ely, et al. (1997), analytic:

...interpretation means drawing meanings from analyzed data and attempting too see these in some larger context. Interpretations arise when patterns, themes, and issues are discerned in the data and when these findings are seen in relation to one another and against larger theoretical perspectives. (p. 160)

The analytic memo developed through purposeful, student-active assessments that permitted me to examine student progress using various modes and levels of student performance. The analytic memo included figurative language analysis. Developing this memo allowed me to examine both literal and implied meanings of figurative language used throughout classroom conversation among students and teachers. Similarly, as suggested by Ely, et al., the reflective memo—the piece that provides focus and illustration of “how the process of observing, writing, and analyzing [are] intertwined”—became a subsequent means of

analysis as it rendered key information for analysis of qualitative and quantifiable reading behaviors (p. 178).

### **Teacher Observation**

The most dominant element of analysis included teacher observation during classroom dialogue in small group, partner share, or student-teacher questioning and/or literary conversations. Anecdotal notes were then collected using either traditional note-taking or by typing into Word documents on my computer. Having the ability to watch the ELL engage in his or her class work provided me with a summary of the learner's progress. During academic conversations, I noted student characteristics through verbal and non-verbal engagement, then returned to my notes, days or at least a week later, to reflect upon my insight of student attitude, enthusiasm, and overall effort. Developing class work (including reading workbook, computerized independent instruction, and independent or small group novel reading, along with student-generated formal and informal writing, and computerized standard-based assessment such as Scholastic's (SRI)) also provided key information for this study. All observational notes and evaluative findings were kept in a field log.

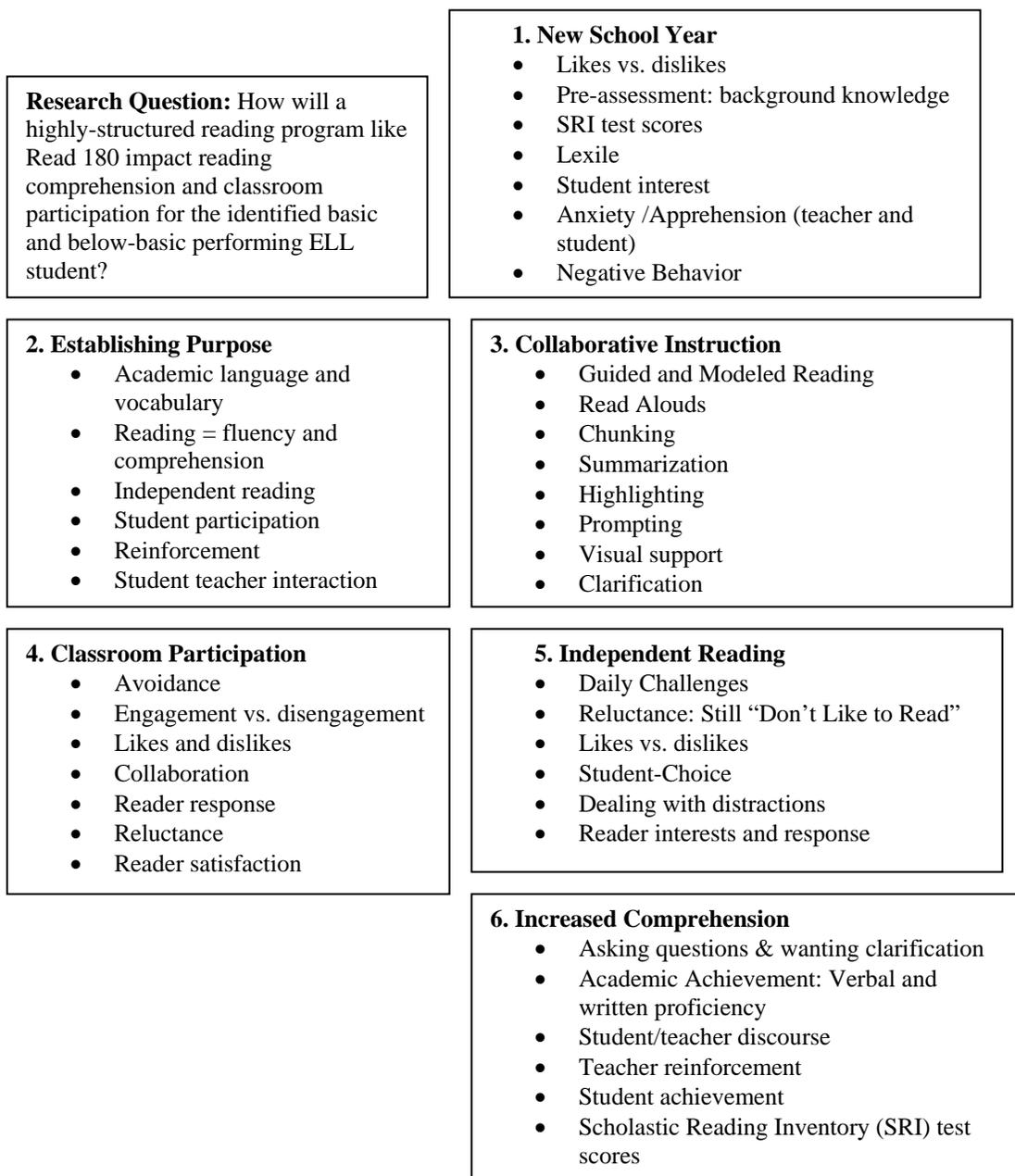
### **Field Log**

This process of noting the ELLs' understanding of content developed into a field log where all documents, notations, and reflective pieces within this binder helped me to better understand my students' learning habits. Besides housing an accumulation of information, this system allowed me to gain greater insight into their cognitive capacities, as I periodically returned to my field log to reflect on the data. My intentions for analysis were grounded in what Ely, et al. (1997) describe as using interpretations of data to create meaning within the whole of the circumstances. Reflecting upon the design, the implementation, and the delivery of instruction enhanced my awareness of recursive student actions, language, and concerns.

### **Codes, Bins, and Themes Analysis**

Since qualitative research contains massive amounts of subjective data, it became imperative for me to reduce and organize this detail-rich material. All reflective notations were then shaped through the process of coding based on what Ely, et al. (2001) describe as "assigning labels to the data, based on our concepts. Essentially, what we are doing is condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units" (p. 165). My systematic approach to coding of data developed as either single words or phrases, illustrating the most significant ideas within the study. As I carefully inspected my field log, searching for patterns, themes, and

challenges, I indexed recurring codes, placing similar codes into thematic bins. Eventually, theme statements developed from the similarities gathered within these thematic bins.



