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Reciprocal Teaching:

Facilitating Retelling Skills in Read Alouds for First Grade Students

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Proposal submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education
Moravian College
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
2011

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Abstract

This teacher research study investigated the observed and reported experiences of eighteen first grade students in an eastern Pennsylvania elementary school when reciprocal teaching was used to facilitate retelling skills after hearing read alouds. Students were observed using the four comprehension strategies of reciprocal teaching: Summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying. Data collection methods included participant observation, retelling rubrics, and surveys. Findings indicated that when discussing read alouds without necessary scaffolding, students were not able to increase retelling skills. Through the use of additional scaffolding prior to the discussion of text, students demonstrated increased comprehension and enjoyment of reading and retelling.

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to my first grade students for your willingness and ability to adapt to a new reading comprehension strategy at the beginning of the school year. Thank you for your engagement in listening to and talking about read alouds with your friends. It has been a pleasure to watch you grow and mature as young readers throughout the data collection period, and I know you all will develop a life-long love for reading and learning.

Thank you to my Hamilton Elementary family for all of your support throughout my study. Many of you helped so much by giving feedback, gathering teaching materials, and just being there for me in general during this sometimes stressful journey. There were many times when I typed through lunch wondering what kinds of wonderful conversations were going on in the faculty room without me!

I would like to thank Dr. Grove for the first half of my journey while collecting my data. Your expertise in gathering data truly helped me to overcome many obstacles. Also, thank you for helping me to understand what good writers do. Teaching first grade, I rarely get to practice the correct rules of writing as much as an English teacher does. You have showed me how to become an author and I truly appreciate that.

Also, thank you to Dr. Shosh for your flexibility with my teaching schedule. Even when I missed the beginning of class due to the long journey from Stroudsburg, you were always there when I had questions. You always gave me the assistance I needed to reflect and revise my writing as well. I sincerely appreciate the insight you have provided throughout this process.

Thank you to Dr. DesJardin for helping me to continue to grow as a primary teacher. Your expertise, warm personality, and willingness to help make you are a wonderful addition to the Moravian College faculty.

To my friends, thank you for your understanding when I needed to stay in on a Friday night in order get my work finished. I know many of you grew impatient when I told you there would be no Play Station 3, or that I would not be able to go out and celebrate with you.

Mom and Dad, thank you for being a phone call away. Whenever I needed help to get by in my daily life, or in writing my thesis you were always both there to lean on. I owe everything to you in helping me to make it this far. You helped me to come to Moravian College as an undergraduate student and now I have continued my education at Moravian College as a Comenius Center graduate student. I could not have made it this far without you.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mrs. Altemose for accepting my invitation to become a part of my thesis committee. Needing to take care of your husband and

son is enough work in itself; thank you for taking on the challenge of taking care of me as well. You are a master teacher and I am grateful for your feedback.

Researcher Stance

Thinking back to the reading I was asked to do as an elementary school student, I remember nothing more than a series of basal readers and endless answers to meaningless questions about what I read scribbled out using paper and pencil. I used to day dream at my seat while the teacher read a story to the class in a monotone voice waiting until recess so I could have some fun. Did I really need to read this stuff? Did I really need to comprehend the story? Why? What was I going to use this for in my life? In my elementary school days, I felt like my teachers did not try helping the learner to understand why we should read and the teachers were rarely able to get us motivated to do so. I developed an early hatred toward reading, especially when I needed to read aloud in front of the class.

Once I got to high school, I was so out of the “reading scene” that I refused to read at all in some cases. I often just asked a friend what the story was about for homework, or skimmed a retelling on the internet of each chapter. When I did read, I actually needed to re-read almost everything assigned to me because I had never really learned how to read for comprehension and I never learned why I should love to read every day. If I could go back in time, I would help myself to understand that reading is about making connections to my life and motivating me to learn about the world.

As a result, I have never felt that my K-12 schooling experience helped me

to become a lifelong reader. The saddest part of my personal story is seeing too many schools utilize this same approach today. Perhaps as a result of those endless questions so many years ago, I have never felt comfortable remembering what I have read. Today I know how important it is to have conversation about what one has read instead of working alone after reading a story. By having discussion about a story with peers, students are engaged in direct questioning and response. Comprehending what one reads is just as important as having the ability to decode the text.

In first grade, children learn how to read, and a crucial part of learning how to read is comprehending what has been read. It is my job as a first grade teacher to make sure that students understand what they read. I was a young boy when my teachers fed me the information and expected me to remember it, rather than teaching me comprehension strategies. The same still goes on in many schools today. I can imagine a boy in my class sitting on the carpet and listening to a story being read to him. In my classroom, we make connections within the text and our lives on a daily basis. I attempt to give the students in my class a reason for reading, and I try to create an environment that is engaging as well.

To be able to comprehend a story means readers or listeners need to retell the story in sequential order and make predictions, question the text, and clarify parts they didn't understand. After researching how I can get my students excited about reading and comprehending text, I came across a comprehension strategy

called Reciprocal Teaching designed to support the comprehension of reluctant middle-level readers. As soon as I read a brief article about reciprocal teaching modified for kindergarten students, I knew I had to try it with my first grade class. Therefore my research question states: What are the effects of reciprocal teaching during read alouds on retelling a story for first grade students?

Literature Review

Reciprocal Teaching

Palincsar (1989) defines reciprocal teaching as a process in which students are engaged in “generating questions about the content, summarizing the content, clarifying points, and predicting upcoming content from cues in the text” (p. 37). She indicates that reciprocal teaching begins as dialogue between the teacher and student before the teacher eventually makes an effort to release control of the dialogue to the students. Implementing reciprocal teaching after read alouds in primary grades allows students to construct and enhance one another’s understanding of the text (Pilonieta, 2009, p. 121). Adapted from the traditional method of reciprocal teaching, first grade students listen to a read aloud story, instead of reading the text for themselves, and then break up into groups for a discussion of literature. According to Pilonieta (2009), students will “Coordinate the use of four comprehension strategies: predicting, clarifying, generating questions, and summarizing” (p. 121). By carefully implementing these four comprehension strategies, first grade students will have the important opportunity

to begin to comprehend text on their own.

Students need to understand what is happening in the text in order to make an accurate prediction as to what may or may not occur next. Pinnell and Fountas (2011) explain that predicting can help students better understand the text because they must use background knowledge to make predictions. Asking students to make predictions as they listen to a new story will help them to become more engaged in the text and excited about reading. Pinnell and Fountas (2011) also note that predicting as they read will likely make the text more enjoyable.

When a portion of text is not understandable for a student, clarification needs to occur so that the student may continue to make meaning of text. According to Oczkus (2003), “Clarifying helps students monitor their own comprehension as they identify problems they are having in comprehending portions of the text and figuring out difficult words” (p. 17). By talking about a single word or part of the text that needs clarification, students can work through the problem together, thus positively impacting their ability to understand that selection of text. Oczkus (2003) explains that the goal for teachers is to help students to monitor their own comprehension. To be able to do this, students must be listening to the story and remain engaged. If something doesn’t make sense, then students need to know to seek clarification.

As students are read to, they must be encouraged to generate their own questions based on what they have heard in the read aloud. Myers (2006) states,

“Students become more aware of plot, character development, and vocabulary when given opportunities to ask their own questions about the text” (p. 323). It is important to note the educator must model “teacher questions” so that students are able to understand and ask questions that will foster in depth answers from the group instead of yes or no replies.

“Summarizing implies the selection and reorganization of important information. Readers constantly summarize information as they read text, thus forming prior knowledge with which to understand the rest of the text” (Pinnell and Fountas, 2011, p. 45). It is important for students to think about the text as they read or as text is read to them.

All four strategies are critical for RT to occur. It is best implemented by explicitly teaching students what each strategy is and how to apply it (e.g. demonstration, modeling). Pilonieta (2009), suggests that reciprocal teaching is using, “Strategies to engage in a discussion thereby jointly constructing and enhancing one another’s understanding of the text” (p. 121). By working together, the learners in each group are able to help each other understand the text through dialogue and feedback from each of the group members. Carter (1997) describes reciprocal teaching as “dialogue that takes place between the teacher and students or student leader and the members of the group that result in students’ learning how to construct meaning” (p. 66). Reciprocal teaching aims to improve students’ abilities to learn while dialogue is taking place; therefore

students are constructing meaning from text through group interaction.

Scaffolding Comprehension Strategies

One of the benefits of reciprocal teaching is helping students develop strategies to be able to comprehend a selection of text. However, prior to the implementation of reciprocal teaching, explicit teaching of the strategies must take place. Collins (1987) states that by scaffolding instruction for reciprocal teaching, students will gain confidence so they can master the skills they need (p. 9). This is especially important in the primary grades where children may view reading only as a process of decoding text. Students are often so focused on decoding words that they have difficulty remembering what they are reading. Due to the fact that many first grade students at the beginning of the year do not have the ability to read text for themselves; it is essential for the teacher to read the text first. During interactive read-alouds, the teacher has the opportunity to engage children with texts that are usually more complex than they can read for themselves. Children have an opportunity to extend their understandings of the text dialogue (Pinnell and Fountas, 2011, p. 4).

According to Myers (2006), there are times when the teacher needs to stop during the read aloud due to the fact that students have many questions about each page of the story. It is therefore important to establish a routine and expectations so the educator can clearly explain what the words mean and what is happening in the story (Myers, 2006, p. 323). Some students in primary grades do not

understand what is happening in the read aloud, due to their unfamiliarity with new vocabulary, settings, plots, and characters. To be able to comprehend text and discuss text after the read aloud, students need to discuss these and other elements during the read aloud. The educator needs to explain and clarify text as part of the initial reading in order for students to be able to have dialogue about the text to extend their understanding while engaged in reciprocal teaching. In other words, the educator must help to scaffold the meaning of text. After scaffolding reciprocal teaching in this way, students have a model to lead their discussion of text on their own. It is also critical for students to see models of the four reciprocal teaching strategies, experience some ‘seat holding’ as they try out reciprocal teaching in a supported environment, and finally work independently as they read while using reciprocal teaching to help them comprehend the text (Oczkus, 2003, p. 22). Students need to be involved in practicing each of the four strategies, even while the teacher is modeling the strategy (Oczkus, 2003).

For instance, a teacher can use think-alouds while oral reading. According to Oczkus (2003), think alouds occur when the reader reads a story and stops to tell the audience what a good reader is thinking (Oczkus, 2003, p. 22). The teacher in this case may effectively model what an effective reader might be thinking and what strategies he or she could be using while hearing the story out loud.

To be able to have a discussion about text, students must use prior

experiences to make connections from their own lives. By using prior knowledge, students are able to speak of the text while making real life connections.

Each time students use reciprocal teaching as a set of comprehension strategies, they will be able to build from prior experience. According to Carter (1997), “Reciprocal teaching parallels the new definition of reading that describes the process of reading as an interactive one, in which readers interact with the text as their prior knowledge is activated” (p. 65). One does this by helping students to make text to self connections. This is essentially using experiences from the past to create new thoughts and understandings. During the read aloud, students are able to make various types of connections. Harvey & Goudvis (2000), suggest that students could verbally start to make connections by saying, “this reminds me of, I have a connection, and remember when” (p. na). This puts an emphasis on the importance of prior knowledge. Without the ability to understand key language from the text and use the information students already know about the text, it may be difficult for students to make real life connections to the story.

In summary, by working in a small group during reciprocal teaching, the goal is for students to increase their abilities to retell the text we read aloud in class. To be able to do this, students must make connections to the text and their lives. Carter (1997) believes that metacognition, or thinking about thinking, is taking place while students are implementing reciprocal teaching. He states,

“Metacognition informs you when you encounter something interesting or substantive and suggests that you slow down so as to savor what is being communicated, to glory in the splendor of the message as it unfolds” (p. 66). To be able to think about one’s own thinking, scaffolding must occur to help the student gain prior knowledge not only within the text, but how to utilize the four reciprocal teaching strategies. Lastly, reciprocal teaching helps students to realize that reading is taught for a reason. Instead of only decoding text, students learn that reading is done for meaning. Collins (1987) believes that carrying out reciprocal teaching by reviewing text will help students understand they need to read for meaning as they move on to more difficult text (p. 6). Only by reading for meaning will students develop an intrinsic motivation for reading to learn.

Social Learning

Reciprocal teaching uses cooperative group work as a means to achieving comprehension of text. According to Bower (2001), “Peer and cross-aged tutoring are as natural as sibling relationships and occur whenever a more accomplished student aids a lower achieving classmate” (p. 6). By grouping students of different ability levels together, they can work as a team to help each other when a problem arises. Students can also act as teachers in a group to help figure out a problem that exists. Heterogeneous grouping of students is important so students can help each other develop an understanding of reciprocal teaching and an understanding of the text that has been read. Reciprocal teaching brings

all types of readers together to a common ground, where students can help each other in a social context. According to Frances (1992), “By becoming proficient in the four strategies and interacting with group members, students appear to become more strategic readers” (p. 15).

The teacher’s role in reciprocal teaching as a cooperative group activity is that of a facilitator. Dewey (1938) states, the teacher reduces to a minimum the occasions in which he or she has to exercise authority in a personal way. Over time, students learn to function in a small group without the direct intervention of the teacher. Dewey (1928) also suggests that the teacher still has a say in what happens within the group, though the teacher will make the decision standing along with the students, instead of taking leadership from them.

According to Murphy (2009), “Despite the differences across the purposes and goals of various approaches, evidence suggests that discussions in small groups about and around text have the potential to increase student comprehension, meta-cognition, critical thinking and reasoning, as well as students’ ability to state and support arguments” (p. 743). Cooperative groups during RT help students to retell a story to their peers using actual text to support their retelling.

By working in a small group, students will need to develop the opportunity to participate in peer-led discussion. Peer-led discussion has the support of a range of literacy researchers. Among its benefits are increased oral

language, engagement and enjoyment of literature and feelings of efficacy about the ability to understand and interpret text (Berne, 2008). There are several ways to teach students how to have their own conversations about text. One strategy that Pinnell & Fountas (2011) suggest is for students to turn and talk about any given concept in the read aloud, providing opportunities for students to practice dialogue in a small group setting. It is important that the educator explicitly teach and provide opportunities for students to dialogue amongst themselves within the larger group first before implementing the small group interaction. By modeling several ways of listening and conversing, students will have many models for peer-led discussion.