*Figure 1. Codes and Bins*

<b>Theme Statements</b>	
1.	Pre-assessment of reading interests and reading aptitude establishes purposeful and systematic instruction minimizing both student and teacher anxiety while reducing negative student behavior.
2.	As strong reading routines were established, by including viable academic language and fundamental vocabulary through real-world application, along with active teacher/student interaction, the more targeted reading instruction enhanced positive student participation and reading independence.
3.	Utilizing visual support and modifications, such as chunking, highlighting the text, summarizing, and prompting, allows for greater teaching success with guided and modeled reading, thereby, multiplying students' opportunities for reading fluency and comprehension.
4.	In order for students to effectively engage in and respond to shared and independent reading, the teacher must increase reader satisfaction by creating a more collaboratively-based classroom environment.
5.	Teacher-directed instruction reduces reading reluctance, limits distractions, and minimizes daily challenges promoting effective reader response while increasing student-choice with reading.
6.	The teacher was able to provide continual reinforcement, so the student could sense gains in reading achievement, expand his or her inquiry and need for clarification that ultimately leads to healthier verbal and written competence.

*Figure 2.* Theme Statements

### **Analysis of Educational Theory**

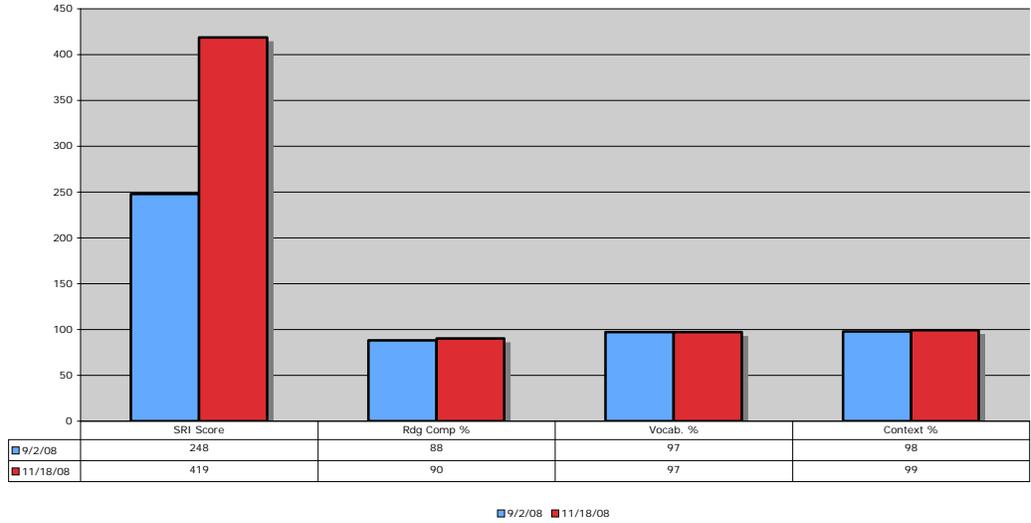
This keen examination of student performance also involved addressing the connection between theory and my study. Throughout this form of analysis, I explored the field of bilingual education studying authors like Freeman and Freeman (2004), Herrera and Murry (2005), and VanPatten (2003), alongside the educational theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978). Reviewing the field log also granted me additional opportunities to examine my students' progress in relation to these authors' expertise, and in turn, helped me interpret my findings on student learning.

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Lastly, I used quantitative data analysis methods to determine the gains, if any, in my ELLs' reading, vocabulary, and context passage comprehension. It should be noted that while students' reading, vocabulary, and context passage comprehension may not appear to have shown significant growth, this can be due to the fact that as students' reading ability increased, so, too, did the reading material's level of difficulty increase. The true measure of the Read 180 program's success, and reiterated by my research, are the scores comparing August baseline and the end of the research period's test results.

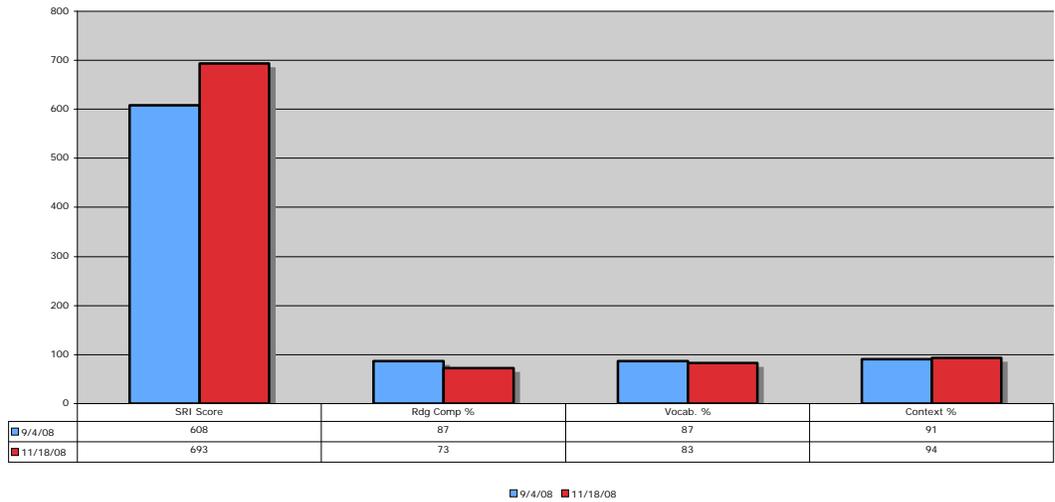
To highlight the students' overall progress within the first ten weeks of observation, I arranged the data in chart format using four categories arranged by test date: SRI scores (initial August baseline testing and end research period testing), reading comprehension, vocabulary comprehension and context passage comprehension. The data illustrated each individual student's reading results (at the onset of the study compared to the end of the study) utilizing the Read 180 Topic Software. These results confirmed reading success. The increase in students' reading proficiency (noted by SRI gains) compared against the student's overall, preservation of, or increase with, comprehension scores has demonstrated substantial reading progress. While the students were reading at a higher grade-level, they were also achieving well-matched comprehension scores based on the more difficult reading material.