There are several aspects regarding grouping students that an educator needs to consider. These include type and size of groups, group composition to give children the ability to build relationships with those who are different from them in gender and ethnicity, and children with disabilities (Weinstein and Mignano, 2003). There are so many different types of with such variety of potential ability level in first grade, it is important to note that correct grouping of students will affect the way reciprocal teaching will work. Weinstein (2003) adds, “Some children have unusually strong leadership abilities; others are particularly adept at resolving conflicts; still others are especially alert to injustice and can help to ensure that everyone in the group has a chance to participate” (p. 251). While other students may be quiet or not as sure of themselves, it is the

responsibility of each group member to play his or her role. To be able to do this, the four reciprocal teaching roles must be clearly defined and understood by each student in order for dialogue to take place. Rules and expectations within each group must be modeled so the expectation for each role is clear for each child.

Benefits as Outcomes

Reciprocal teaching promotes several potential benefits in the classroom. For instance, when students are actively involved with a story, they tend to become engaged and enjoy the text they are working with. Liebling (1989) states, “As children learn to read and write, it is important that they have ample opportunities to read text in which the content is sufficiently interesting to warrant a discussion of literary quality” (p. 9). It is the educator’s job to select text that will interest the student. Instead of choosing text that will be too hard for students or too drawn out, the educator should choose text that is rich in vocabulary that students will be able to discuss in detail.

To be able to keep students engaged in text, the educator must select text that is appropriate for the needs of the class. Takala (2006) states that at times when implementing reciprocal teaching, text can have too many unfamiliar words or have too much text in general. This could lead to students not being able to summarize the story or make meaning out of the text (Takala, 2006, p. 572). If the educator selects inappropriate text, students will be less likely to be engaged and therefore not develop the very understanding of the text that the RT strategy

is designed to support. Age appropriate text is essential to keep students motivated and engaged. According to Le Fevre (2003), “Limited access to age appropriate text that targets their interest level can thus be a serious problem for poor readers” (p. 39). The educator must make an effort to find those texts that will motivate students at any age to keep them engaged in the story.

In a study of third grade students participating in reading pairs, Bower (2001) found greater enthusiasm toward reading in students who participated in literature discussion after reading, compared to students who independently answered comprehension questions after reading. These students were also more supportive toward others in their group. The students who participated in reading pairs also showed greater confidence when reading and discussing text than did the students who did not participate in the paired reading (Bower, 2001, p. 10). When students have a role to play after a story has been read, they are more likely to feel they are needed in the group. Students feel like they have a job and want to do it well. Taking pride in the quality of student work is a positive outcome to have, especially in reading. Reciprocal teaching has the potential to bolster this with all students. Murphy (2009) says that, “The dialogue process is negotiated and sustained through interpretations of text, high level reasoning, and standards of interaction that govern group behavior” (p. 741). Over time, the group will be able to show confidence in its decisions and in its dialogue.

Myers (2005) implemented reciprocal teaching in her kindergarten

classroom by differentiating the titles of each role students played. Myers called her roles: The princess storyteller, clara clarifier, quincy questioner, and the wizard. She demonstrated each role explicitly and modeled how to interact while in these roles. Myers (2005) states, after implementing reciprocal teaching with her kindergarten class, “Sometimes a student who was not in a leadership role would correct another student” (p. 320). Thus...providing children with a specific role seems very important.

After implementing reciprocal teaching for three months with her kindergarten class, she found that students became more aware of complexities of plot, character development, and vocabulary when given the opportunity to discuss text in small groups (Myers, 2005).

Retelling as Assessment

Retelling is a specific form of assessment educators can use to determine if students can comprehend the text. In primary grades, retelling is an effective measure to check for understanding. According to Hacker (2003), “Teachers need comprehension measures to satisfy accountability goals within the school, but, more importantly, they need assessments to be able to give more constructive and personalized feedback to students about their reading progress” (p. 702). Since it is so important that teachers have a measure to assess understanding, a retelling of the story is an efficient way to check for comprehension. After students have retold the text to the teacher, it is also important that the teacher

keep track of student progress and success. Myers (2005) assigned students in her kindergarten class roles depending on how they applied the four different reciprocal teaching roles. If she noticed that a student was weak in one aspect of reciprocal teaching, she would give that child more practice in that role (Myers, 2005, p. 319). Because it is rare for a first grade student to be proficient in the use of all four roles, it is so important for a teacher to reflect on what is happening within each group by keeping track of how each student does when retelling the story aloud.

In first grade while retelling a story, students need to include key understandings from the text. By teaching students four strategies to use while reading or listening to text, students will begin to understand what a proficient reader does while reading or listening to a story. Pilonieta (2009) states, “Teaching multiple strategies is sensible because proficient readers use multiple strategies while reading (p. 121). Essentially, students will begin to understand how to use the four strategies in reciprocal teaching to retell text.

While retelling, teachers in primary grades may use a rubric to keep track of student’s retelling skills. There are many aspects to retelling, (e.g. character traits, sequencing, plot, and setting), and the teacher will look for specific language from the student and score the language using a rubric. For instance, as we work with readers in the reading center, we are interested in whether they use the phrasing and wording of the original text in retelling (Kletzien, 2009). When

listening to a student retell a story, it is important to write down specific instances when the child does in fact use language from the story. This helps to identify if the student is actually grasping the main idea of what has happened in the story.

Summary

Gajria (2009) notes, “Essentially, the focus in primary grades is on learning to read, whereas the emphasis shifts in later grades to reading to learn” (p. 210). By using reciprocal teaching in primary grades, children have the opportunity to read for comprehension. According to Pinnell & Fountas (2011), “When children are actively listening to and discussing a text, all of the strategic actions for comprehending are in operation” (p. 10). Students who are able to implement reciprocal teaching effectively will also have the ability to discuss text with others, play a key role in any conversation about text, and have a positive attitude toward reading. Reciprocal teaching has the potential to do much more than increase students’ comprehension by also developing the life skills that are needed to function successfully in a social learning environment.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Goals

As a first grade educator, it is my responsibility to teach my students how to comprehend text. Reciprocal teaching supports the development of comprehension by allowing students to discuss several different parts of a story,

including character, setting, and plot. Doing so helps them to think about what happens in sequential order. In addition to summarizing, students also learn to engage in questioning, clarifying, and predicting. My intent as a teacher action researcher is to support student comprehension through the use of reciprocal teaching to increase students' retelling capabilities.

Setting

My study was conducted at a rural primary school in Pennsylvania with 264 students in grades kindergarten through second. Five elementary schools in my district serve students in kindergarten and first and second grades. Students in my school are 86.7% White, 6.1% Black, 6.4% Hispanic, and .8% Asian. The school has an economically disadvantaged subgroup of 17.8%. This means that 17.8% of students get free and reduced lunch. There are 5 classrooms that serve kindergarten, 5 classrooms that serve first grade, and 4 classrooms that serve second grade. The school has one trailer where students are pulled out of the classrooms for intensive small group instruction in the area of math and reading for children who are at risk for academic achievement, (e.g. students who are learning disabled or English language learners).

Participants

The participants in my study consisted of 18 first grade students (9 boys and 9 girls) in my class with mixed ability levels in reading, writing, and math.

The age of my participants ranged from 6 to 7 years old. Three students receive Title 1 reading services daily, and one student receives Title 1 math services two days a week. No students in my study received ESL services.

Data Gathering Methods

Participant Observations

According to Hendricks (2009), “Field notes are kept throughout the study and include detailed information about implementation of the intervention, participant responses, and surprising events” (p. 91). I observed my students while they worked in a small group setting. I was able to keep my thoughts and hunches separate from what happened by maintaining a double entry journal in my field log. On the left side of the journal I recorded what I observed while students were implementing reciprocal teaching. On the right side I was able to write down my beliefs about what had happened and why it may have happened. By recording observational data in this way, I was able to study my student observations over time to ascertain how students thought, what they felt, and how their comprehension improved while using reciprocal teaching as a comprehension strategy. For example, as students discussed their reading in small groups, I was able to walk around the room and write down exact quotes. The quotes that were on-topic gave me insight as to how my participants understood the text. The quotations that displayed off-task behavior also helped me to think

about why certain participants may have been off-topic or off-task.

Reflective Memos

After gathering qualitative data in my study, I was able to write reflective memos including my thoughts about what had happened and why it may have happened in my study. Building on the work of Donald Schön, Hendricks (2009), identifies three types of reflection, namely *reflection-in, on, and for-action*. Reflection-in-action takes place as the event is occurring (Hendricks, 2009, p. 25). The type of reflection that occurred when I wrote my reflective memos is considered to be *reflection-on-action* and also allowed me to plan for new action to meet the needs of my students. Reflective memos offered me a way of understanding what happened in my classroom over time.

Student Surveys

I gave my first grade participants a survey at the beginning of my study (Appendix C) to find out how they felt about reading and retelling stories. According to MacLean & Mohr (1999), “Survey data can show you the scope of your question and tune you into the general understandings of your students” (p. 42). I was able to reflect on my students’ answers from the pre-survey to check for prior experiences in reading and retelling. This gave me insight as to how reciprocal teaching may benefit my students. At the end of my study, I gave my students a post-survey (Appendix D) to check for change in the way first grade students felt about working together in a small group and retelling stories after

implementing reciprocal teaching.

Student Work

Although not a part of my original data collection plan, I followed Maclean and Mohr's advice (1999) and used student work to help me to understand what students were thinking as they implemented reciprocal teaching. By having students "kid-write" their thoughts and feeling about reciprocal teaching, I learned more about the students' ability to understand the text. I used this data to accurately portray my students' ability to comprehend text.

Rubrics

To help me as a qualitative researcher better understand if students were comprehending text due to the implementation of reciprocal teaching, I used a retelling rubric (Appendix E) as a means of assessing student comprehension. After using reciprocal teaching as a comprehension strategy, I met with students one at a time to retell me the story they had been discussing in their small group. The retelling rubric consisted of four different criteria, including *sequence of events, setting, characters, and teacher support*. By addressing these four criteria, I was able to score student achievement in retelling the same stories that were read aloud during the implementation of my study. I chose these criteria and scored based on the students' ability to retell without the need for teacher prompts.

Trustworthiness Statement

I followed ethical guidelines for conducting teacher action research as I conducted my study. My research study proposal was approved by the Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board. My principal and my students' parents signed consent forms (Appendix A & B) indicating the rationale for my study, noting that participation was optional and that students had the right to withdraw from participation without penalty at any time. The data I collected were recorded and kept in a locked filing cabinet and on my password protected computer. All research data were destroyed at the conclusion of my study.

According to MacLean & Mohr (1999), "Observing, writing, interviewing, documenting, analyzing, are ways to ensure validity" (p. 117). I collected and analyzed several types of data in my study. Triangulation to me is using several sources of data and bringing the data together to find commonalities. I strived to use all of my data as outlined above to suggest specific outcomes due to the implementation of reciprocal teaching. I was open to unexpected research findings. I reflected on my findings as I reported data to my colleagues and research team members. Both my colleagues and my team members helped me to identify any biases as I interpreted data. It is important and ethical to view the data I collected from several different lenses. Hendricks (2006) states "Engaging in reflection at the beginning of the research is one way to clarify any initial bias" (p. 116). To be able to do this, I consistently reflected on my own perceptions

about what happened in my study. Lastly, I made my bias clear at the beginning of my story and throughout my findings as well.

My Story

First Grade or Kindergarten

It's amazing to think about how much five and six year old students who begin first grade each fall will learn during the school year that lies ahead. Each and every year it's so easy to forget that my new students, my new children, my new class have just finished kindergarten and do not yet possess the same capabilities as the students from my previous class who are now beginning second grade. My new first graders often arrive without yet being able to tie their shoes, wipe their nose when necessary, or zipper their coats at the beginning of the year, but those are relatively easy behaviors to teach and are the least of my worries as the new year begins. Slowly, after I introduce new rules and expectations during the first few weeks of school, children begin to realize they are in school for an amazing reason: there's simply so much to learn! While a few of them realize this right away, some of the children are reluctant to let go of summer, and others have not yet learned how to sit still for more than 13 seconds exactly.

After laying the groundwork for our new school year, I shared my teacher action research study plans with my class. Coming from kindergarten, students were most certainly ready to hear stories being read aloud. What was so

unfamiliar to them was the discussion that would take place after each new read aloud. This was the concept of my study and it was called reciprocal teaching. I gathered my students on the carpet with a head full of wonder about how they would react to something new. I told them that I loved to talk about books with my friends. We had a discussion about the benefits of what we could learn from our friends if we talked about the books we read. We said that we could get ideas from our friends; we could learn something new that we didn't understand, and we discussed the pure enjoyment of talking about a story, almost like talking about a video game or a movie. I explained to students that we would be working in small groups to talk about the stories we would read aloud and we would do fun activities to go with each story. I explained there would be roles to play and each child needed to complete his or her role to help the entire group to understand the story. Lastly, I explained that talking about our new stories would help students to understand the read aloud and also help them to re-tell the story to me when it was time to do so.

Starting the Process

Surveying the Students. After getting to know all of my students in the first few weeks of school, I was eager to introduce reciprocal teaching to my first grade class. Thinking of my excellent class from the year before, I had no doubt that reciprocal teaching would go off without a hitch. To begin, I needed to discover how students felt about reading, listening, and retelling stories, so I

surveyed them as follows.

Reading and Retelling Attitude Pre-Survey			
Do you like retelling stories to your teacher?	9	4	5
Do you like retelling stories to your friends?	10	6	2
Can you remember a story in the order it was read?	11	4	3
Do you think it is fun to talk about a book with your friends?	12	3	3
Can you remember even small details from a story after it has been read to you?	13	5	0

Table 1. Pre-Survey Results

As I read the first question of the survey, I could already see Max coloring in all of the smiley faces that he liked best. As I worked my way through the list, voices shot out.

“I hate reading. This is dumb,” said Nat. “Can we use markers to color in the smiley’s?”

Before he could finish, Jerry chimed in. “Max wrote on mine. I am not doing it.”