**Lisa's Progress**



*Figure 3. Lisa's Progress*

**John's Progress**



*Figure 4. John's Progress*

Vera's Progress

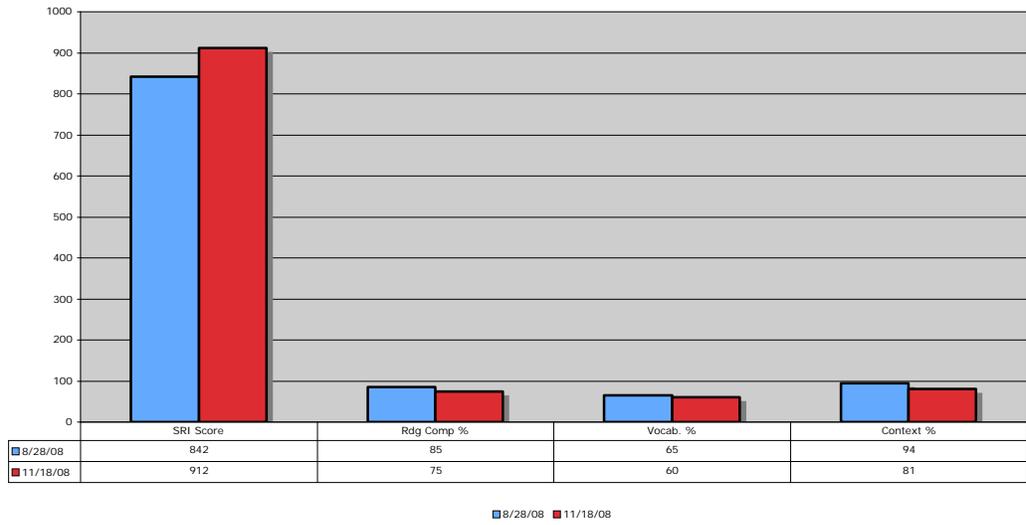


Figure 5. Vera's Progress

Winston's Progress

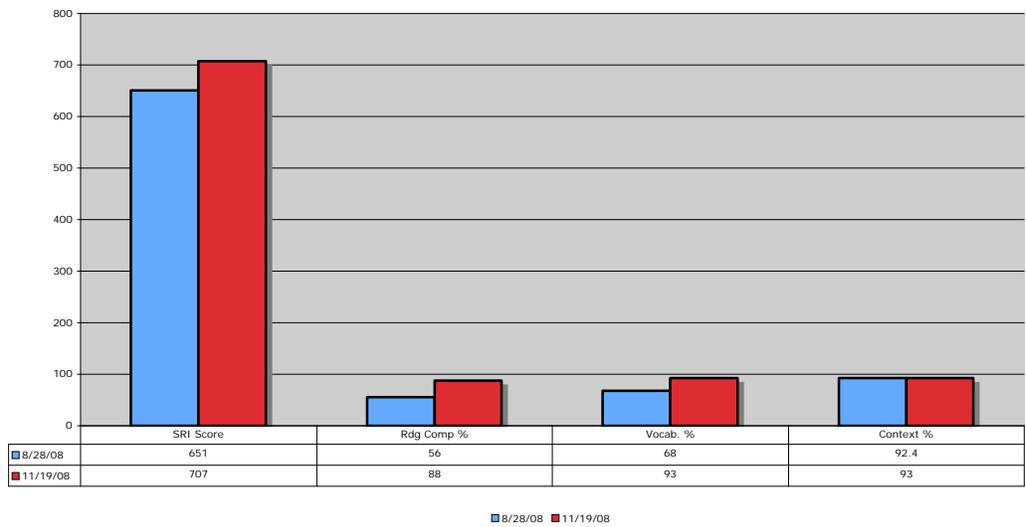
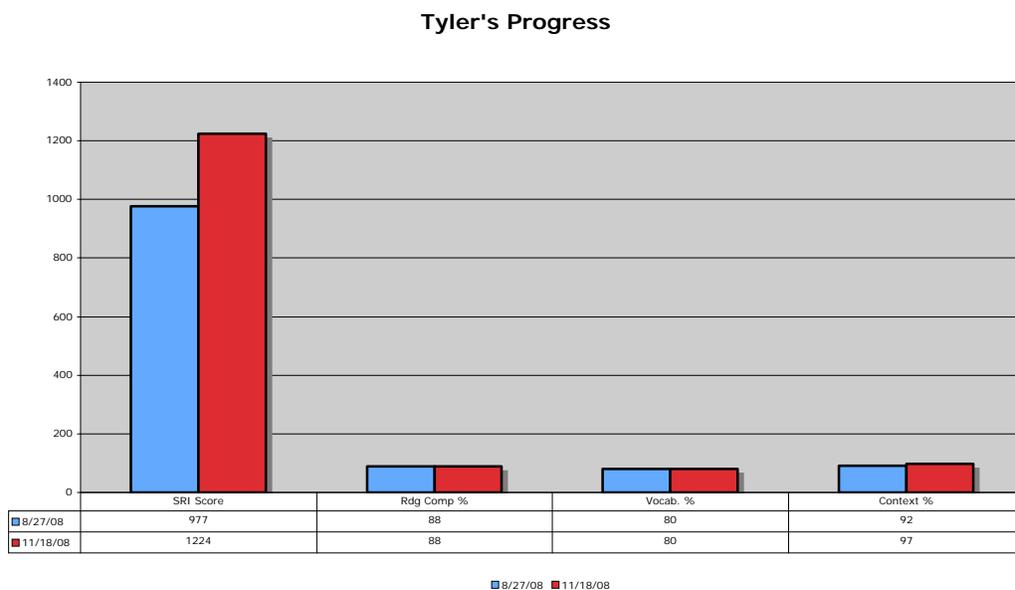


Figure 6. Winston's Progress



*Figure 7. Tyler's Progress*

**Definitions:**

SRI Score is the student's Lexile score in relation to the student's current year-end grade-level proficiency range.

Rdg. Comp % is the average reading comprehension score based on the Read 180 Topic Software segment.

Vocab. % is the average vocabulary comprehension score based on the Read 180 Topic Software segment.

Context % is the average context passage comprehension score based on the Read 180 Topic Software segment.

## FINDINGS

The most notable theme revealed through my research was that *pre-assessment of reading interests and reading aptitude establishes purposeful and systematic instruction thus minimizing both student and teacher anxiety while reducing negative student behavior*. What I needed to do from the very onset of this new school year, and this study, was to abide by two very important methods of instruction: commit to acquainting myself with all my students—especially the

ELLs—to better understand their reading interests and skill level, and not make assumptions about the English language learners’ interest or reading competence. So, within the first week of school, I administered a reader survey to learn about my ELLs’ reading likes and dislikes. Next, I knew I had to learn more about their reading abilities if I was to provide the best direction for enhanced reading.

My students took the baseline Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) test within the second week of school to assess their current reading levels and facilitate better lesson delivery. As Herrera and Murry (2005) explained, it is crucial that a teacher recognizes and communicates interest in her students’ learning aptitude as class work progresses to maximize student engagement toward academic success. With these two Read 180 evaluative approaches completed, I ensured that each individual ELL worked from a solid educational foundation based on personal needs, in addition to finding greater comfort within an unfamiliar reading environment.