Wow. I was in disbelief. I had hopes and dreams of my implementation being a success right away. Shortly after administering this first survey, I penned the following acrostic poem to show the emotions I was feeling. I was nervous that I wouldn’t be able to reach all of my students or help them build the

comprehension skills that I wanted my students to develop, not leaving anyone behind. I knew it would be a long journey, and I was determined to make it work. I kept my feelings of anxiety to myself and put on a determined face for my students, showing them that I was excited to start the process and attempting to put them at ease. In reality, though, I couldn't help feeling scared:

Suddenly
Cold
Anxious
Road to Comprehension
Excited
Determined

Figure 1. Acrostic Poem: My Initial Feelings

Pre-Retelling of Text. Prior to introducing and implementing reciprocal teaching, a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of retelling skills took place. Using data from students' kindergarten teachers I was able to acknowledge certain skills students previously had coming into first grade. Using running records and retelling rubrics, I was able to paint a picture of the class in general. Eight out of the nine girls in the study came into first grade reading on or above grade level. Those students showed proficient comprehension in retelling on their independent reading level. The retelling rubric used to assess students in kindergarten is the same rubric I used in my study consisting of sequencing,

describing setting, describing characters, and teacher support. The one female student that was not proficient in retelling was also reading below grade level and received Title I reading support coming into first grade. There were seven boys reading below grade level and two of those boys came into first grade receiving Title I services. Though seven boys were reading below grade level, on each other their guided reading levels, there were only four boys that scored below proficient in retelling. It was my goal to increase not only reading levels in the classroom through the use of reciprocal teaching, but develop retelling skills as well. In all there were five students altogether that were not proficient in retelling out of the eighteen participants in the study.

Gathering rubrics used to assess students in kindergarten and analyzing the retelling rubrics, I was able to gain an understanding of the skills I would need to explicitly teach. Sequencing was a lower area than any other on the retelling rubric, as a class. Even though there were numerous students that scored proficient on the retelling rubric, the score for sequencing was developing for many students. Opposed to this, many rubrics showed that students scored proficient in the categories of setting and character. This gave me insight as needing to explicitly teach students how to sequence a story in a whole group and small group setting. Lastly, I analyzed the need to teacher support. All students in the class needed one or more prompts from the kindergarten teacher to be able to retell the entire text on their levels. This led me to believe that students should

be taught how to think about what they have left out when retelling the text independently. I was hopeful that reciprocal teaching would help me to do this with all students.

Introducing Our Discussion Strategy. My next move didn't ease my fears. When introducing reciprocal teaching to my students, most had a look of despair on their tiny faces as if a monster were coming out from behind my chair. I knew they had never done this type of activity in kindergarten. As I explained the benefits of having a conversation about a story after it has been read, Alex interrupted, "Why do we need to talk about the book?"

I noted to the class the importance of discussion after hearing a story and how discussing a story could help students recall what had happened. I introduced the term *comprehension*, explaining that I wanted students to understand what we were reading and that having a discussion in small groups with their peers would be a fun way of remembering what had happened in the story. At this point, I had all students' attention and their eyes gazed on me in anticipation of beginning the new activity. I asked the students to give me thumbs up if it sounded like fun, and every single student in the class proudly raised his or her thumb into the air. Before we'd be ready to begin, I would need to scaffold instruction so that each student would know what to do when we moved into our groups. I decided to use the same story "Quick as a Cricket" to introduce each of the facets of reciprocal teaching.

Summarizing. Following our initial reading of “Quick as a Cricket,” I made sure to help students understand that a good summarizer includes major details, small details, characters, setting, and a beginning, middle, and end of the story. To model how I wanted students to summarize the read aloud, we completed an interactive writing on the white board. Interactive writing is a shared writing process where the teacher shares the marker with students and learning occurs together. We created a retelling together on the white board, while helping each other extend our thoughts about the story.

In "Quick as a Cricket" there was a boy, and he was the main character of the story. The boy pretended he was all different types of animals, and he acted like the way the animals act in real life.

The boy was a cricket, snail, ant, whale, basset, lark, bunny, shark, toad, fox, kitten, ox, lion, clam, rhino, lamb, tiger, shrimp, poodlechimp, lizard, and bee.

At the end of the story the little boy said, "Put them all together and you've got me!"

Figure 2. Shared summary of “Quick as a Cricket.”

After we had finished, we read the retelling aloud as a class, and I asked, “Can anyone think of any other little details from the story that could be important?” I told students that when retelling a story they should pretend that whoever they were retelling the story to had never heard the story before. By doing this, students would make sure to include all details, big and small. Since all students were able to participate in the interactive exercise to establish what a

good summarizer does, I felt confident that they would be successful summarizing the story independently in their groups. What I failed to realize was that it was September, and even if first grade students could understand what it means to summarize, being able to practice summarizing with their peers was an entirely different process, which became clear to me when I asked students to re-tell the story of “Quick as a Cricket” in peer groups. According to Weinstein and Mignano, students should be assigned to heterogeneous groups with respect to gender and ethnicity, also including students with disabilities (Weinstein, 2003, p. 251). I did this by creating two groups of four students and two groups of five students for a total of 18 students in all.

As soon as Max joined his group mates, he called out to me, “I don’t know what happened, Mr. Oertner. I can’t retell, and I don’t even like my group.”

Betty added, “What am I even supposed to say when I retell?”

Nat quickly shouted out, “Mr. Oertner, Mr. Oertner, We just did this in the circle. Why do we need to do it again?”

Calmly Mel raised her hand and asked politely, “Could I help Betty?”

“Yes, Mel, that would be greatly appreciated,” I answered.

Just then Maddy stood up across the room and pointed at the story that was standing up on the shelf. She asked, “Can we look back in the story if we forget?”

I was ecstatic that she asked and responded, “Maddy, you might be able to

get some help from your friends, too. Try discussing what happened in your group and you might remember some important details from the story!”

Just seeing Mel’s hand raised and Maddy asking for the story instead of just taking it from the shelf gave me a glimmer of hope. Listening to my students summarize the story in their groups, I quickly realized that having the necessary social skills would play a vital role in the success of reciprocal teaching. I did not blame those students who were not yet ready to complete this trying new task successfully. I knew that it would take time and modeling for students to understand how to implement the strategy correctly. Vygotsky (1978) states “...what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development of tomorrow - that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87). I needed to take Vygotsky’s advice and meet students on their respective levels. I also needed to build off of what they already know so they would eventually be able to succeed through numerous new experiences throughout the year ahead.

I decided to call everyone back to the carpet to discuss what had happened in their groups. I made it a point to portray what a small group conversation should look like, and I also wanted to show students what was happening in some of their groups. I sat in the circle with all students and shared some of the quotes I had heard from the group discussion. I asked students after I repeated each quote, to put their hands on their head if they thought it was something good that

they would want to do in groups or to cover their eyes if they thought it was a negative behavior. I used the same quotes listed above from Max, Betty, Nat, Mel, and Maddy. Of course I didn't tell students who had made each statement; the point was to relay the message of positive social norms that would need to occur for reciprocal teaching to succeed and to help students learn how to avoid the negative behavior. We discussed each quote and behavior as it was said and we talked about what we could do next time to turn it into a positive behavior or how we could use our words to solve problems. For every negative action, students were able to express what could be done next time to help reciprocal teaching work. For example, even after I used Max's quote, "I can't retell and I don't even like my group," sure enough it was Max himself who raised his hand and exclaimed, "Whoever said that should just get along with their peers." Even though it didn't surprise me that he offered himself this advice, it did confirm that Max understood the need to work well with others. After modeling what a good problem-solver and group member does, I wanted to show students how to ask effective questions.

Questioning. I knew that students would continue to practice summarizing, and asking questions from the text could help them to do so. By re-reading the story "Quick as a Cricket," I felt strongly that I could both help students to re-tell and help them to ask questions about the story in the process. My hope at this point was to have students be able to summarize the story and ask

questions about the story as well. After rereading the story, we discussed what types of “teacher questions” we might ask one another in our groups. Teacher questions are questions that the educator might ask from the story about the character, setting, or plot. According to McLaughlin (2003), “They know they use questioning in their everyday lives and that increases their comprehension. Good readers are problem-solvers who have the ability to discover new information for themselves (p. 7). To teach good question asking skills, I spoke with students about why we need to ask questions in the first place.

I wrote “Good Teacher Questions” on our white board. I explained that a good teacher question zeroes in on one aspect of the story and is not about the whole story in general. I gave the first example to students and asked, “What was the problem in the story?” I told students that this was a good teacher question because it dealt with one detail from the story, the problem. After explaining the first example, I asked students if they could come up with good teacher questions from the story. As soon as I asked students to raise their hand if they could think of one, Max raised his hand the highest and called out, “What happened in the story?”

I asked students why Max’s question might be too broad.

Gran raised her hand and told the class, “It is not a great teacher question because it is not about one thing. It is about the whole book!”

I said, “You’re right Gran! Can anyone think of a teacher question about

one part of the story?”

Mel responded, “Who was the main character in the story?”

I wrote her question on the white board and asked her to tell us why it was a great teacher question.

She explained to the class, “Because it is about one character in the story, the main one.

Jewel raised her hand shyly and exclaimed, “I have a good teacher question, too. Name all of the animals in the story!”

As a class, we discussed the question Jewel asked and explained that we believed it to be a good teacher question because it only dealt with the animals and was not too broad.

Maddy calmly raised her hand halfway in the air, asking “What was your favorite part of the story?”

I wrote Maddy’s question on the board and had her explain why it was a good teacher question.

She told everyone, “It is good because it is about your favorite part. It is only one part of the story, so it is good.”

Several students demonstrated the ability to create multiple teacher questions with the class. Others sat back and listened. At this point, though, I realized that there were still students who were not cognitively ready for posing questions on their own. Struggling to differentiate for those students, I created a

list of the questions on the board so that by practicing questioning techniques, students could choose one of those questions to use at any particular time in their groups if they get stuck. I compared my strategy here to the use of manipulatives in math. By having a suitable “Question Wall” for students to bank from, I was hoping for success in the future with time and practice. The following figure shares teacher questions that we discussed as a class. These were questions that students could use when there was no other question they could think of.

Good Teacher Questions

What was the problem in the story?
Who was the main character in the story?
Can you name all of the animals in the story?
What was your favorite part of the story?
Was there a solution to the problem?
Why was the boy having so much fun in the story?
Do you think it would have been better if the boy rode an ant at the end,
why?

Figure 3. Good Teacher Questions

Before I sent students off into groups to practice coming up with their own teacher questions, I asked them what they remembered about being a good listener, speaker, and group member in general. We discussed several ways we could be good team members by using positive behavior. Each student was to think of his or her own question and pose that question to the group. Then, each group member was able to answer the question asked by the questioner.

That instant, as students moved into their groups, Nat asked, “My question is, ‘What did you eat for dinner?’”

Ned replied, “You were supposed to ask a question like ‘Who was the main character in the story?’”

“I don’t care who it was,” Nat responded, as everyone in his group laughed.”

At this time, I stuck my head into their group and tapped Nat on the shoulder. I told him, “If you were listening when we discussed good teacher questions, Ned is correct. A good teacher question is about one part of the story. Having dinner last night doesn’t have anything to do with the story, does it?”

Nat looked down without reply as the members of his group posed questions about the story.

Walking over to Maddy’s group, I heard such wonderful questions.

Maddy: Who was the main character in the story?

Gran: The boy was the main character!

Gran: Where did the story take place? I am tricking you!

Jerry: It happened EVERYWHERE! It was outside all over!

Jerry: What was he as slow as? It is not a lamb.

Maddy: Slow as aSNAIL!

Betty: I have a good one. Which animal do you want to be like?

Maddy: Lion to eat people!

Jerry: Tiger to eat people!

Gran: I waited to last to say this one. Poodle! I am as cute as a poodle!

Maddy's group was on-task and asking good teacher questions right away.

I was quite impressed by how well Maddy's group picked up on how to ask teacher questions without the need for redirection.

At this point, I had four students in Maddy's group who understood the concept and could take on the role of questioner in their group. To heterogeneously group students at this point, I should have split those four students up in other groups, which would have allowed them to model not only how to ask questions, but how to work well with one another. Looking back, I realize that this could have benefitted students in those other groups who were not yet ready to ask their own questions. For students who still could not implement the question asking strategy, more explicit modeling from the teacher needed to take place. The fishbowl strategy of students sitting in a circle, watching and listening to their peers utilize the question asking strategy, would be an effective tool. Students would benefit from listening to their peers and learn how to effectively use this strategy. Another way to model appropriate questions for students would be in a small group guided reading lesson. Students would read text on their level and a question would be modeled following the reading of text. Students would then be told to ask their own question about something that may have happened from the story. Over time by modeling several times in guided

reading, students would be able to apply their knowledge of question asking to the reciprocal teaching strategy.

Predicting. After rereading “Quick as a Cricket” once again to my students, we had a discussion about predicting and what types of predictions we could make. I explained that students could predict what could happen next, what could happen further in the future, or what could happen if a sequel book had been written. I asked Gran to give a prediction about what might happen next in the story.

She said, “There are a few things that could happen next. First, the boy could ride a different animal. He could also go somewhere else, like in a field or even in the ocean. Maybe something else that might happen could be that the boy gets a friend in the book too.”

Gran gave a magnificent prediction and after she did so, many hands were raised by fellow students who wanted to give their own predictions. With so many hands raised, I was sure that most students would be able to give a prediction about what could happen next. I modeled a single sentence prediction, and then I also modeled a prediction that was about the next several possible events. Students and I discussed why the second prediction was stronger.

Max said, “The second one was longer, so it was better.”

Quickly Gran raised her hand again and told Max, “It is not just because it was longer. It was better because Mr. Oertner listed many things that could

happen, not just one. They are things from the story that might happen.”

As students worked in their groups, I observed all students able to make at least one prediction. Many of these predictions offered a brief statement about what might happen next. Mel stood out among her peers by suggesting an alternate ending.

Mel exclaimed to her group, “There were a few different ways this story could have ended. I came up with a great way it should end instead of the way the author ended the story. I think it would be a better story if it ended this way. First, the story ended with the child putting all of the animals together to make him. I don’t think that is what should have happened. I think the child at the end of the story should have chosen his favorite animal and the child should have acted like that animal. He could have dressed up as that animal for Halloween and acted like that animal. I would have been as lazy as a lizard and dressed up like a lizard. Then I could just sleep all day long and relax instead of doing math.”

Here Mel spoke at length about numerous events that could have occurred. I gathered all students on the carpet for closure and to have Mel explain her alternate ending to the entire class. Mel stood up and gave an intricate explanation to all of us. I asked students why this was such a good alternate ending, and several students answered that it was so good because she went beyond just one sentence. I then went on to tell the class that Mel was creative in

the way she thought about the next several possibilities.

Although this is not predicting per se, Mel showed understanding and engagement to come up with something completely different that could happen at the end of the story, thus showing comprehension skills. Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007) remind teachers that students, “should tell you what they are predicting and why. They should tell you what their images look like. You want to hear questions they are asking and connections they are making” (p. 229). The authors stress that a best practice for teaching predicting is to help students understand that giving a sole prediction is not sufficient. Students really need to think about why they are making that prediction in the first place and what the prediction means, helping them to further understand the story, thus increasing their comprehension through the use of prediction.

After the positive example that Mel shared with the entire class, I felt good about students being able to continue to predict and suggest alternate endings as they read. Even though most students, through observation, predicted a single next event that might occur, I felt extremely confident at this point that at least students would participate in the predication strategy within their small group.

In hindsight, using the same book to teach prediction along with the rest of the strategies may have hindered students’ ability to make predictions as to what might happen next, since all of them had by this point heard the same story read aloud several times. This led my class to come up with alternate endings, such as

in Mel's case, instead of making a prediction as to what might come next in the text. Predicting works as a important guess and check system for students, where they guess what might happen, and then they must remain engaged in the story to see if their prediction came true. While the prediction might be correct or incorrect, the important part is that students truly dove into the text by making meaning from their prediction, right or wrong. McLaughlin (2003) has come up with three important questions to ask oneself when predicting: "What is the story about?" "What might happen in the story?" "What do I already know about _____?" (p. 20). By using the same book each time to demonstrate the predicting strategy, I inadvertently made it more difficult to help my students to come up with answers to those important prediction questions.

Clarifying. To *clarify*, students would need to explain details in their own words. I made sure students understood they needed to choose story language, which meant words from the story or a word students didn't know the meaning of. Then, the group could discuss how to clarify the language from the story, or come up with a definition. When modeling how to implement this strategy with my first grade class, I asked if anyone knew what it meant to clarify something. I could hear a pin drop. So, I went on to re-phrase and I asked the class what they did if they didn't understand a question or something I said.

Gran called out, "I understand everything!"

Before I could respond, there was general pandemonium, and I knew I

needed to take control of the class before moving on to the next section of reciprocal teaching. There are a set of rules and expectation and most students follow them on a daily basis. When there is something new being done, sometimes students in first grade throw the rules out the window because they are so excited to complete the activity. According to Weinstein (2003), “As a beginning teacher you would be wise to adopt a deliberate, thorough approach to teaching and reviewing rules and routines. Once you’ve gained experience-and a reputation-you try a less formal approach” (p. 78). Weinstein goes on to say that rules and expectations evolve over time. I needed to continue to monitor individual behavior and teach to each child’s needs.

“Don’t forget to raise your hand, Gran.”

I explained to the class that when students do not understand an idea or a word, they should ask a question or talk about it further so everyone understands what is happening. I pulled out our book “Quick as a Cricket” once again and found the word *tame*. I told the class that I was going to pretend I was the clarifier and the rest of the class was my group. I went on with the demonstration:

“I found the word *tame* in the text. I wasn’t sure what it means. Does anyone else know what the word *tame* means?” I asked.

Maddy raised her hand quickly, “I know what it means, and it means that you can tame something, like a lion!”

I told Maddy and the class, “That sounds correct Maddy, but I don’t know.

Should we ask the rest of the class?”

Maddy nodded, adding, “Sure.”

I asked the rest of the group “Do you think that is what *tame* means?”

Students all shook their heads yes. At this point, I had them convinced that they all knew the meaning of the word *tame*. I stopped the demonstration and explained that this was exactly how the clarifier should do his or her job. But, I made sure to express that if anyone in the group disagreed with the answer that a group discussion must occur to figure out the true meaning of the word. One more time as a group I told students that if they fail to agree with one another, it is okay, but they will need to use problems solving skills to fix the situation.

Students were very quiet at this point and looked ready to try. So I read the story “Quick as a Cricket” one more time, asking students to listen for a word or part of the story that was confusing to them. I sent them off into their groups where everyone was supposed to think of one part or word they did not understand. While some students attempted to implement the clarifying strategy, others seemed confused or disinterested.

Dan left his group to carpet surf and then went on to play with a Judy Clock in the corner, hiding under a desk.

I intervened. “Go back to your seat, Dan. You need to follow the directions.”

Nat was sitting on a table turned away from his group, and I redirected

him to turn around and talk with his group mates.

Nat looked at me and said, “I don’t like my group or this story.” He then returned to his seat and put his head down.

As I went over to Maddy’s group, Nat took out a dinosaur book, and shared it with Ned. I called everyone to the carpet to discuss what had happened during the use of the clarifying strategy. I asked the class what kinds of words they came up with to clarify. I received a wide variety of words that groups talked about, which suggested that some students had made progress with the role of the clarifier.

There is a difference between boys being boys acting out for attention, and boys that are acting out because either they don’t understand the task or they do not yet have the capability to complete the task. At the time, I was quite upset with Dan and Nat’s behavior, but best practices would indicate that I did not go about supporting them in the correct way. When thinking about Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development, I needed to get down on their level to find out where I could meet them. At this time, just managing the rest of the class I was not sure what to do. In this case, I would have needed to identify more specifically what these boys could already do and ascertain what they already knew. Then, by using scaffolding I could have built up eventually giving some independence back to the child after teaching him or her specific skills needed. Of course, these skills are complex and couldn’t be mastered by every child after a

single lesson for each strategy. In the next section I will share how I attempted to use best practices in my teaching while reading several stories and implementing reciprocal teaching one step at a time.

Where do I live?

The story “Where Do I Live?” was the first non-fiction selection I shared with students for reciprocal teaching. Before reading “Where Do I Live?” aloud, I introduced a turn and talk strategy to my class. I asked students to speak with a partner about where they lived, what their houses looked like, what was around their houses, and anything else they wanted to share with their partners. When I had done a similar activity in the past, my students became excited about sharing real life details with each other, especially in front of the whole class. After speaking with a partner this time, I asked volunteers to share some of the information about where they lived with the whole class. The first student I called on was Mel because I knew she would likely have a good story to share, and I hoped that Mel might spark other ideas from the class.

Mel began, “I live in a farm with my dad. It is almost a farm, but a house too. We have horses and dogs and chickens. I am not allowed to be with the horses because they are still too big for me, but I help with everything else. There is a field in my back yard, and I play in it sometimes. Oh and my house is big.”

I was particularly pleased with the level of detail that Mel shared with the class. After her explanation of where she lived, other students were eager to share,

and I called on as many students as I could so that as a class we could tap into and build as much prior knowledge about different living spaces as possible.

Max responded, “I live in a bigger house than Mel. It is a small yard, but I am allowed to play outside. I go outside a lot and play with second grade kids.”

Gran was next. “My house, um, my house is kind of big but kind of small too. My bedroom is small but my house is big. I have a field, too, in my backyard but it isn’t like Mel’s. It is like a small field but we don’t own it. My grandparents live there. We are going to move soon, though.”

Maddy offered, “My house is kind of small, but my dad and mom like it. My sister and I have the same room and we play a lot. We are not allowed outside because it is a busy street. Sometimes we do, but mommy is there with us most of the time.”

Next came Ned: “I live with my mom, but I was adopted. I didn’t live there all my life. I like my house, though. My dad isn’t home a lot. He works. It is a small house, but it is just me and my brother and my mom most of the time. We have a lot of grass and a playground.”

After letting students share stories about where they lived, it was clear to students that we all lived in different areas and in different types of houses. At the end of our presentations, Nat called out, “There are like different types of houses.” I was quite pleased with Nat’s understanding and his ability to pay attention to the conversation as well, and I hoped that Nat could take this

understanding into his group to further comprehend the text we were about to read aloud.

After I shared the story aloud with the class, we discussed how each of the four strategies in reciprocal teaching might be used with the book. From the previous read-alouds, I knew there would be questions about what to do, especially using a non-fiction text for the first time. I asked “What could the summarizer write about?”

Mel said, “The summarizer could just list all of the different places somebody could live, like in the book.”

“Perfect,” I exclaimed. “Now, what could the predictor do? Give it a try.”

Max raised his hand and asked, “Predict who lives with your friends?”

It was clear that Max wasn’t sure what he could predict about the story.

“We could talk about that, Max, but that wouldn’t be a prediction for the story. A prediction is something that could possibly happen that has not happened yet. Do you want to give it another try? What could possibly happen in the text or what could happen in your life that has to do with the text?” Max shrugged his shoulders.

Maddy offered to help him out. “We could think about where we want to live, maybe when we were older.”

“I was thinking the same thing Maddy,” I smiled. “Give me thumbs up if you can think of one place you would want to live when you are older.” All

students gave me a thumbs up. “Can anyone explain what the questioner could ask the group?”

Jerry was eager to answer: “Where do we all live in our group? I didn’t get to share yet.”

“I think that is a wonderful idea, Jerry. You will all get to share where you live in your groups if that is what the questioner wants to ask. I love it,” I said happily. “There is one last role to play in our group. Does anyone remember what the clarifier does? Can anyone tell us what the clarifier could talk about with their group?” No one at all raised a hand, and at this point silence fell over the class. “Well, what does a clarifier look for?”

Gran slowly raised her hand and said, “Words.”

“That is right, Gran. What kinds of words or what other types or parts of the story does the clarifier look for?” I asked.

Gran said, “We should look for hard words or things we don’t get.”

“Think about parts of the story that you didn’t understand and write them down so your group can talk about them. If you remember a word from the story that you didn’t understand, write the word down and talk about that with your group. Does everyone understand what to do for all four parts? If you think you could write about any role I give you, put your hands on your head.” Max smiled and did not respond; everyone else quickly put their hands on their head.

The language arts block during our first grade day consists of writing

throughout the day across the curriculum. There is independent practice each morning when students arrive during the kid-writing time. There is also shared writing time during morning meeting where the teacher and students share the marker to develop writing skills such as spacing, periods, uppercase letters, and content. There is also writer's workshop time during the day when students are taught the entire writing process starting with a rough draft, revising, and re-writing.

Before sending students off to the seats to begin utilizing their role in RT through writing a response prior to the group discussion, there was discussion about how we could write our responses. We went over the skills that we had learned and listed them on the board to help students think about what good writers do.

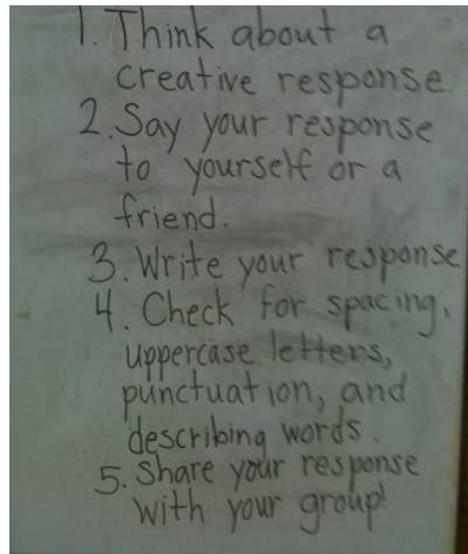
- 
1. Think about a creative response.
 2. Say your response to yourself or a friend.
 3. Write your response
 4. Check for spacing, uppercase letters, punctuation, and describing words.
 5. Share your response with your group!

Figure 4. What Good Writers Do

After rereading our writing guidelines on how to respond to the story, I sent children back to their seats to start writing. I prepared to assign each student a role and all students went back to their seats except for Max. I pulled him aside and asked if he understood what to do. He responded, “No, Mr. O.” I told him to wait at the guided reading table, and I could give him extra help after I gave the other students their roles.

Coming back to Max at the guided reading table, I told him that his role would be the summarizer. I asked him if he understood what he would need to do. Again he said, “No, Mr. O.” So I modeled a summary from another story we had read at morning meeting. I explained to Max that when summarizing a story, include the facts you know about the story. I told him he could also retell the story in his own words about what had happened in the story in order. I asked Max to think of three facts he learned in the story “Where do I Live?” Max told me “I think I could do it, and I will try.” I asked Max if he wanted to share his three facts with me first, and he said “No, I want to do it on my own.”

At this point, Max began to work. This is a point in my study when I realized that Max may need the individual attention to model a special role he may need to play in RT. There are times when students need to be taught one on one or just an extra reminder due to their zone of proximal development. In this case, Max was not cognitively ready just yet, to go straight from the story to his seat and begin to write. I realized this quickly and the differentiation for Max was

to review the direction and re-model how to complete his role in RT.

As soon as I assigned roles, Betty and Gran were off to the races. They had two wonderful sentences written as others were just getting started, showing how engaged and eager they were to share their predictions.

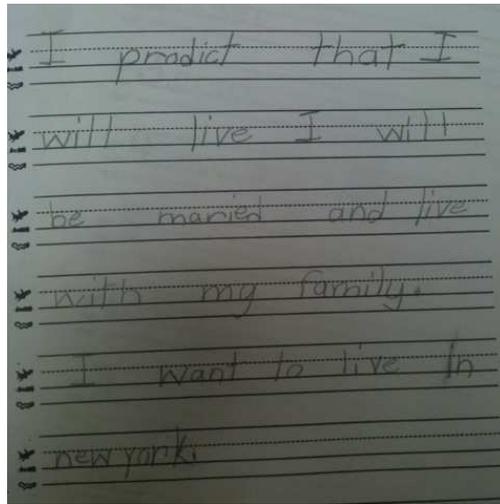


Figure 5. Betty's Prediction

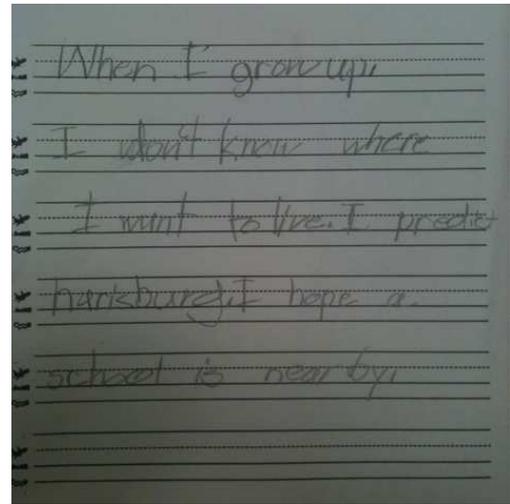


Figure 6. Gran's Prediction

Where do I live Retelling. According to Pilonieta (2009), groups should report their findings to the teacher. "In this manner, the teacher continues monitoring and scaffolding the students as they move to independent practice" (p. 122). By pulling students individually to retell the stories to me as they worked in their RT groups, I was able to assess the retelling skills of each individual student, thus forming an understanding of which students understood the text and which students needed more scaffolding to make sense of the text.