Through the SRI and reading survey, ample, individualized instruction ensued from the start of the school year. In addition, expectations were immediately set as I encouraged and supported active participation from every ELL in all four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based on the earlier SRI testing, greater attention was paid to each student’s language and cognitive abilities. This evaluation of skills helped ensure the student’s needs were being met as well as the regular education reader in our

English-speaking classroom. As Dong (2000) stated, “teachers need to be aware of students’ English proficiency levels and cultural and education backgrounds so they can tailor their instruction to specific language needs” (p. 15).

It was very important to me to provide a learning environment in which my ELLs felt they were a part of, in which they could excel, and in which they had something to offer. By providing the ELL with individualized support and guidance, reading interest began to grow with an earnest effort because the student found comfort and success with his or her work. As noted by Freeman and Freeman (2004), Vygotskian theory states that if a child is to successfully acquire a new language, and make the greatest language advancements, then instruction must occur within the child’s *zone of proximal development* (ZPD).

With Read 180’s utilization of automatic and regular, ongoing, formal and informal assessment this allowed me to comfortably and naturally monitor students’ progress, while making any necessary adjustments to the pace of the reading program for a more suitable learning situation. As a result, these assessments created an organized and interrelated framework from which reading could be learned part to whole. As suggested by Freeman and Freeman, I was aware of each child’s ZPD, progressing with instruction from a supportive and accommodating approach, making adjustments to ensuing computer-work, along with modifying subsequent class work, based on the initial SRI scores. These contributions, mentioned by Freeman and Freeman, increase the English language

learner's chances of gaining confidence in reading abilities, resulting in the student being mindfully engaged in greater mastery of comprehension and thinking. Established examples can be noted when comparisons are made between the increase of reading difficulty scores (baseline and second test SRI scores) and the maintained or improved reading, vocabulary, and context passage comprehension percentages (Figures 3-7).

When the class was up and running, I noticed a second theme emerge: *As strong reading routines were established, by including viable academic language and fundamental vocabulary through real-world application, along with active teacher/student interaction, the more targeted reading instruction enhanced positive student participation and reading independence.* This was apparent as the ELL engaged in “effective classroom instruction [that] purposely [added] to or [expanded] on existing schemata rather than constructing entirely new banks of associated information” which allowed the English language learner to take on a more active role in classroom participation while developing a strong establishment of genuine academic growth (Herrera & Murry, 2005, p. 193). Since ELLs had more key opportunities to participate in daily instruction, this effectively guided the implementation of specific language acquisition strategies and produced a strong foundation that supported the innate linguistic ability of my ELLs.

Fortunately, the Read 180 program also outfitted each student with rich opportunities for meaningful learning, helping with the many academic and linguist concerns common to the English language learner. The reading strategies implemented into the Read 180 day included scripted vocabulary lessons throughout daily instruction that, again, helped to capitalize on the ELLs' reading success. Each reading workshop opened with five key vocabulary words that the students immediately rated on a scale of 1 to 4: the number 1 indicating the least known to a number 4 illustrating the student's complete understanding and usage of the highlighted vocabulary word. Ten additional vocabulary words appeared throughout each workshop's reading pieces.

As the student read and shared in short, informational articles, he or she would define, discuss, and practice applying new target vocabulary words in various modes of writing from short sentences to lengthier pieces. This vocabulary analysis then extended to the analysis of word cognates, word families, and multiple-meaning words during the "Word Challenge" real-life application section following the short readings in each workshop. The Read 180 program encouraged students to take ownership of their education and allowed them to see word meaning beyond the classroom. Our lessons also included the teacher and/or students bringing in outside materials related to the topic of study that help the ELL to better grasp and apply these new vocabulary words. Quite often, I would support our workshop readings by locating supplemental material

that included a number of the words under study. Following my lead, students would then arrive to class eager to tell me about a vocabulary word they had seen in the newspaper or had heard on the television, or studied in another class. As Freeman and Freeman (2004) state:

Students have no trouble learning the vocabulary, but they need more than vocabulary to compete academically with their peers or do business in a world market. English language learners do not need to be practicing isolated vocabulary that they might eventually use. Instead, they need to be offered authentic opportunities to use vocabulary in meaningful ways (p. 135).

Additionally, each ELL had plenty of opportunities, well beyond the isolation of the workbook vocabulary exercises, to hear academic vocabulary throughout their lessons. Phonemic awareness, decoding, and overall linguistic and reading developed during the incorporation of read-alouds, cloze activities, computerized instruction, and/or listening to reading coaches on the independent novel with audio CDs. No matter the mode, the ELL reader witnessed modeled intonation, pronunciation, sentence fluency and phrasing as he or she developed more confidence in reading comprehension. These activities also provided opportunities for the English language learner to gain linguistic success “especially given the fact that many ELLs will not automatically recognize the

meanings of all the words that they can decode and thus will require rich vocabulary and comprehension instruction” for greater linguistic achievement (Manyak and Bauer, 2008, p. 433). Finally, targeting explicit vocabulary, either through word-to-word textual translation or with the help and guidance of individualized computer instruction, the student better understood, and could apply, the intricacies of the English language as he or she participated in the reading class.

Throughout the study, I took into account the reality that working with the ELL is all about modification and accommodation. As I approached each lesson, I not only considered the importance of a learned skill, but I also considered the attraction of the workplace to capture the reader’s attention. *I utilized visual support and modifications, such as chunking, highlighting the text, summarizing, and prompting, to allow for greater teaching success with guided and modeled reading, thereby, multiplying students’ opportunities for reading fluency and comprehension.*

The reading instruction within the Read 180 classroom also employed a modified text which presented literature in sectioned reading passages and paragraphs as opposed to lengthy overwhelming full-paged text. VanPatten (2003) has suggested that the teacher make suitable modifications within the classroom to help meet the ELL’s learning needs. One method is to chunk information; present material part to whole in order that the student balance prior

knowledge and new material through manageable parts of instruction. The structure of the Read 180 workbook followed this modification with its bold headings and captions, colorful pictures, up-to-date graphics and charts that provided much needed visual support to guide linguistic differentiation. The format of the text, along with adequate questioning, also helped support the ELLs' need for, and use of, strong language skills. As suggested by Klingner and Vaughn's (1999) Collaborative Strategic Reading approach:

...[breaking] down texts into small sections to allow students to discuss meanings, clarify confusion, and apply specific comprehension strategies while reading, [offers] real-time support for the ELLs' developing understanding of the text, and, at the same time, [provides] them with opportunities to participate in rich discussion. (p. 433)

Lastly, I discovered these reading supports helped generate mental organization, encouraged student-to-student conversation, aided in the clarification of ideas, along with promoting the extension of thought processes. This rational, systematic, teacher-led approach to reading best accommodated the ELL's individual needs. These tailored adaptations promoted student engagement in large and small group discourse along with greater independent or reading group reading achievements.

The reading workbook consists of nine chapters/workshops, all of which follow the same design, similar article lengths, similar vocabulary practice, similar pre-writing graphic organizers and writing samples. These similarities provided consistency and agreement necessary for the ELLs' linguistic success. The ELLs experienced this multi-dimensional, highly structured reading approach as they worked with essential elements for strong second language (L2) acquisition and academic success. One very effective component of the program fostered the incorporation of questioning before, during, and after each reading passage.

Besides presenting the English language in a non-threatening, comprehensible manner, ELLs require opportunities to share their old and new knowledge free of ridicule and continuous correction for successful achievement to emerge. *In order for students to effectively engage in, and respond to, shared and independent reading, the teacher must increase reader satisfaction by creating a more collaboratively-based classroom environment.* Activities such as read-alouds, choral and/or cloze reading, small group instruction that elicit immediate response and feedback from reading participants helped to engage the ELL as he or she blended in with the crowd.

Second language acquisition (SLA) research endorses this collaborative approach and notes that for the English language learner to find success, instruction must exist within an active learning classroom. As explained by

Freeman and Freeman (2000), “teachers who follow principles for success encourage students to collaborate as they investigate subjects of interest to them. They find answers to big questions by reading together and talking together” (p. 167). Herrera and Murry (2005) also suggested that when instructional tasks involve all students, learning is perceived as worthwhile, and in the end, the ELL profits from this support, thus amplifying new language understanding.

I found the read-alouds reading strategy was one of the strongest components of the Read 180 instructional model. This approach guided each lesson, aiding the student in building textual success. According to Avalos, et al. (2007), this style of active involvement:

...includes everyone in the group as students simultaneously read and receive support from the teachers and peers. In addition, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are implemented in a social environment by engaging in conversations before and after reading (p. 318).

What I also learned during these collaborative recitations was that many students were becoming much more skilled at transferring new skills. As I worked more and more with the ELLs, asking questions that required new or extended responses, they had greater success with contextual readability, comprehension, connection of background knowledge, and author’s purpose. According to the research of Freeman and Freeman (1998), Law and Eckes (2000), and Herrera and

Murry (2005), classroom talk must include strong language structures in order to develop new language from old knowledge while following a natural, progressive manner so the student can make sense of the nuances of a language.

Another crucial element for my ELLs' reading success was creating opportunities for sustained dialogue and substantive language use in multiple reading settings. Since language acquisition is an action versus reaction process, I provided the ELL with numerous reading modes (partner reading, teacher-modeled, reading coach with the audio CDs and computerized instruction) to aid in the growth of the student's natural expression. These reading forms increased the student's ability to reorganize old information (L1) into new ideas (L2) while also making connections along the way, ultimately propelling the ELL toward greater second language acquisition (SLA). In the end, as these new sub-skills developed, our collaborative, yet ordered routines, made learning much more organized and cohesive, aiding in greater mastery of transferred learning.

This is not to say that the ELL can effortlessly learn English from the systematic employment of various language activities. Certainly though, *teacher-directed instruction reduces reading reluctance, limits distractions, and minimizes daily challenges promoting effective reader response while increasing student-choice with reading.* It also articulates an increased likelihood of linguistic and literary mastery due to motivating and cognitive-based principles. By engaging my students in purposeful and rewarding instruction, I helped increase each

ELL's probability of achieving greater linguistic and academic success. I found that when I took the time to direct and model the lesson material, ranging from classical literature to real-life application, then the student encountered fewer obstacles that encouraged him or her to take greater risks with his or her reading.

Since our daily readings included learning strategies such as modeled reading, think-pair-shares, the incorporation of outlining with graphic organizers, the integration of small and large group discussions along with student-teacher conferences, my ELL readers learned to monitor their own proficiency in L2 fluency. This allowed students to adjust efforts according to their own needs. Eventually, the students started taking responsibility for their own learning because they perceived learning language as comfortable, achievable, and purposeful. These advancements follow Krashen's *affective filter hypothesis* which argues that "second language learners] with a low level of anxiety, high motivation, strong self-confidence, and good self-image are better equipped for classroom performance and second language acquisition" (Herrera & Murry, 2005, p. 18).

It was clear that the ELLs were now more eager to learn and displayed more enjoyment in our reading workshops. However, it was now even more critical for me to help them become adept at proficient language production. Grouping offered a prime opportunity for the student to practice and for the teacher to adjust reading rate, to include questioning methods, and to provide

continued support to help the ELL to grow their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. What I found quite helpful in utilizing this teacher-directed reading approach was that the less proficient reader gained greater access to more excellent reading. The Read 180 program's built-in use of teacher-guided reading, small group instruction, and implementation of scaffolded instruction provided even more support vital for best language practice. By allowing my inexperienced readers to engage in a supportive and guided system while manipulating language, from the known to the unknown, they also had the necessary tools for acquiring enhanced reading dexterity.

This approach is supported, in the research of Avalos, Plasencia, Chaves, and Rascon (2007) who identify the formation of small-group instruction as being one of the most significant aspects of modified reading practice. Reading in small groups helped increase my students' language production and addressed a wide range of reading needs, giving focus and attention to their rate of reading, speaking, listening, and writing comprehension, all of which benefited students' desire for L2 proficiency. In the end, the ELLs were not ignored or left to flounder aimlessly, devoid of reading strategies, but were granted applicable methods which they could use to propel them toward greater reading independence.

Finally, in teaching the Read 180 class from an at-large view of the world, *I, the teacher, was able to provide continual reinforcement, so the student could*

*sense gains in reading achievement, expand his or her inquiry and need for clarification that ultimately lead to healthier verbal and written competence.* Our class readings included a wide range of content-areas. Students were exposed to informational pieces such as surfing, scientific studies on the human brain, the causes and effects of the Black Plague, and money management tips, just to name a few. Other readings focused on literary genres, like poetry and the short story, while additional pieces introduced students to more American culture oriented themes such as war, rap music, teen crime, and real-life applications which included filling out government forms, job applications, and learning how to calculate a budget. With such a rich content, every ELL experienced multiple opportunities for success.

On a daily basis, I included strategies such as modeled reading, think-pair-shares, sentence-starters (for verbal responses), journaling, graphic organizers, and the integration of small group discussion along with student-teacher conferencing. These small group settings allowed me to monitor, assess, and guide the students' language development with listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Law and Eckes (2000), by the teacher taking "a little extra time observing how [students] act and react, and making sure they understand what is expected of them [makes] the difference between success and failure" (p. 76).