When I called Jerry over to retell me the story, he explained that in his group, he was the question asker and he made sure to ask the question "Where do

you live?” Then he re-told the story, as follows:

There are many places to live in this town. We all have different houses.

There are neighborhoods to play in and playgrounds too. There are people that live in other areas, in different states. People actually live all over the world.

I observed Jerry’s retelling and used the designed rubric to score his retelling of the story. Jerry referred to “people” in general and did not specifically name anyone in the story. Thus Jerry received a 1 on the rubric. Jerry was able to define many different settings in the story: Neighborhoods, playgrounds, different states, towns, and different houses. Jerry was able to score a 4 on this part of the rubric because he referred to more than three different settings in the text. Next, Jerry was able to tell most of the events in the story. He did not include all of the events by all means, but he was able to tell about many different places one could live. He received a 3 on the rubric. Last, I prompted Gerry twice in his retelling by simply saying “What else happened in the story Jerry?” He was then able to add more to his retelling, but he did need prompting from me as the educator. He received a 3 on the rubric because he only needed 2 prompts. Overall Jerry scored 11 out of 16 on the scoring rubric. The way the retelling rubric is set up is that Jerry was classified as being **proficient** at retelling the story, though he was on the lower end of the proficient range. Going from here, I would teach Jerry to include more details about the events that had happened and

positively teach Jerry about how to use characters in his retelling using specific names instead of pronouns such as he, she, and people. This would be done in a small group guided reading lesson with other students having the same needs.

“It’s Mine”

While most students demonstrated improved comprehension as they read “Where Do I live?” I still needed to attempt to meet the needs of those who were not getting the desired benefits from reciprocal teaching. According to Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007), literacy learning requires a supportive environment that builds positive feelings about self and literacy activities” (p. 58). To be able to do this, I needed to find a way to motivate students who had not found success in the RT portion of our literacy block. In the story “It’s Mine,” three frogs have a difficult time sharing. They quarrel all day and have a difficult time getting along. I knew this had the potential to be the perfect time to create the positive opportunities championed by Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley.

Gathering my students on the carpet without even showing them the book, I asked “Do we need to share with our friends?”

Promptly the entire class shouted “Yes!”

I went on to ask them why sharing is so important in school and at home. In typical fashion, Gran was eager to offer her thoughts: “Sharing is so important because we need to get along. If we don’t share then we can get in trouble. Even if it isn’t your friend, you need to share.”

Piggybacking on Gran's idea, Max added with a smile and a long, drawn-out voice, "I share with my friends at school but not with my sister at home. Well, I don't share with everyone." Max was enthused to share his comment with the class as his fellow students all laughed. This was positive attention for Max, and he was enjoying it thoroughly. "At recess I try to get the ball," Max added. "But then I let my friends have a turn too. It is like in games when you need to share the most."

I pleased with Max's response and added, "I often see you sharing at recess and was that is great! Sharing is so important so we can all stay safe and have fun in learning together!" But, there were many thoughts running through my head. In figure 7 below, I share some of my internal dialogue about how to help Max find success.

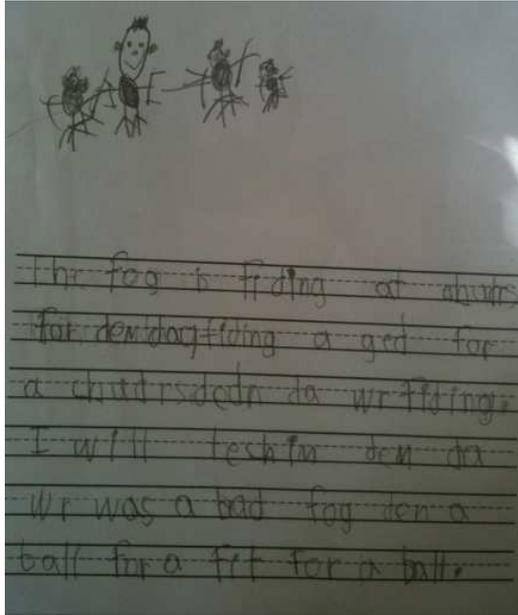
Get Motivated

Wow, Max seemed so happy to share his thoughts, I wonder why? Could this be the key to helping him succeed? Maybe I could read books to get him this excited for every read aloud. This really could work! I understand that Max and the rest of the class need to be excited about doing anything before they do it if I want them to be productive, but I had such a hard time getting Max excited in the past. Is he coming around? Will he join the group? Maybe I should start to look for books that will help not only Max to get excited, but the other children too. I can't wait to see if Max will participate after the read aloud. Which role should I

assign to Max to keep his positive feelings about this topic? I could ask him to be the summarizer and maybe he could tell me about the frogs that fight. I think that is what I am going to do. Max is so happy to share his comments and I really think he can do this!

Figure 7. Get Motivated

After introducing the story “It’s Mine!” I asked students to think about what the frogs were doing throughout the story and how we can use what we learned about them to help us share in our lives. After reading the story and seeing that Max was still excited and engaged. I knew that he was excited to share his response. Part of best practices in teaching reading is getting students motivated and engaged. Since Max was so engaged with this story, I was eager to hear his response. This was one of the first times that Max wanted to participate without prompting or needing to pull him aside to explain what to do. It seemed like Max was taking what he had learned in the prior days and he was going to use what he had learned to respond.



“The frog is fighting at each other for them doing fighting again. I will teach them that they were bad frogs then they won’t fight for a ball.”

Figure 8. Max’s Retelling of “It’s Mine!”

I was quite pleased to see Max complete the activity in a timely manner and participate appropriately with his group. Max was engaged and excited to be able to tell his group what happened in the story. Since the goal of reciprocal teaching is to get students engaged in discussion of text, I saw this as an important success for Max. While he had not yet learned to summarize the story correctly, he connected the fact the frogs were not sharing with one another and he wanted to fix that situation. Max indicated in his retelling that he understood the main concept of the story, though he disregarded many small details.

Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007), say that, “Differences in literacy achievement from one child to the next in the same grade will vary and must be addressed with small-group instruction, early intervention, and inclusive classroom programs” (p. 59). In reflecting on what I could do for students like Max in the future, I know that I will need to incorporate small-group instruction to help students retell the small details of the story. Here Max needs continued direct instruction about what to include in his retelling. Max displays the ability to understand the main concept. Max needs to be reached where he is at and instructed on his level to further foster his ability to comprehend text on a higher level.

“Sheep Out to Eat”

After seeing progress in the participation of so many students in the story “It’s Mine!” I moved forward, still trying to reach each student where he or she was at to develop comprehension. What happened with this next story was intriguing. This humorous fiction story about sheep going out to eat and making a mess all over the place had been a favorite of past classes. There was laughter and enjoyment on all of the students’ faces as I introduced the story to the class. After hearing the story “Sheep Out to Eat,” Ned and Betty went to their seats with the rest of the class to initiate their roles in each group by writing responses prior to discussion. In separate groups, Ned and Betty played the role of predictor. I often need to sit one-on-one with Ned to re-teach or scaffold instruction for him to

stay on task. Betty, on the other hand, is almost always working before anyone else takes out a pencil. Even though she is often quiet, Betty always completes her work. Today Ned was hooked, and he got out his pencil and frantically wrote down his prediction about what the sheep might do next.

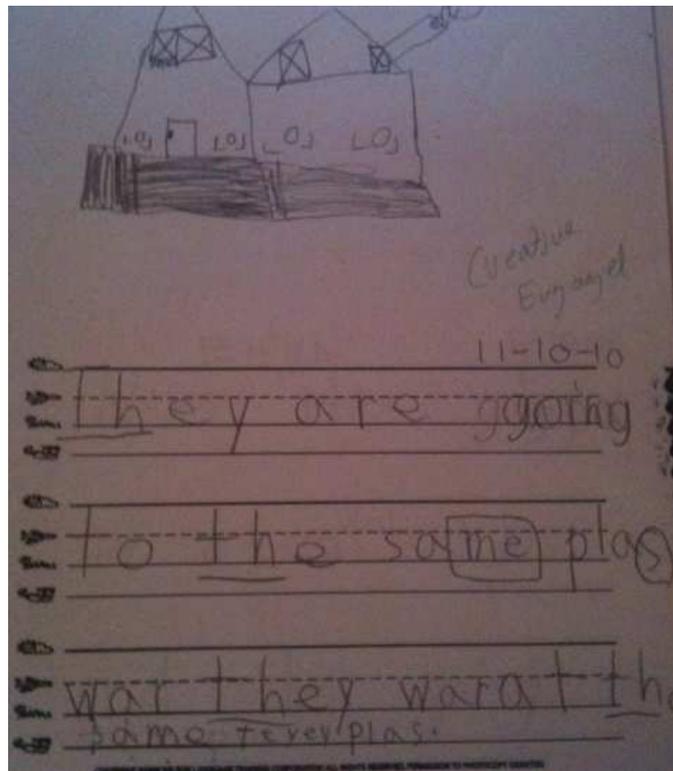


Figure 9. Ned's Prediction

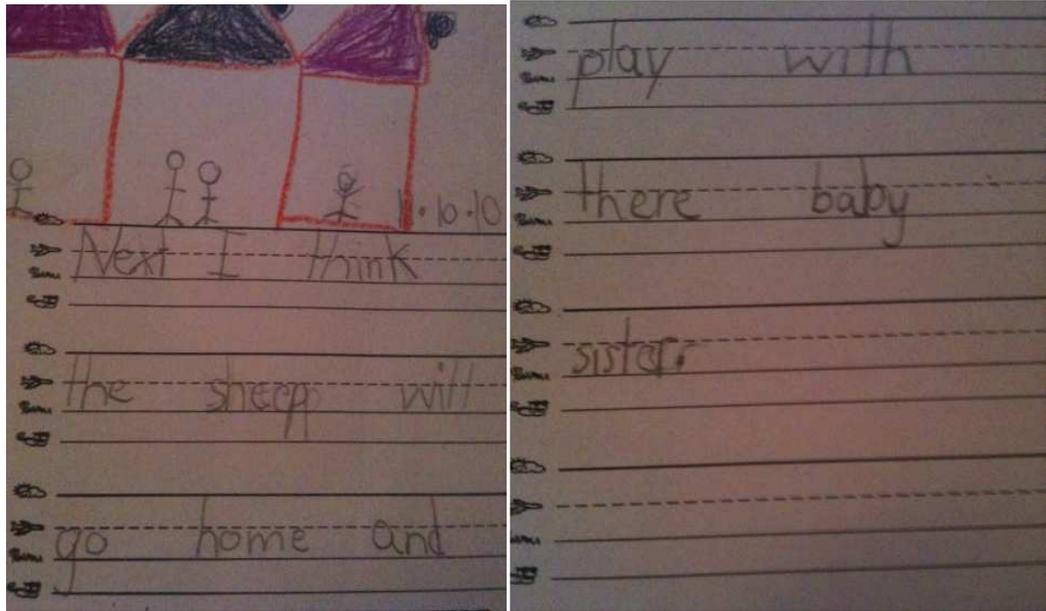


Figure 10. Betty's Prediction

Different Experience Brings Knowledge

Ned's prediction of what might happen next in the story was that the sheep were going to go straight back to the same tea shop they were eating at throughout the story. After reflecting on Ned's prediction, I asked him why he predicted they would go back to the same place.

"I don't know. I just think they will keep going back to make a mess at the same place every day forever," he explained.

I followed up with, "What would they do if they went back every day? Would they even be allowed back in?"

Ned exclaimed, "They will probably just keep going back and sneak in

and make a mess at night.” Betty brought her little sister into the story by predicting the sheep would go home to play with their little sister. When they retold the story to me after completing this activity, Betty scored a 13 out of 16 on the retelling rubric, which was proficient, while Ned scored 8 out of 16, which is classified as developing comprehension.

Exploring Student Performance

Reflecting on Ned’s progress after the read aloud, I believed that he understood what was going on in the story, and while his prediction may have been somewhat unconventional, it still made sense. Ned’s thought was relevant to what was happening in the story. When it came time to retell the story, Ned failed to give key events as to what the sheep actually did in the story. Ned was able to understand the main concept of the sheep making a mess, but was only able to tell one event that had actually occurred. By using the retelling rubric to assess comprehension, I was able to gain important insight into Ned’s developing ability to comprehend text that was read aloud to him. Just because Ned was able to make a sound prediction, though, did not imply that he fully understood the story. I observed Ned being able to support his prediction with evidence from the text. Ned used one aspect of RT, predicting. As Ned shared his prediction with his group, I observed him speaking to his group showing he understood how to make a prediction. Ned sat with his group and listened to others sharing their roles. When it came time for Ned to retell the entire story to me while I assessed him

using a rubric, it was evident he used the prediction strategy he created and was not yet ready to implement the other roles while retelling. This told me that even though Ned now showed proficiency in predicting, there needed to be differentiation activities so he could fully grasp the other roles in reciprocal teaching to help him retell the entire story. According to McLaughlin (2003), “After explaining and modeling strategies, teachers scaffold instruction to provide the support necessary as students attempt new tasks” (p. 10). Ned was able to implement the role of predictor, but needed more scaffolding in the other three areas so he could, in turn, use those strategies and apply them to comprehend text. Ned as well as other students who needed differentiation activities to learn how to use the four roles in RT worked together in a small group setting daily to achieve the goal of being able to use all four roles in RT to comprehend a story.