The repetitive and predictable nature of the reading program encouraged

the ELLs to freely participate throughout all the lessons since there were specific and exact steps and procedures set in place to help the struggling readers gain greater textual understanding. The program's predictability also helped me monitor the students' reading comprehension by noting what processes were occurring, then moving beyond monitoring to prompting, so the students could become more active with all language domains. Herrmann's research (1988) suggested that direct explanation helps monitor a student's comprehension by modeling the thought process needed to mentally and to intellectually understand what is being read. Readers need this opportunity to develop their craft—reading—during direct teacher-explanation because “as the lesson progresses, the teacher monitors and shapes students' evolving understandings of reasoning processes by asking them to explain how they made sense of the text and, on the basis of what they say, providing additional explanation to help them reason like experts” (p. 24).

Additionally, the Read 180 routine narrowed its reading focus so the ELL could acquire the “big picture,” creating a stronger sense of familiarity with the English language within an unfamiliar literary content. For example, the reading included many universal themes easily understood by any teen regardless of cultural or ethnic background: themes such as perseverance, survival, freedom, death, hatred, friendship, and love. Each semester's four reading workshops are organized by theme, so the ELL had multiple opportunity for reading

comprehension success based on recurring essential key ideas. This explicit comprehension approach also granted the ELLs a rich linguistic reading experience that was comprehensible to them and resulted in the English language learner building stronger associations between prior knowledge and new information. It was through this explicit instruction that the ELL began to view himself or herself as equally valued and rewarded as the native speaker (NS) and better able to express his or her reading prowess and linguistic proficiency throughout every aspect of the reading classroom.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### The Future in Today

*Be like the bird that, passing on her flight awhile on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her, and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings. ~Victor Hugo*

I promptly recognized, when I analyzed the data, that even though the Read 180 had a structured approach, each student still had the freedom to attempt new approaches to reading and learning due to my differentiation to encourage increased comfort level. Although the student may have only taken baby steps along the way, the processes fell into place and the once reluctant, struggling student now worked more actively and worked more comfortably side-by-side with his or her English-speaking classmates. The ELLs now felt more comfortable verbalizing their thoughts, ideas, and reactions, stemming from a faith they had in themselves. This comfort in the classroom translated itself in more participation and increased activity on the actual class work. I continue to hope my ELLs will view their opinions as worthy contributions, regardless of their current reading comprehension level and continue to advance reading levels with even more classroom participation. I also hope these students continue to realize that I have, and will continue to have, faith in their abilities.

What needs to happen from here on is a continued nurturing of this strong reading relationship among my students and between them and me. Besides

having the entire class maintain its trust in me, the students in turn, must continue to trust in themselves so they can remain true to their reading and linguistic success.

With this trust in mind, and as I look to the future, wondering what more I can do for my ELLs, I feel that one additional element could have expanded the results of my research study. At the beginning of my inquiry, I wanted to follow my ELLs' progress in their English, history, and science classes. I felt these core content-area classes would be where any reading success or improvements seen in the Read 180 class would perhaps transfer into improved grades and participation. Regrettably, I quickly sacrificed the idea because of two reasons: time constraints with gathering and analyzing this additional observational data and the initial reactions from my colleagues regarding this mode of inquiry as an evaluative and investigative method of their teaching practice. Looking back on both of these reasons, I feel I should have planned for this mode of data collection and not have relinquished the idea so quickly. Unfortunately, the negative reaction I initially received from many of the content-area teachers and my inexperience with research data processes, greatly influenced my decision to eliminate this research piece. Having now finished the research study, I believe I could have developed a manageable system for including such supplemental data, while also receiving the help and support from a few, more willing, teachers.

I briefly revisited this objective at the end of the study. I enlisted the help of several teachers, asking two very straightforward questions: 1) Did you notice any change in the ELLs' level of reading comprehension and classroom participation? 2) Did the ELLs' overall reading attitude change from the beginning of the school year to the end of the first semester? The following information summarizes the responses regarding all five ELL participants from two English, two history, and two science teachers.

The general response was that the ELLs had a tendency to be quiet participants. From the beginning of the school year until December, they tended to sit back and watch their English-speaking peers engage in academic discussion. On a more positive note, both English teachers were pleased to say that by early December, both Vera and Tyler were working well in small groups. These teachers stated that both these students were beginning to engage in greater academic conversation, offering assistance to their fellow ELLs, and occasionally volunteering to read aloud during whole group activities. In contrast, Lisa, John, and Winston chose not to join in any formal, academic dialogue; they were more than willing to talk to the teacher and with other students during informal, social conversations, but were indifferent towards formal discourse. Every teacher also stated that the ELLs were "good kids," but did not seem to be interested in the subject matter. The teachers assumed the reason these students did not want to read aloud in class or answer too many questions was probably because they did

not want to give the wrong answer. Most often, the ELL did get the answer wrong. Then again, if they were brave enough, the teachers stated that only one or two students would periodically ask clarifying questions.

Since the ELL appeared to lack the necessary academic discourse, large group classroom participation was limited; and, again, the teachers were uncertain of the depth of the students' subject matter comprehension. As a result, without the implementation of formal assessments (subject-related tests and/or standardized tests, such as PSSAs and 4Sights) each teacher said it was quite difficult to evaluate the ELLs' level of reading comprehension. On the other hand, by the end of December, the teachers began to see glimpses of improvement. For Lisa, John, and Winston, greater comfort was found in small group activities. One teacher believed that Winston's "forte had become his work in small group," and that he "was taking more initiative within the class." Two of Lisa's teachers reinforced the idea that she had always worked well in small group, but was finally willing to try new activities involving oral reading. Likewise, John's science teacher explained that even though John seemed frustrated with the text, it most likely was too challenging at the beginning of the year. As the semester progressed, and as John's participation improved, so did his comprehension.

Vera and Tyler's consistent Read 180 gains appeared to mirror their content-area class improvement. According to Vera's history teacher, even

though she seemed “a bit intimidated by the male students, her independent work excelled.” As this teacher thought about her improvements, he found it quite interesting that as her independent work grades improved, “she seemed to gain more confidence in her overall class ability.” Vera’s English teacher shared similar thoughts. “She always did work, but was sometimes distracted. Once she seemed more comfortable in the class, she did read out loud; she even volunteered when we read *Romeo and Juliet*.” Every one of Tyler’s teachers articulated the same idea: Tyler is smart, a hard worker, and a leader in his class. One particular comment did strike me as odd; Tyler’s science teacher voiced his surprise that even though Tyler “is probably the brightest of the class, he has never participated in class discussion. His work is always done, but he has never participated in the class discussion.”

Armed with this latest knowledge, I am encouraged to become an even greater advocate for the ELL. To ensure I can better help the students with their linguistic and learning needs, I want my instructional support and guidance to extend beyond the Read 180 class. While I understand there are limitations to my teaching, and that it is impossible, and unreasonable to think I need to teach every one of my ELLs every subject, I believe if I improve the lines of communication between their content-area teachers then there will be an increased likelihood that the ELLs will achieve greater reading success. Nevertheless, for now, my English

language learners need to know they are more than an extension of me; and that they can, and must react, respond, and exist on their own.

***As I Learn***

*As I learn, I wonder*

*what it will mean, what it will say.*

*I sit watching the pictures as they*

*fill my head with words, thoughts,*

*ideas.*

*As I learn, I follow*

*what it will mean, what it will say.*

*I sit listening to the words as they*

*fill my head with pictures, names,*

*ideas.*

*As I learn, I ask*

*what it all means, what it all says.*

*I sit marking the print as it*

*fills my head with questions, names,*

*ideas.*

*As I learn, I discover*

*what it means, what it says,*

*And I learn the answers*

*by MY pictures, MY words,*

*MY ideas.*

*-- Susan M. Hughes*

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**RESOURCES**

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**APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A: Parental Consent Letter (English Version)

October 2008

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As the end of the first marking period quickly approaches, I would like to share your child's progress with you. Please find enclosed your child's most recent *Read 180* improvements.

At this time, I would also like to ask for your help and support. Currently, I am working toward a Master's degree at Moravian College. The focus of my research is how my teaching strategies help your child as he or she works in class strengthening his or her reading comprehension.

I will collect data during the first semester of the 2008-2009 school year. All students will receive the best teacher instruction as they participate in Scholastic Stage C *Read 180* Instructional Model; therefore, no student will be singled out as a participant or non-participant. I will gather information to support my study through teacher-student conferences, work samples from the Scholastic *Read 180* rSkills workbook and supplemental materials, and by direct observation. All participant names will be kept confidential; and only fictitious names will be included in my study. Finally, all research materials will be kept in a secure location at school or in my home, and all data gathered during this study will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

If at any time you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress or my research, please contact me at school at 610-250-2481. My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted at Moravian College by phone at 610-861-1482 or email at [ishosh@moravian.edu](mailto:ishosh@moravian.edu).

Please check either the "approve" or the "not approve" line below indicating your child's participation in this study, and sign and return this letter by 10/21/08. Again, thank you for your continued support as we share together in your child's academic progress.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Hughes

Child's Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Not approve \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: HSIRB Letter



Susan M. Hughes

July 29, 2008

Dear Susan M. Hughes:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has reviewed your proposal: "What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences when specific language acquisition strategies are implemented for strengthening reading comprehension and classroom participation for the basic and below-basic ELL student?" Although the committee cannot give its complete approval at this time, your research is conditionally approved, pending the following revisions.

In your response to proposal item IV.7, please clarify your statement that "Participants and non-participants will not be singled out."

It is imperative that you consider your intention to gather data only from this particular subset of students as these individuals' involvement in your study may cause them to stand out from others in the class. Please explain, in your response to item IV. 8, your method of avoiding stigma for students who as a result of participation in your study, may be labeled as "basic" or "below basic." Noting that all students will participate in the school's regular curriculum may help in doing so. Alternately, you may wish to alter your data-gathering procedure to obtain regular curriculum data from all students in the class.

Unless you can guarantee that your sample will contain no handicapped or mentally disabled persons, your response to proposal item IV. 10 must identify these individuals as possible subjects. Further, in your response, you must address efforts to minimize risk to these individuals.

Please submit an Informed Consent form appropriate for the school principal or administrator. Also, in consultation with your advisor, please revise the Informed Consent form for parents and guardians so that it is understandable to those with limited English proficiency. Be sure that both the Informed Consent form for the principal and for parents and guardians explain subjects' rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The forms should also provide names and telephone numbers of individuals or agencies that subjects may contact in the event of unanticipated psychological distress that may occur as a result of this study. Mention of this information should appear in your response to proposal item IV.13 as well.

Although this issue did not affect the committee's decision, HSIRB Committee member also urge you to consider the manner in which you discuss your researcher project with your students. Although ethical standards require consent only from parents or guardians of those under the age of 18, the students must give their assent as well. In other words, children who do not wish to participate should have the ability to inform you of their wishes without having to rely upon their parents do so. Thus, they should know that they can inform you directly if they wish to refuse full participation in or to withdraw from the study once data collection has begun.

Upon satisfactory revision to these portions of your proposal, the committee expects to fully approve your submission.

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 (medwh02@moravian.edu) should you have any questions about the committee's requests.

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

### Appendix C: Parental Consent Letter (Spanish Version)

Oclubre 2008

Estirnado Padre o Guardian,

A medida que el final del primer periodo de calificaciones se aproxima, quisiera compartir con listed el progreso de su hijo/a. Encontrara adjunto a esta carta progreso mas reciente en Read 180.

En este momento, tambien quisiera pedirle su ayuda y apoyo. Actualrnente, estoy trabajando para adquirir un grado de licenciado en Moravian College el eual requiere un ultimo proyecto de investigacion. El enfoque de mi investigacion es como mis estrategias de ensefianza ayudan a su *hijo/a* a rmedida que el o ella trabaja en clase fortaleciendo su comprensi3n en la lectura.

Yo reunire informacion durante el primer sernestre del ano escolar 2008-2009. Todos los estudiantes reciben la mejor instruccion de maestro a rmedida que ellas participan en el Scholastic's Stage C Read 180 Instructional Model; par 10 tanto, ningun estudiante sera escogido como participante o no-participante. Yo reunire informacion para apoyar mi estudio por media de conferencias de maestro-estudiante, ejemplos de trabajos del libra de Scholastic Read 180 rSkilis y materiales suplementarios y par medio de observacion directa. Todos los nombres de los participantes se rnantendran confidencial; y solamente nombres ficticios senin incluidos en rmi estudio. Finalmente, todo material de estudio se mantendni en un lugar segura en la escuela o en casa y toda informacion reunida durante este estudio sera destruido al conduIT este estudio.

Si en cualquier momento usted tiene alguna pregunta o preocupacion acerca del progreso de su o mi estudio, par favor contacteme a la escuela al 610-250-2481. Mi auspiciador es el Dr. Joseph Shosh. A el se le puede contactar en Moravian College par telefono al610-861-1482 o par el correo electronico [ishosh@Moravian.edu](mailto:ishosh@Moravian.edu).