Post-Retelling of Text. After implementing reciprocal teaching and observing progress in several students, I was able to analyze the progress of all students using the retelling rubrics from the text used in reciprocal teaching. For each story, certain groups were chosen and I was able to have students retell certain texts one on one. From the beginning of reciprocal teaching I was able to see progress in numerous students. The very first retelling was from the story “McDuff and the Baby.” One key finding was when analyzing Betty’s retelling rubric. She scored advanced in the category of setting and proficient in all other categories. This showed that although Betty was slow to participate, she listened

to her group members and was able to comprehend the story. At the beginning of the year, Betty was reading on grade level but needed many teacher supports such as teacher prompts. This helped me to realize that Betty was able to gain insight through dialogue and bring that knowledge with her when retelling, thus needing less prompts from me as the educator. In this story, Ned was unable to participate and when asked to retell the story he said “I don’t know what happened!” Even though Ned listened to the read aloud, as the educator I could tell that Ned displayed no interest in the story. Ned scored emerging on the retelling rubric. At the beginning of the year Ned also scored emerging before the implementation of reciprocal teaching. One could analyze that Ned needed to be interested and have the ability to participate in reciprocal teaching to foster his retelling skills. By listening to the read aloud, Ned was unable to produce what had happened.

In the story “Chrysanthemum,” I was able to assess eight students on the retelling rubric. Out of the eight students I assessed, Max was the only student that scored emerging. After reading my observational notes as to what had happened in his group, the other seven students displayed the ability to participate in group dialogue within their group. Max did participate and listened to the rest of his group for a short period of time, but slowly began to leave his group and return back and fourth as the dialogue took place. This was an example of Max needing specific instruction as to what was expected of him in the reciprocal teaching group.

As I took a step back to scaffold instruction for each role in small groups, change began to occur. Slowly students who were not participating as much as other students, began to understand their roles. In the story “Caps for Sale,” Jewel was able to participate in her reciprocal teaching group adding insight to Gran’s questions. Jewel started off the year being able to retell a story on her level, but needed numerous teacher supports. She was able to give key concepts of each story, lacking sequence. By participating in the group dialogue, Jewel was able to score developing on the retelling rubric. Even though she did not display proficient in retelling, Jewel made progress since her first day in first grade. Gran came into first grade reading above grade level and she was observed taking over the group leader role. Gran made decisions for her group and played “teacher” within her reciprocal teaching group. It seemed at the time that Gran was teaching students what had happened in the text, thus taking away students’ dialogue in her group. Gran grew stronger in retelling, scoring advanced in all areas on the rubric. Because Gran understood how to implement each role, and teach the other students in her group what had happened in the story, Gran grew stronger in her ability to retell text.

After taking a step back to help students foster discussion so all students would be given the opportunity to speak within their groups, I allowed students to write their response prior to holding group dialogue. In my head, I believed this to help foster discussion for students such as Betty, Jewel, and Ned who were

always quiet in their groups. On the retelling rubric for the story “It’s Mine,” I found that students who displayed the ability to write their responses were those students that scored proficient. After analyzing eight retelling rubrics for the story “It’s Mine,” Nat was one student who did not score proficient. Analyzing the student work sample from Nat, I was able to clearly see why he may have scored emerging. He was able to write one sentence about what might happen next in the story. He shared his response with the group and was observed listening to the rest of the groups’ responses, not adding to any of the group discussion. Nat showed enthusiasm for his prediction, yet still was unable to obtain understanding of text. This helped me to understand that writing a response may be fine for students having the capability to write several sentences pertaining to their specific role in reciprocal teaching. The other seven students assessed for this story scored proficient on the retelling rubric and displayed the ability to write their responses and participate in group discussion.

Throughout my study as an educator I learned that students need to be able to understand how to use each role in reciprocal teaching to gain benefits of being able to retell text. Also, to participate, students needed to show interest and engagement within the text. In the story “The Snowy Day,” Betty showed that she was not capable of retelling, yet Betty has made progress in retelling throughout the study. During the read aloud, Betty displayed behaviors such as showing detest for the text. When writing her response to the story and sharing it

with her group, Betty again grew quiet. Betty scored emerging on this retelling rubric. Ned, on the other hand, scored proficient on the retelling rubric in all categories. This was a breakthrough and it was due to the interest that Ned had in the story. He displayed behaviors such as question asking and enthusiasm for the text during the read aloud and while his group held dialogue. Ned helped me as the educator to understand the importance of reading interesting and exciting texts for all students.

As my study came to a close, I was able give running record assessments to all students in small group guided reading. The goal of the study was for students to understand the four roles of reciprocal teaching and be able to use them when reading in any setting. At this point in the school year sixteen out of eighteen students were reading on grade level. Sixteen out of eighteen students scored proficient in retelling text on their guided reading level. At the beginning of the year there were five students who were still developing or emerging in retelling text. This may explain why the three students who were now proficient in retelling were thinking about the roles used in reciprocal teaching and using them to help retell text.

Summary: Our Experience

At the beginning of the data collection period, I was full of anticipation. After reading the literature on reciprocal teaching and thinking about how I might apply it with my first grade students, I anticipated that everything would go

according to plan. While reviewing the pre-survey results from my students, I learned they had many different opinions about reading and speaking about books together. After introducing the RT strategy to students, I soon came to realize that there is much more to teaching six and seven year old students a comprehension strategy than just modeling it and expecting them to apply the strategy. I needed to look much deeper into why some students had difficulty understanding how to make effective use of reciprocal teaching. Children clearly learn on different levels and in different ways. Going into my study, I knew this and when I gave responsibility of independence to my class, I gained a further understanding of where each and every one of my students was at cognitively. I quickly realized when the reciprocal teaching strategy was not yet within a child's zone of proximal development. Slowly, taking it a step at a time I was able to reach my learners in their own unique way. It may not have been to the extent I originally hoped, but after meeting every student where he or she was at, I was able to reach out to help foster comprehension. Academically and behaviorally my students have grown in so many ways. I feel like my students have taught me much more about how I can be an effective teacher due to the implementation of this study. With the ability to apply social skills in discussing text with one another, my students have gained comprehension skills to use in their lifelong learning journey. The students who were not originally ready to implement reciprocal teaching have also grown in many ways. From where they were at the beginning

of my study, they now have the scaffolding to move on to the next step on the road to comprehension.

Data Analysis

According to Ely (1997), the researcher should start to look for categories in his or her earliest field log entries. I read through my field log, starting at the earliest entry and developed labels or codes to identify key events that were happening in any given entry. I specifically examined how students were interacting with each other within small groups. I also looked for students' ability to have a conversation about the text with one another. Being able to retell the read aloud was an integral part to my study. I also coded student quotes pertaining to their oral retellings of stories that were read aloud. I analyzed students' strengths and weaknesses in each aspect of reciprocal teaching and coded many direct quotes that students made during the implementation of reciprocal teaching, showing students' understanding or lack of comprehension. After coding each entry, I entered each code into a coding index, which allowed me to tally how many times each code occurred in my field log and where it occurred as well.

I also coded student work samples displaying students' ability to utilize the reciprocal teaching strategies that we studied. Coding student work also helped me to identify off-task behaviors and to intervene when students exhibited an inability to comprehend a story.

My analysis of scores in student rubrics also helped me to keep a clear record of my students' developing comprehension skills as well. I coded rubrics showing students' ability or inability to retell text. This gave me insight into when and how the RT strategy supported or did not support students' ability to comprehend read-alouds. Lastly, I coded surveys to better understand students' interest in listening to, retelling, and discussing books with their peers. After analyzing each piece of data, I completed the same process of keeping a spreadsheet, or coding index, with all of the codes that I identified.

I also wrote numerous reflective memos pertaining to the data I collected. Reflective memos consisted of my thoughts about the data I collected. I shared my opinions about what I believed to be happening. I also wrote about why I thought each event had occurred. The reflective memos were written throughout my study starting on the first day. After rereading each reflective memo, I coded my thoughts and feelings. I placed the codes on the same spreadsheet as the other data I had collected. Analyzing my own reflective memos gave me the ability to recall what had happened each time students worked with the RT protocol. By writing regular reflective memos, I was able to consistently analyze what was happening and modify my practice to meet the needs of my students.

As I reflected on my study and coded my data, I was also able to read several authors' works to help me to reflect on my study through a variety of lenses. I read Dewey (1938/1997), Delpit and Dowdy (2002), Vygotsky (1978),

and Freire (2003), and wrote a reflective memo applying each author’s ideas to my study.

After sorting my codes into how many times they appeared and where they appeared in the data, I was able to create categories or bins from the majority of codes I have found. Ely (1997) refers to bins as “coded data that can be given an initial rough sort” (p. 162). I then looked at relationships between the categories or bins and was able to depict the major findings of my study in a series of preliminary theme statements.

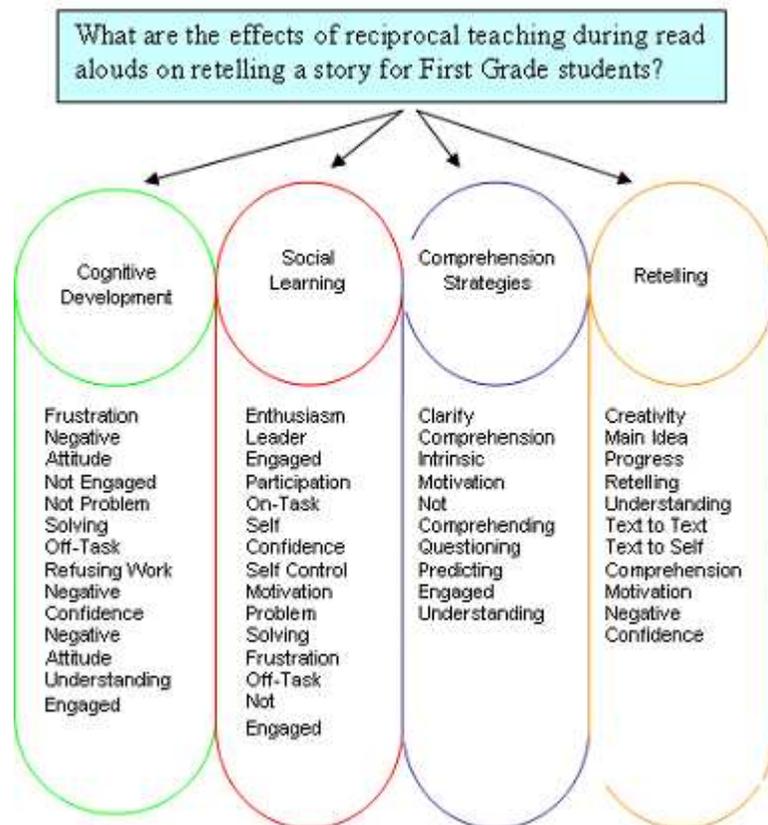


Figure 11. Bins.

Findings

My study examined the observed and reported experiences of students when reciprocal teaching was introduced as a comprehension strategy for read alouds in my first grade classroom. I intended reciprocal teaching to foster the ability to retell text by giving students the opportunity to teach each other through dialogue. I hoped that students of all ability levels would be able to implement reciprocal teaching, thus furthering their knowledge of the read alouds I presented in my study. After reflecting on students' work, group dialogue, and retelling rubrics, I was able to code data and develop bins that led me to draft the theme statements I share here.

I designed this study because in my experience as a first grade teacher, I have found that many students are capable of listening to a story and even reading a story on their own their reading level, but lack the ability to comprehend and retell text. Before beginning my study, I thought that students of all levels would succeed in the use of this strategy, but I quickly learned that not all students were socially ready to work with one another. I needed to employ scaffolding so all students would be able to implement reciprocal teaching. I still vividly recall the first day I tried to implement reciprocal teaching when Max crossed his arms and said, "I'm not doing it!" I knew then that there was going to be much work needed to help all students benefit from what reciprocal teaching had to offer.

When students were cognitively ready, reciprocal teaching was a useful

tool to support comprehension skills. It would only take but one student in each group though to hinder the entire group's success. Due to the social nature of reciprocal teaching, all group members needed to learn to cooperatively speak and listen to one another, solve problems in their group, and help each other to learn about the story, no easy or automatic task to be sure. The table below reveals students' reading and retelling attitudes post study.

Reading and Retelling Attitude Post-Survey			
Do you like retelling stories to your teacher?	14	3	1
Do you like retelling stories to your friends?	11	7	0
Can you remember a story in the order it was read?	8	5	5
Do you think it is fun to talk about a book with your friends?	14	4	0
Can you remember even small details from a story after it has been read to you?	12	5	1

Table 2. Post-Survey Results

There were three major changes between the pre and post surveys. There was an increase of 5 students who reported liking retelling. Prior to using the RT strategy, it may have been that students never had the prior experience of retelling stories to the teacher; therefore they may not have known if they liked doing so or not. After having understood how to do so, and given the opportunity, students now reported they do like to retell stories to the teacher. In the pre-survey, there

were 3 students who did not like to talk about books with friends at all. In the post-survey, all children reported liking to talk about books with friends. This was a major accomplishment for me as the educator in the classroom.

Throughout the study, there were students who were observed getting along well with their peers and also students observed that were not cognitively ready to work together and needed more practice developing social skills. I was pleased to see that all students in the classroom felt comfortable talking about text with peers, even those students who started the year off needing extra practice and differentiation to use the RT strategy. While 11 children initially reported that they were able to remember a story as it was being read, only 8 children reported being able to do so at the conclusion of the study. On the pages that follow, I share my explanation of themes that emerged in the areas of cognitive development, social learning, comprehension strategies, and retelling.

Cognitive Level

Although reciprocal teaching may promote social learning, few first grade students are cognitively ready to implement reciprocal teaching independently at the beginning of the school year.

Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that "...what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development of tomorrow - that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (p.

87). One of the key concepts of reciprocal teaching is for students to gain the ability to discuss text in a small group setting. To be able to do this, all group members need to have the cognitive ability to work socially with others. Many students in my first grade classroom did not have the cognitive ability to do this at the beginning of the school year. According to Vygotsky, the assistance that I needed to give students was scaffolding so they could work independently tomorrow. In this situation, many students were not ready to be on their own, no matter how much scaffolding I provided. Time and time again, I attempted to model each component of reciprocal teaching. It was my job to try to help my students obtain the necessary skills to advance to the next level. In first grade at the beginning of the year, students are on so many different levels cognitively. I needed to look into each child's level and meet him or her at a different place. In small groups, this was difficult for me to do because of the differences in the prior knowledge students brought to my classroom. To make my scaffolding effective, I needed to engage every learner in activities within their cognitive ability level while addressing prior knowledge as well. There were numerous times in my study when students refused to work and rather than continue to chastise them for misbehavior, I needed to learn why each child did not want to participate in the first place. With Nat twirling around on the carpet when he should have been with his group, I needed to divert my attention to why he was doing this. Did Nat just choose to be silly instead of doing his work? Or, did Nat not yet have the

necessary social skills to implement reciprocal teaching? I also thought about Nat's prior knowledge in the use of strategies and concepts such as RT. I found there definitely needed to be scaffolding for Nat so he could become successful at implementing this strategy. Exploration of the skills that Nat has already presented was a need. Then I needed to start from that point to give Nat the essential knowledge and skills to use this strategy. For example if Nat displayed the ability to predict the next event in text but could not yet predict several of the next events including small details, during small group instruction Nat would be taught how to add small details in his predictions and practice this skill to give him confidence to be able to implement the strategy in RT..