Par favor marque abajo la linea de "apruebo" o "no apruebo" indicando la participacion de su hijo/a en este estudio y firmelo y devuelva esta carta antes de Nuevamente, gracias por su apoyo continuo mientras compartimos juntos en el progreso acadernico de su Sinceramente,

Sra. Susan M. Hughes

Nombre del Estudiante:

Firma del Padre/Guardian:

Apruebo \_\_\_\_\_ No apruebo \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha:

### Appendix D: SAM Student Yearly Progress Report Sample

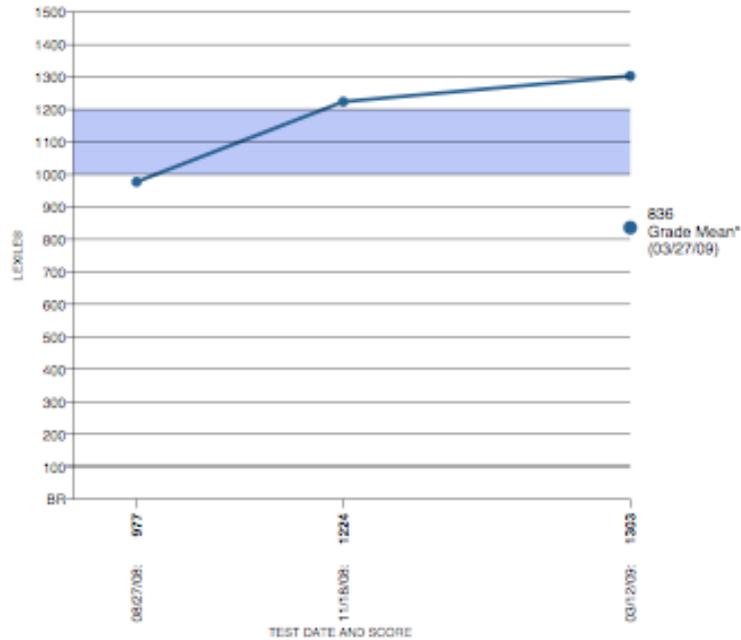


## Student Yearly Progress Report



Teacher: Susan Hughes  
Grade: 9  
Class: Period Six

Time Period: 08/25/08 – 03/27/09



Grade 9 Year-End Proficiency Range    BR = Beginning Reader  
\* Grade Mean is the average score of all students in the same grade based on their last test.

**Using This Report**  
**Purpose:** This report tracks an individual student's Lexile scores over time in relation to the student's current year-end grade-level proficiency range.  
**Follow-Up:** If the student is not meeting grade-level expectations, provide materials at the appropriate level for reading practice. If SRI performance has declined significantly, review the student's test experiences and plan appropriate intervention.

## Appendix E: SAM Student Reading Report Sample



PROGRESS  
MONITORING

### Student Reading Report

School: Easton High School  
Teacher: Susan Hughes  
Grade: 9  
Class: Period Six



**Time Period:** 08/25/08 – 03/27/09

**READ 180 Level:** 4  
**Current Topic Software:** Not Your Boring  
Science Job  
**Last SRI Score (Lexile®):** 1303

#### READ 180 Software Progress

TOPIC SOFTWARE AND SEGMENT	DATE STARTED	DATE COMPLETED	NO. OF SESSIONS	COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY			WORDS MASTERED	
				COMP. SCORE	VOCAB. SCORE	CONTEXT PASSAGE SCORE	FLUENT	SPELLING
<b>Not Your Boring Science Job</b>								
Cave Woman	03/25/09	In Progress	2	50%	50%	N/A	38	26
Mummy Dearest	03/03/09	03/23/09	7	100%	100%	97%	70	79
Dr. Brain	02/20/09	02/26/09	5	80%	60%	100%	81	101
Snake Stalker	02/05/09	02/19/09	8	100%	60%	97%	69	88
<b>Big Money</b>								
Diving for Treasure	12/15/08	02/04/09	10	100%	100%	93%	74	82
Home Is Where the Oil Is	12/08/08	12/12/08	5	80%	100%	96%	68	76
Wall Street	11/20/08	12/05/08	5	80%	80%	100%	48	53
Bright Lights of Vegas	11/12/08	11/17/08	4	100%	100%	91%	59	60
<b>Showstoppers</b>								
Selena	10/31/08	11/11/08	6	80%	60%	90%	60	60
More Than Hot Air	09/29/08	10/30/08	14	80%	100%	96%	91	93
Slammin' Poets	09/19/08	09/24/08	4	100%	60%	93%	84	84
Blue Man Group	09/04/08	09/18/08	10	80%	80%	90%	101	78
<b>TOTAL SEGMENTS COMPLETED: 11</b>			<b>80</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>880</b>

#### Scholastic Reading Counts! Independent Reading Progress

BOOKS READ	DATE	SCHOLASTIC READING COUNTS! SCORE	TOTAL WORDS READ
NO DATA TO REPORT			

#### Using This Report

**Purpose:** This report shows an individual student's progress on READ 180 Topic Software CDs and segments, as well as independent reading progress using Scholastic Reading Counts!

**Follow-Up:** Share this report with the student to discuss results and set goals. Investigate areas of concern using the appropriate Student Diagnostic Report.

## **Appendix F: Student Interview Questions**

### Student Interview Questions

1. What specific activity/activities have we done in this class to help you with your reading? Tell me some specific examples.
2. Who has helped you the most in this class? What did he or she do that helped you the most?
3. Which rotation within the Read 180 program has provided you with the best reading support?
4. Which rotation within the Read 180 program seems to be the least helpful when it comes to helping you improve your reading skill?
5. When you do work with other students, do you prefer to work with an English speaker or a student who speaks your native language?
6. Do you prefer to complete work independently, with a partner, in a small group, or with a teacher?
7. What is your overall opinion of reading?
8. Why do you have these feelings about reading?

### Appendix G: Reading Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ 180 Audiobooks**  
Classroom Management Support

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Reader's Survey**

1. Circle the kinds of things you like to read.

- |             |                 |                  |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------|
| magazines   | nonfiction      | mystery/suspense |
| newspapers  | biographies     | humor            |
| comic books | science fiction | poetry           |
| fiction     | horror          | other _____      |

2. What is your favorite book?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. List some of your favorite television programs.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What are your favorite movies?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What magazines do you read?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What are some of your interests outside of school?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What are your favorite subjects in school?

\_\_\_\_\_

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Use to help students with book selections.



<b>Resource Links</b>
Teaching Resources: p. 70
<b>SAM Keyword:</b> Survey