After each read aloud was complete, I modeled the four strategies of reciprocal teaching-for students again and again. Constantly the class and I spoke about how to use positive social skills within their group. I posed problems to the class so students could better understand how to solve them without the need for me to be by their side. Still at the beginning of the school year for six and seven year old students, there was a need to set routines and expectations not just during reciprocal teaching but throughout the rest of the day as well. Without a clear cut set of directions and expectations, I could not expect students to act as I wanted them to. Writing ideas with paper and pencil first provided additional scaffolding for children who were ready to use these tools. Because some students were not ready to write their thoughts down on paper, I once again had a dilemma on my

hands. Without the necessary background knowledge, scaffolding, and social skills, students are not ready to benefit from RT.

Social Learning

Reciprocal teaching demands that students work together to achieve a common goal. Students needed scaffolding to help them understand how to cooperatively learn from one another while remaining engaged in group discussion. Students also need support to learn to solve problems within the group so positive communication may occur.

It is an important job for any educator to have some control in the classroom. To have students work together in a social setting is a task in itself. Especially in the first few weeks of school when students are still getting to know one another and the teacher is getting to know the diverse needs of each learner, it is crucial to set expectations so students can prosper from working together.

Pilonieta (2009), suggests that when students are using reciprocal teaching, they are “jointly constructing and enhancing one another’s understanding of the text” (p. 121). My students struggled at the start of the school year to do this. Gran, for example, possessed the ability to work with her peers while remaining engaged, but her performance suggested that she was above the rest of the class academically. Gran displayed engagement but still needed to learn the social skills that would allow her to work well within her

group. She was often controlling and demanded her peers do work while she managed the group. Clearly, I needed to model positive engagement with peers and also speak with Gran about how to be involved positively in her group. Tending to the individual needs of students like Gran was crucial to help students realize how to work better with others.

Vygotsky (1978) concluded, “Writing should be meaningful for children that an intrinsic need should be aroused in them, and that writing should be incorporated into a task that is necessary and relevant for life” (p. 118). After modeling how students could write their responses before having their writing help them to foster group discussion, I made sure to discuss with students how to make connections to real life. Vygotsky would say that by fostering real life experiences and connections, students would prosper by working together. Students shared and responded to each other’s writing in a positive way within their reciprocal teaching groups.

According to Bower (2001), “Peer and cross-aged tutoring are as natural as sibling relationships and occur whenever a more accomplished student aids a lower achieving classmate” (p. 6). Although this may be true for students once they feel comfortable in doing so, at the beginning of a new school year the students with less prior knowledge tended to shut down, while those with more took off like rockets. I observed it to be difficult for students like Gran to slow down and wait for others like Max. It was difficult for Gran to learn how to help

Max to become a social member of the group.

To combat this issue, problem posing and problem solving needed to be done. Dewey (1938) states, “The teacher reduces to a minimum the occasions in which he or she has to exercise authority in a personal way. When it is necessary, in the second place, to speak and act firmly, it is done in behalf of the interest of the group, not as an exhibition of personal power” (p. 54). At the beginning of the school year, Max could not control himself when a problem arose. Even though I began to model how to participate and Max responded appropriately to the problem solving exercises, he still had difficulty exhibiting self control in his RT group. All students need to be equipped with the necessary social skills to implement reciprocal teaching as a comprehension strategy.

Eventually, a differentiation to social learning took place. Students were mandated to take turns. When they had a piece to share they had an exact turn in reading their thoughts from each paper. This provided a structure to the group dynamic, but it still gave students the opportunity to get thoughts into the air verbally. There was very little response, though, from others in the group once each student was finished reading. Hence, writing down thoughts first on paper may have taken away from the social learning aspect of reciprocal teaching. Even though there was more content to the discussion, the open ended responses of the reciprocal teaching were taken away.

I find it most important to create a safe learning environment where

students can and will learn. When implementing reciprocal teaching, it is of the utmost importance the educator set important ground rules and expectations before social group work takes place. Even if the educator does this, there is still a need to scaffold specific activities that will ensure the success of student's social skills. Students in first grade have different backgrounds, prior knowledge, and different life styles at home. Students need to be taught directly how to interact within a group setting. There need to be opportunities for students to practice social skills throughout the day as well, starting at the beginning of the school year.

Comprehension Strategies

Modeling comprehension strategies for first grade students enables them to discuss story elements and reflect on their own thinking about the text during and after the read aloud to help them comprehend text.

Dewey (1938) states, "The educator is responsible for a knowledge of individuals and for a knowledge of subject-matter that will enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to social organization, an organization in which all individuals have an opportunity to create something, and in which the activities in which all participate are the chief carrier of control" (p. 56). It is the educator's job to set up reciprocal teaching and make sure that all students are ready for the opportunity to implement the strategy effectively. Dewey says that

it is the teacher's job to be responsible to set up social organization. In my study, I attempted to do as Dewey suggests. I needed to set up the social organization so students could efficiently use multiple comprehension strategies within each group. I looked at it as having several separate social organizations in the classroom. Each group was its own social organization. The way I set up groups was imperative to the success of reciprocal teaching. Eventually I came to the realization that first grade students need extensive modeling and direct instruction prior to the implementation of reciprocal teaching. To be able to use this comprehension strategy students needed to work as a cohesive unit. By modeling and reviewing expectations daily, most students slowly gained the ability to effectively use reciprocal teaching and increase their retelling skills.

According to Murphy (2009), "Despite the differences across the purposes and goals of various approaches, evidence suggests that discussions about and around text have the potential to increase student comprehension, metacognition, critical thinking and reasoning, as well as students' ability to state and support arguments" (p. 743). Murphy states that there is "potential" to increase comprehension and metacognition. Students in first grade need to be able to work with one another first before taking control of their own learning. According to Murphy, if students are able to do this, then comprehension skills may increase. When I began by quickly demonstrating each new strategy, numerous students were lost when they tried to have a group discussion because

they didn't fully understand what to do. By taking a step back and differentiating for the class, I was able to hook more students into participating positively in the strategy. When students were able to get their thoughts on paper first, they were able to use their writing as scaffolding to foster discussion. Betty, for example, used her writing to speak up in her group, but Nat and Max were not ready to write their thoughts, and instead needed direct instruction in order to make progress. According to Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007), there is a balance in comprehensive literacy instruction. The teachers' roles are "Explicit instruction, modeling, scaffolding, facilitating, and participating" (p. 39). The authors state this as best practice in teaching literacy, and the roles start with high teacher control and go to low teacher control. Modeling for students, according to Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley, is in the realm of high teacher control. Thus, when encountering students who were are not cognitively ready to comprehend the text and write their response, modeling should be done as explicit instruction with high teacher control. In order to do this, a small group writing workshop could be used to model exactly what is expected when writing responses to text.

According to Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007), best practices for teaching comprehension strategies would occur thirty minutes daily and "Instruction in this time block would focus on vocabulary acquisition and study as well as teaching children effective comprehension strategies for constructing meaning with text and becoming self-regulated learners" (p. 316). Reciprocal

teaching consists of four separate comprehension strategies. By consistently modeling the four strategies daily with my students, many were able to gain understanding of how to apply each strategy, thus constructing meaning during read alouds. This was evident when numerous used the strategies effectively within their groups to retell text verbally. After modeling how to effectively use each strategy daily, students checked for their effectiveness implementing RT on their own. There were times when modeling comprehension strategies for the whole class did not meet the needs of all learners and activities needed to be differentiated. When this was the case, it was evident that direct instruction in the use of strategies, such as small group instruction, needed to be done to meet the needs of all learners.

McLaughlin (2003) states, “After explaining and modeling strategies, teachers scaffold instruction to provide the support necessary as students attempt new tasks. During the process, teachers gradually release responsibility for learning to the students, who, after practicing the strategies in a variety of settings, apply them independently” (p. 10). Throughout the day in first grade, students were given many opportunities to practice the comprehension strategies that were modeled for them. Guided reading, shared reading, literacy centers, and independent reading time are parts of the literacy block in first grade. During guided reading, I was able to observe students’ respective zones of proximal development and assess where I needed to meet them. Then by giving direct

instruction in each of the four comprehension strategies in RT, I was able to begin to see advances in understanding of how to apply each strategy. After modeling strategies several times during guided reading, I was able to give some of the responsibility to the learners to practice strategies during shared readings and center time. Shared readings were used to implement specific strategies in RT one at a time. By taking the group as a whole, I was able to observe when students were able to independently apply each strategy during literacy center time. At this point, many students were able to utilize the range of comprehension strategies on their own. Thus by modeling the comprehension strategies in a variety of settings, students' retelling skills increased as they progressed from needing the full support of the educator, to constructing their own meaning of text due to the use of the strategies in RT.

Retelling Text

When using the four strategies of summarizing, predicting, questioning, and clarifying, students are able to identify the main idea of text, while including supporting details in their retellings of the text.

In my study, I found that those students who participated daily in reciprocal teaching were much more successful when retelling text than those students who refused to participate or were not cognitively ready to learn in this way. Bower (2003) suggests in his research, "The students who participated in

reading pairs also showed greater confidence when reading and discussing text than did the students who did not participate in the paired reading” (p. 10). Of course, those students using the strategy already were better at re-telling than those who weren’t yet ready to participate. This, in turn, often led to a higher level of understanding and a better retelling of the text. For example, in Nat’s case, when we started to write our responses, he shut down and dropped his pencil. He did not like writing in general and this was something extra now that he needed to do. As a result, when asked to retell any given story, Nat would often say, “I don’t know.” Nat needed scaffolding, in this case so he could complete the writing portion of RT. Nat needed to be taught first how to write his response on paper and that needed to be done in a small group setting or one on one. Even after teaching Nat how to write a response using a role in RT, there still needed to be engagement from Nat and motivation to complete the task. Nat’s prior knowledge did not necessarily lend itself to writing a response on paper. Thus, I needed to find out what motivated Nat and teach him the specific skills needed to explain his thinking on paper. Cognitively Nat could write. He displayed proficient writing skills when he was writing about a topic like trucks that interested him. It was my job to create a setting and provide opportunities for Nat to become engaged. Gran, on the other hand, often wrote more than one page for her role. When it was time for Gran to retell the story back to me, she often included thoughts that her group members had shared with her, helping me to see

how she benefited from the reciprocal teaching experience. Gran would tell me who it was in her group that helped her to understand the story better. For instance when Betty was the questioner, she asked a meaningful question that Gran understood and remembered. Gran took that experience with her and used it while retelling the story. Gran expressed sequentially what had happened in the story and after she reached the middle of her retelling Gran stated, “Betty asked ‘What was the problem in the story?’, and our group said that the problem was the monkeys took all of the hats and the man couldn’t get them back.” Gran went on to finish her retelling and this provided me with evidence that she was thinking back to a RT strategy when retelling text, thus helping to guide her understanding.

Vygotsky (1978) states, “Development in children never follows school learning the way a shadow follows the object that casts it” (p. 91). Vygotsky tells us here that all students come in and learn on different levels. Differentiation must be done so that all students may participate and benefit from any given strategy. Nat refused to do his work when he wasn’t able to do it. Vygotsky reminds me of the importance of having Nat complete a different task, one that he could complete with my assistance on his level of cognitive development. Nat’s refusal to complete his work was a reminder that I needed to differentiate instruction for him. A justifiable action for me as the educator at this point would have been to teach to Nat’s specific needs in his small guided reading group.

Effectively writing down one’s response improved his or her ability to

retell text back to me. Without writing down one's thoughts, Betty was able to give me the big picture of what happened in the story, including the main idea and a few characters. As my study progressed and Betty started writing down her thoughts, more of a concrete retelling became evident. I suspect that Betty's retelling skills increased not only because of the thoughts she wrote, but because of the thoughts of others in her group as well.

When students had a concrete way to share their thoughts, more content arrived within the group dialogue. The group conversation was not going around in circles anymore, since students could literally hold onto their thoughts. I believe this helped students to comprehend the story better, leading to a better ability to retell the story, including major and tiny details.

In retrospect, to be able to utilize all four strategies when implementing reciprocal teaching, students first needed to understand how to apply each strategy not only when writing their responses and using their responses in their groups, but students also needed to be able to apply the knowledge they had gained in their groups to retell the story to me so I could assess their understanding. There are several activities that could be applied to scaffold students such as Max's and Nat's understanding so they too could benefit from reciprocal teaching. For example at the beginning of the school year and throughout, small group guided reading lessons should be developed to teach particular areas that need support. By breaking down each RT role and practicing in guided reading groups, students

will get the necessary skills needed to extend their understanding when utilizing RT. Another strategy that would benefit students who are unable to apply necessary language skills would be grouping students in a different way. Instead of grouping students in fours to conduct RT, initially students may be grouped in pairs. By discussing the story using one role in RT and only speaking to one peer, students may gain language skills and build confidence prior to speaking in front of a larger group of their peers. Once it is acknowledged that students can perform the four roles of RT on their own, it will help them to understand text better, thus their ability to retell text will increase as well.

According to Weinstein and Mignano (2003), “Audible comments may disturb everyone’s concentration and progress; second, loud, public comments may be embarrassing and may have a negative effect on students’ motivation or willingness to ask questions” (p. 223). It is possible that some students in first grade were embarrassed or did not want to participate in the group discussion for fear of offering an incorrect response. To differentiate for such students an effective practice could be to model and discuss the text with those students at the beginning of the day, at centers, or guided reading prior to discussion to justify their response. This could help to motivate students to speak within their groups and also help them to improve their confidence to apply each role.

Pinnell and Fountas (2011) define making connections as “Searching for and using connections to gain knowledge through personal experiences, learning

about the world, and reading other texts” (p. 189). To meet each child within his or her own zone of proximal development, a concrete differentiation would be to help one make connections within the text to aid in comprehension of text. Because a key facet of comprehending text is through making connections, it is my job to help all students understand how to make connections between the text and themselves, the world, and other texts. There are clearly some texts that would not be fitting for some first grade students to make connections to. Therefore, the educator must find and read texts that motivate students to make connections, once again building on each student’s prior experiences.

Weinstein and Mignano (2003) state, “Before students can work together productively, they must understand the value of cooperation. This is especially important to high achievers who may prefer to work alone without having to assist others they perceive to be less able” (p. 256). Because of the differences in ability in first grade students, especially at the beginning of the year, it is important that students understand how to work together to help aid in understanding. To differentiate to meet the needs of all learners, heterogeneous grouping should be used, thus supporting Weinstein and Mignano’s statement that “high achievers” should be taught how to assist others. Activities such as teaching students how to help others by working together should be done prior to grouping. Students who come into first grade without the prior experience of working together could benefit from cooperatively working with peers to help

them understand text. Once the class as a whole understands that we are here to help each other learn, students such as Max and Nat may not feel as if they need to withdraw from the activity due to the understanding that we are all here to help each other.

To meet students within their respective zones of proximal development, scaffolding activities must be done. As an educator of students on different levels of cognitive development, I must teach to each student's specific needs. By meeting each student where he or she is at in his or her own zone of proximal development, students will, over time, be able to begin to utilize all four roles of RT thus aiding in the comprehension of text.

Future Plans

This study has not only shown me that I need to look at each individual child, but it also proved to me that all children learn on different levels. Even after being a teacher for six years, I still need to remember that to have and maintain a successful learning environment, I truly need to get down to the level of each child specifically and cannot just look at a group of students as a whole. I have grown as an educator by learning how to be patient with the students who are not cognitively ready to complete a given task. I have also learned to let students who are ready move ahead instead of holding them back with their peers. It doesn't need to be that all students are on the same playing field. Since all

students learn differently, it is significant that teachers teach in this matter. I have learned specifically that when one needs to take a step back to scaffold instruction, he or she better do so before going ahead or even more confusion will likely result.

There were times when frustration settled in not only for me, but for students as well. Looking back to understand firmly where this frustration came from, it was mostly due to the students who were just not ready to perform the tasks I expected. In order to follow best practices for all of my students, I need to come up with a plan to meet the needs of those learners who may enter first grade with less prior knowledge that I would ideally like them to possess. I still do not see reciprocal teaching working fully in a first grade classroom until all students are able to understand and apply the concepts within a small group setting, which usually does not occur until the second half of the year.

A plan to explicitly teach the four reciprocal teaching roles must occur next year when implementing reciprocal teaching in my first grade classroom. The role explicit teaching will play in my classroom will be to model and demonstrate the strategies numerous times, in many different ways to ensure that all students thoroughly understand the concept for each role.

One way to explicitly teach each role in my first grade classroom would be to use puppets to define each role for students to motivate and engage them in learning. By distinctly modeling each role with four separate puppets, students

may grow accustomed to the definition of each role. When students begin to take over more independence, they may benefit from practicing how the puppet portrayed each role, thus essentially turning them into each character.

After explicitly teaching students each strategy through the use of modeling using puppets, I plan to teach each role using the fishbowl method. In a fishbowl method of learning, students sit in a circle, watch, and listen to what is happening inside of the circle. For each separate role I will choose a demonstration group to hold a discussion using each role. Students will be asked to give feedback as to what they observed happening inside of the fishbowl. Students will be able to learn expectations of what group dialogue looks like and how to positively interact with one another. Another way of explicitly teaching students how to get along with one another would be to teach them how to problem solve within their groups. By using the fishbowl method once again, students will be given a problem and they will need to figure out how to solve the problem. Students that are watching and listening will again give feedback as to how they would go about solving any problem that may occur.

Lastly, throughout the entire first half of the year, I would explicitly teach the four roles independently in guided reading. In guided reading, students are on different reading levels. During each guided reading level, students learn new skills and strategies they can use to help them become effective readers. I will be able to take each small group and observe specific skills needed to be learned

prior to implementing reciprocal teaching using the four roles simultaneously. An example of this would to explicitly teach how to summarize a story using sequencing. Sequencing a story would be taught prior to reading the text and modeled several times throughout the course of each story. Once each group member has a thorough understanding of how to summarize, a new role can be introduced to the group. Building off of what was learned in the previous guided reading lessons, slowly students will become aware of how to use each strategy before, during, and after each guided reading book. When it is time to implement reciprocal teaching, students will have sound background knowledge of each role in reciprocal teaching.

In first grade students are taught specific social skills to get along with each other. This happens at the beginning of each year within the first few months. It is important in my classroom that students understand how to get along and follow the classroom expectations. Therefore I would wait to implement reciprocal teaching until the second half of the year. Throughout the first two quarters in first grade, my focus will be to teach problem solving skills and character traits so students can get along with out the need for me as the educator to intervene. If a student is able to function independently it is much more likely he or she will be able to work well with others within his or her reciprocal teaching group. To be able to do this, in the first half of the year I would go about grouping students in pairs instead of groups of four, as what is

needed for the reciprocal teaching strategy to take place. By grouping students in pairs and working with each other, students will begin to develop oral language skills to use in a larger group setting. When working with one other person, students may gain self confidence in their ability to listen and speak about any given topic. Slowly by transitioning students to a larger group, they may become aware of their abilities to answer questions in a larger group setting. This will all be done during the first half of the school year prior to the implementation of reciprocal teaching.

Therefore, future plans of this study include modeling each strategy at a much slower pace in small guided reading groups for the first half of the year. Once it is understood how to implement each of the four strategies and I know for sure that each student is able to do so, and then I will be able to introduce the whole concept of reciprocal teaching.

At the beginning of the school year, it is crucial that students gain the necessary social skills so they can work together to achieve a common goal. In group work, such as RT, students need a tremendous amount of practice working together. In the first half of the year, students need to be taught specific social skills that will be necessary when implementing RT during the second half of the year. I plan to use several strategies to help students use social skills during the first half of the year to get them where they need to be to begin reciprocal teaching. A major part of first grade social skills are having the ability to problem

solve within the group. For students to be able to work independently when I gradually release responsibility to them, problems will arise. By teaching students how to solve their own problems by modeling different situations that could occur, students will begin to solve problems in their groups, monitor their own behavior, and use positive social skills to help one another.

There are future plans to help foster strengths in students such as Ned in my classroom. Students that come into first grade at the beginning of the school year have specific needs that need to be met from the educator. Those students such as Ned need oral language skills, prior knowledge about text, and social skills to be able to work within the reciprocal teaching group prior to implementation. One way of doing this would be to assess where Ned is at orally and socially using observation and raw data from the kindergarten teacher. Once I understand what skills Ned already has, I will be able to meet him within his respective zone of proximal development. One key finding was that Ned did not have the necessary prior knowledge of the texts that were read to the class. By finding key interests Ned has in his life, I will be able to gather texts that are suitable for him. Getting students such as Ned engaged prior to the text being read is essential. Another way to develop Ned's language skills would be to introduce that story and read the story prior to the whole group setting. Ned will be able to gain confidence in his ability to answer questions about the text if I am able to implement this plan. Lastly, students need to be able to understand and

use text from the story in each discussion. Key vocabulary from each read aloud would be introduced in a small group setting so those students will be able to understand what is happening in the story. By doing this, I will be able to meet the needs of all learners. I will explicitly teach language from the story, how to interact with each other, and find stories that excite, motivate, and engage all students in the classroom prior the implementation of reciprocal teaching in the second half of the year.

I have thought about further questions I may ponder in the future as well.

What are the observed and reported experiences of first grade students when reciprocal teaching is implemented within an above average reading group?

Since my study was implemented with every single student, low and high readers, it would be interesting to find out how comprehension skills might develop further if those students reading above grade level were able to complete reciprocal teaching on their own. Then, I could work with the other readers in a small group setting such as guided reading and teach to their specific needs.

What are the observed and reported experiences of first grade students when reciprocal teaching is used as a means to produce writing? In my study, students were given paper to write their thoughts down for each role they played prior to talking within their group. They were to read what was written on their paper to start the conversation in each group. By asking this question, I could first implement reciprocal teaching with all students, then after reciprocal

teaching has taken place, what could students tell me about the book? Could they write their own version of the story? Could they retell the entire story across several pages? Could they come up with the problem and solution? It would be interesting to find whether reciprocal teaching not only fosters comprehension, but motivates students to write as well.

I intend to continue to complete action-research in my classroom and encourage my colleagues to do so as well. My findings truly helped me to realize how to teach to each child's specific needs and behaviors. This study has given me insight as to what I need to do at the beginning of the year on the first day of school to help children succeed. By building off prior experience and teaching to wherever each student is at in the first place, students will be able to come back day in and out with new experiences building from their old ones. This will produce understanding and hopefully motivation to remain engaged throughout each day in first grade.

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APPENDIX A: Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods. One of the requirements of the program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I am focusing my research on reciprocal teaching in first grade. The title of my research is "Facilitating Retelling Skills Using Reciprocal Teaching." My students will benefit from participating in this study because reciprocal teaching is a comprehension strategy that helps students to understand what they are reading by having small group discussions about a story after it has been read.

As part of the study, all students will be asked to participate in small group discussion and utilize four different roles. Students will be summarizing, predicting, questioning, and clarifying the text that is read aloud. A variety of read alouds will be examined throughout the study. Students will then get into small groups where each child will have a specific role. By using the four different roles while discussing text, summarizer, predictor, questioner, and clarifier, students will be able to comprehend what has been read aloud. We will use a simple survey to determine the children's feelings toward reciprocal teaching and classroom discussion in general. A rubric will be used to monitor student's ability to retell a story after it has been read aloud. Several interview questions will also be used to check student's feelings and understanding of reciprocal teaching. The study will take place from September 13th through November 24th, 2010.

The data will be collected and coded, and held in the strictest confidence. No one except me will have access to the data. My research results will be presented using pseudonyms; no one's identity will be used. I will store the data in a locked cabinet in my home. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

A student may choose at any time not to participate in the study. However, students must participate in all regular class activities. Please note that this will be exclusion from the study only, not the classroom assignments. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal during this study have any influence on a student's grade, classroom placement, or exclusion from classroom activities. Should you be concerned about the perceived risks associated with this study please contact Mrs. Barbara Bradley, Principal. She has reviewed the study and is available through the school office at [REDACTED] or your child's guidance counselor at [REDACTED].

We welcome questions about this research at any time. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or consequence. Any question you have about the research can be directed to me by phone [REDACTED] email [REDACTED] or you can contact my adviser [REDACTED] Education Department, Moravian College, [REDACTED].

Sincerely, [REDACTED]

I agree to allow my son/daughter to take part in this project. I understand that my son/daughter can choose not to participate at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature Date [REDACTED]

Student's Signature Date [REDACTED]

APPENDIX B: Principal Consent Form

Dear [REDACTED]

I am completing a Master of Education degree at Moravian College. My courses have enabled me to learn about the most effective teaching methods. One of the requirements of the program is that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. This semester, I am focusing my research on reciprocal teaching in first grade. The title of my research is "Facilitating Retelling Skills Using Reciprocal Teaching." My students will benefit from participating in this study because reciprocal teaching is a comprehension strategy that helps students to understand what they are reading by having small group discussion about a story after it has been read.

As part of the study, all students will be asked to participate in small group discussion and utilize four different roles. Students will be summarizing, predicting, questioning, and clarifying the text that is read aloud. A variety of read alouds will be examined throughout the study. Students will then get into small groups where each child will have a specific role. By using the four different roles while discussing text, summarizer, predictor, questioner, and clarifier, students will be able to comprehend what has been read aloud. We will use a simple survey to determine the children's feelings toward reciprocal teaching and classroom discussion in general. A rubric will be used to monitor student's ability to retell a story after it has been read aloud. Several interview questions will also be used to check student's feelings and understanding of reciprocal teaching. The study will take place from September 13th through November 24th, 2010.

The data will be collected and coded, and held in the strictest confidence. No one except me will have access to the data. My research results will be presented using pseudonyms; no one's identity will be used. I will store the data in a locked cabinet in my home. At the conclusion of the research, the data will be destroyed.

A student may choose at any time not to participate in the study. However, students must participate in all regular class activities. Please note that this will be exclusion from the study only, not the classroom assignments. In no way will participation, non-participation, or withdrawal during this study have any influence on a student's grade, classroom placement, or exclusion from classroom activities.

We welcome questions about this research at any time. The child's participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or consequence. Any question you have about the research can be directed to me by phone [REDACTED] email [REDACTED] or you can contact my advisor [REDACTED] Education Department, Moravian College,

Sincerely, [REDACTED]

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand the consent form, and received a copy. Matthew Oertner has my permission to conduct this study at Hamilton Elementary School.

Principal Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX C: Pre-Survey

Pre-Survey

Name: _____

1. Do you like retelling stories to your teacher?



2. Do you like retelling stories to your friends?



3. Is it difficult to remember a story in the order it was read?



4. Do you think it is fun to talk about a book with your friends?



5. Can you remember even small details from a story after it has been read to you?



APPENDIX D: Post-Survey

Post-Survey

Name: _____

1. Do you like retelling stories to your teacher?



2. Do you like retelling stories to your friends?



3. Is it difficult to remember a story in the order it was read?



4. Do you think it is fun to talk about a book with your friends?



5. Can you remember even small details from a story after it has been read to you?



APPENDIX E: Retelling Rubric

Retelling Rubric

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Book Title: _____

	1	2	3	4
Sequence of Events	Includes only 1 or 2 events or details	Includes at least 3 events or details	Includes most of the important events from the beginning, middle, and end in sequence	Includes all of the important events from beginning, middle, and end in sequence
Setting	Includes at least 1 general comment about the setting	Includes at least 1 general comment about the setting and describes the setting	Includes 2 comments and describes the setting	Go into detail about the setting describing 3 or more details
Characters	Refers to characters using general pronouns	Refers to characters using appropriate pronouns and includes at least 1 detail	Refers to most characters by name and includes details about each character	Refers to all characters by name and includes all most important details
Teacher Support	Retells needing 5 or more teacher prompts	Retells needing 3 or 4 teacher prompts	Retells with 1 or 2 teacher prompts	Retells with no teach prompts
Score	4, 5, 6, 7 Emerging Skills	8, 9, 10 Developing Skills	11, 12, 13 Proficient Skills	14, 15, 16 Advanced Skills

Comments: