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Reciprocal Teaching in a Third Grade Classroom

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Abstract

This qualitative research study investigates the observed and reported experiences of nineteen third grade students when reciprocal teaching methods were used during reading instruction. The study examines the students' use and application of the reciprocal teaching strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and asking questions. The study explores students' work and discussions during reciprocal teaching activities in both whole group and small group settings.

The findings suggest that the implementation of reciprocal teaching methods motivates students to read text, encourages students to be active participants in story discussion, and allows students to become aware of strategies to apply when reading independently. The findings also suggest that the quality of student work and student discussion improves with teacher modeling and guided practice.

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Researcher Stance

Background for the Study

I will always remember the day when I first began to read. I can clearly see an anxious five-year-old girl sitting in a blue armchair reading aloud for the first time from a Dick and Jane book. It was from that moment that I “appeared” to be a good reader. My parents could not believe how easily reading came to me. They could not stop giving me books to read aloud to them. Needless to say, they were very disappointed when my reading grades in school did not reflect the reading that they heard at home. They soon became aware that I did not understand the many words that I was reading. The primary grades were extremely challenging for me because I continued to struggle with reading comprehension. I also was often absent because I had childhood asthma. At the end of second grade, my mother was so frustrated with my lack of reading progress that she almost withdrew me from the Catholic school that I was attending. She did not know how to help me become a better reader.

My parents reluctantly decided to send me to the same school for third grade. They thought that they would see what would happen in another year. They did not want to uproot me from my friends and the routine of the school. My third grade teacher was a very firm, but fair nun. I remember feeling very afraid of her during the first week of school. As time progressed, I soon became very comfortable with her style of teaching. Once that happened, I realized that

she had much patience and really enjoyed teaching children. The most important thing that I remember about her was that she loved to read. She had posters all over the classroom where we would record the books that we were reading and describe what the books were all about. We completed many book reports and projects that I thought were very enjoyable. Before I knew it, I was beginning to make sense of what I was reading. Looking back on this experience, I feel that I began to comprehend what I was reading in third grade because I had genuine experiences in which I could interact with text. I was creating my own context for what I read, and I had opportunities to discuss my thoughts and opinions about the text.

My parents continued to work with me every night at home to reinforce the learning that was taking place in the classroom. They had even bought me a chalkboard on an easel, which is probably the best gift that I have ever received! I would write vocabulary words and sentences over and over again on the chalkboard. I would also pretend that I was the teacher. My parents would hear me explaining what words meant. I felt empowered to learn. I will always remember how successful I felt as a third grade student. This success motivated me to become a lifelong reader. Reading comprehension was something that never came easily for me, but when given opportunities to engage in reading activities, I was able to show growth and success as a reader.

I feel very honored that I am a third grade teacher, since my turning point in school occurred in third grade. It is common for third graders to believe that being a good reader is simply reading all of the words at a fast pace. They often are unaware that they also need to understand and make sense of what they are reading. Throughout my years teaching third graders, I have consistently noticed challenges that students face with the complexity of comprehension questions and the expectations of quality responses to literature. I have spent much time through the years telling third grade students that I love to hear the sound of pages turning while they are answering reading comprehension questions because I then know that they are trying to revisit the text to find answers. This is a very difficult task because students often do not naturally take the time to look back in the text to reread and find details to help them answer comprehension questions.

Reflections From a Mini-Study

I designed a mini-study during my first year teaching third grade. My students had a difficult time discussing and writing about what they had read. Their comprehension scores on multiple-choice questions were typically average to above average. Their scores on written response questions were typically below average. I was not sure if they did not understand events from the story or if they were just reluctant to write. For these reasons, I decided to implement dialogue journals for books of independent choice. I enjoyed reading and responding to my students' journal entries, but I felt overwhelmed at times

because I was not familiar with all of the chapter books that students had chosen to read. This made it difficult at times to insightfully respond to their entries. As time progressed, I decided to continue having students read and respond to independent books of choice but not in the form of dialogue journals. Students wrote notes, thoughts, and reflections in a notebook about their independent books. The students read them to me during individual conferences, and I posed questions about the main events in the story. The students began to be active readers, which helped them to comprehend text. I still felt like I was missing an important piece to the reading comprehension puzzle. The dialogue journals and reflections in notebooks did not help all students achieve success in reading comprehension. I think that this was due to the demand of writing necessary each day. I also realized that I probably did not spend enough time modeling reading strategies that help to make meaning from what was read. These strategies could have been applied when students were responding to literature both orally and in written form.

After reflecting on my concerns with implementing dialogue journals, I spent much time thinking about my core beliefs as a third grade teacher. I strongly believe in having students actively involved and engaged in learning. I often put these principles into action in math class when my students use manipulatives and play games to learn and practice math concepts and skills. My students participate in hands-on activities in science that allow them to discover

and explore the scientific method. I realized that I have a more difficult time when thinking of ways all students can be truly engaged in reading. I came to the startling conclusion that I had not always been giving students enough opportunities to be engaged and active readers. I began to think about ways that I could incorporate my core beliefs with my motivation to improve reading comprehension.

Research Question

I thought about my third grade teacher and my parents' motivation to help me succeed. I wanted to choose a research topic that would engage my students to be active readers so that they would be better able to comprehend text and respond to literature in written form. I wanted them to learn how to naturally look back in text and use reading strategies independently. After quite a bit of research and reflection on my own teaching practices, I decided that I would implement reciprocal teaching (RT) in my third grade classroom. The goal of RT is to have students apply the four strategies independently while reading. I chose this focus area because students would learn how to predict, question, summarize, and clarify while having meaningful discussions about the text.

One of the features of RT that really made an impact on me was the idea of students being the teacher when they take turns to be the discussion leader. It reminded me of the power of my chalkboard when I was in third grade. The idea

of taking on the role of the teacher could allow children to feel more confident about their own learning.

For these reasons, I proposed the following research question: What are the observed and reported experiences when reciprocal teaching methods are used with third grade students during reading instruction?

Literature Review

Introduction

Sweet and Snow (2003) define reading comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning” (p. 1). Through this definition, Sweet and Snow recognize two challenges of reading: how print represents words and constructing meaning from what is being read. Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, and Malatesha Joshi (2007) explain that reading instruction is a very complex process because students not only need decoding skills, but they also need vocabulary knowledge and metacognitive skills so they can understand what they have read. They believe that strong readers learn these skills through practice (p. 71). Sweet and Snow (2003) argue that a major problem in reading instruction stems from the fact that strategies are most often taught as a set of isolated skills that students do not use when reading text independently. “The engaged reader is intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from the text” (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, Scaffidi, & Tonks, 2004, p. 404). Sweet and Snow (2003) support that through multiple strategy instruction, students can be taught how to comprehend text on a higher level.

Multiple Strategy Instruction

Palincsar (2003) strongly believes that the goal of any type of instruction should focus on having students accomplish tasks independently. She believes

that this can occur when a teacher transfers responsibility for learning to the students and focuses on the processes, not products of learning. The processes of reading comprehension require teaching the students to use multiple reading strategies.

Integral to thinking about the place of strategy instruction is mindfulness that strategies are but a means to an end; they are a means of providing students entrée to the text, a means of checking on one's understanding, and a means of taking corrective action when experiencing difficulty in understanding the text. (Palincsar, p. 100)

Block and Pressley (2002) support multiple strategy instruction because there is very strong evidence that the instruction of more than one strategy at a time leads to students acquiring and using reading comprehension strategies. There is also evidence that students have been able to apply the strategies independently when taking standardized tests. Multiple strategy instruction supports comprehension because of performance on assessments involving reading skills (Block & Pressley, 2002). The goal of solid reading instruction is to be a self-regulated learner (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009). Pilonieta and Medina believe that self-regulated learners are able to choose from a set of strategies to better understand text. They are then able to choose another strategy if the one that they first chose is not helping them to make sense of the text. Teachers sometimes lose sight of

strategy instruction, and students become unfamiliar with monitoring their reading (Palincsar, 2003).

Guthrie et al. (2004) believe that students are capable to gaining deep understandings of text if they are interested in what they are reading. When students are engaged in what they are reading, there are three important effects: “cognitive strategy use, reading motivation, and reading comprehension” (p. 404).

Reciprocal Teaching Overview

“Reciprocal Teaching (RT) refers to an instructional procedure that takes place in a collaborative learning group and features guided practice in the flexible application of four concrete strategies to the task of text comprehension: questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting” (Palincsar & Klenk, 1991, p. 213). Palincsar and Brown (1984) are the co-creators of this instructional technique that promotes both “comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring” (p. 119) activities. Palincsar and Brown selected these four reading strategies because they promote the goals of enhancing comprehension and having students check whether it is occurring. Palincsar and Klenk (1992) believe that these four strategies were chosen because they

represent the kinds of strategic activity in which successful readers routinely engage when learning from text (i.e., self-testing understanding, paraphrasing while reading, anticipating and purpose setting, and taking

appropriate measures when there has been a breakdown in understanding.

(p. 24)

These four strategies also provide opportunities for readers to construct meaning from the text they are reading and support an interactive learning environment rich in discussion (Palincsar & Klenk, 1992). Carter (1997) believes that RT originates from the idea that reading involves a multitude of comprehension strategies and the opportunity to use them when needed.

The Four Reciprocal Teaching Strategies

Summarizing. Oczkus (2010) believes that summarizing is a very multifaceted process that requires the application of multiple reading strategies and skills. Summarizing is an essential reading strategy that comprises RT because it enables readers to not only identify important information in the text but also to involve the opportunity to make paraphrases and synthesize what has been read (Palincsar, 2003). Hashey and Connors (2003) believe that summarizing is such an effective strategy for comprehension because it enables students to only identify key points instead of retelling everything that occurred. Palincsar (2003) acknowledges that summarizing is much easier for students at the paragraph level. Once students become more familiar with the strategy, they can apply it to longer pieces of text. RT provides many opportunities for students not only to create their own summaries, but also to read and listen to those of their peers. This helps them become more capable readers (Oczkus, 2010).

Predicting. “Predicting is a strategy that assists students in setting a purpose for reading and in monitoring their reading comprehension” (Oczkus, 2010, p. 19). Oczkus (2010) identifies that students often enjoy making predictions because they relate predicting to a guessing game. Fielding, Anderson, and Pearson (1990) argue that students should not be worried about being correct with their predictions. Teachers must spend much time modeling the concept that predictions should be reasonable, but they are not always correct (Williams, 2010). Sometimes students come to terms that they only make predictions before they begin reading a piece of text. Hashey and Connors (2003) believe that predicting is a continuous process that does not only occur at the beginning of text. Predicting is such an important reading strategy because “it requires students to hypothesize about what the author might discuss next in the text” (Oczkus, 2010, p. 101). This gives students a purpose for reading because they will need to either confirm or disprove their hypotheses (Oczkus, 2010).

Fielding, et al. (1990) imply that teachers play an important role in instructing students how to make reasonable predictions. Teachers can ask prediction questions to their students, but they should make sure that they encourage students to explain their predictions and give them enough time to reflect on their predictions after reading (Fielding, Anderson, & Pearson, 1990). Teachers should model making predictions with both fiction and nonfiction texts

with graphic organizers as an aid to help in visually representing clues about text (Oczkus, 2010).

Clarifying. Clarifying can be defined as “keeping track of one’s comprehension of the text and knowing fix-up strategies to maintain meaning during reading” (Oczkus, 2010, p. 20). Clarifying is a complex strategy for many students because it integrates two important tasks: identifying a difficult word or idea, and then trying to figure out how to solve the problem that is causing confusion while reading (Oczkus, 2010). Kelly, Moore, and Tuck (1994) emphasize, “Clarifying is an activity that is particularly important when working with students who may believe that the purpose of reading is saying the words correctly; they may not be particularly uncomfortable with the words, and, in fact the passage, are not making sense” (p. 101). Kelly et al. (1994) believe that students need to be taught how to clarify text so that they can fully understand the different ways in which text can be difficult. Once they understand what can cause difficulty while reading, they need to be taught ways in which they can create meaning to a difficult word or concept. Stricklin (2011) believes that through clarifying words and ideas, students have the opportunity to make connections in the text because they are not skipping words. They have to think about what is confusing them, and that creates new meaning.

Questioning. “When students generate questions, they first identify the kind of information that is significant enough to provide the substance for a

question” (Oczkus, 2010, p. 101). Generating questions is an essential reading strategy because students read with a focus to identify the most important ideas from the text (Oczkus, 2010). Throughout RT lessons, students continually learn how to generate a variety of questions that include the skills of recalling, making inferences, and applying new information to prior knowledge. Stricklin (2011) supports the questioning strategy because it requires students to understand what they are reading in order to ask sensible and thought provoking questions to their classmates. Harvey and Goudvis (2007) believe that the questioning strategy is what really empowers students to comprehend what they read.

Curiosity spawns questions. Questions are the master key to understanding. Questions clarify confusion. Questions stimulate research efforts. Questions propel us forward and take us deeper into reading. Human beings are driven to find answers and make sense of the world. (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007, p. 81)

Implementing Reciprocal Teaching in the Classroom

Palincsar and Brown (1984) created the RT instructional technique to improve comprehension of seventh grade students who were poor comprehenders. The students were actively involved in the four RT strategies of predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying words and ideas. The students worked in small groups and took turns to be the dialogue leader. The teacher also served

as model to demonstrate think-alouds. Oczkus (2010) believes that think-alouds are so powerful because they show students what a good reader is thinking.

Palincsar and Brown (1984) conducted several studies with seventh grade students to show the effects of reciprocal teaching as a comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activity. In their first study, they examined the effects of small RT groups of 37 seventh graders, 24 of whom were identified as being poor comprehenders. Teachers taught and modeled how to use the four RT strategies: questioning, predicting, summarizing, and clarifying. Students read 13 expository training passages in small groups with a teacher to model the RT strategies and guide the dialogue. Students were assessed on comprehension by reading and answering comprehension questions with 45 passages, and they became more comfortable being the dialogue leader in their small groups as time passed. Students were placed in a variety of groupings such as: one to one, small group led by trained reading specialists, small group sessions taught by the general classroom teachers with no specialized training, whole group, and small group led by students.

At first, the data showed that students were asking unclear questions when taking on the role of questioner in their small groups. Students were able to take on the role of being a questioner after the teacher spent time modeling how to ask critical thinking questions. As time went on, students were able to ask main idea questions, and their summary writing also improved. Palincsar and Brown (1984)

found that the students were able to transfer the RT strategies to new tasks. As time progressed, students were able to take on their RT roles and engage in active dialogue about reading. The results implied that student improvement was evident in all student groupings.

When implementing RT in the classroom, the teacher first models the four strategies to the students so that they can eventually take on the role of teacher to lead a discussion about text (Williams, 2010). Hashey and Connors (2007) acknowledge that there is no particular order for introducing the strategies, but they do recommend that they be instructed one at a time with a daily review of strategies that were previously taught. They concluded that RT was most effective after all of the strategies were introduced, and that can be a very time consuming process. After the strategies are introduced, students need to practice using them through collaborative discussion (Williams, 2010). The teacher turns the strategy use over to a group of readers with a student leader (Block & Pressley, 2002).

Williams (2010) believes that RT strategies are conversation between teachers and students with the goal of a shared understanding of text. This conversation is structured dialogue that allows students to construct meaning to what they have read (Carter, 1997). Williams (2010) conveys that students need to fully understand the four RT strategies before their dialogues turn more “conversational” and the students begin to use the RT strategies more flexibly.

Berne and Clark (2008) strongly believe in student led dialogue groups because “they can be productive forums for students to develop their comprehension strategies” (p. 78). When students share their thinking aloud, they are being a model for their peers.

Kelly, et al. (1994) implemented RT with fourth grade students using Palincsar and Brown’s RT model. First, the teacher discussed the title of a story and elicited predictions from the small group of students. Then students silently read a limited part of a passage. Students then orally composed summaries, asked teacher-like questions, made predictions, and asked for clarification on any words or ideas. Students took turns as dialogue leaders as the teacher acted as a coach by assessing and monitoring strategy usage and comprehension of the text. After much practice, the students became more comfortable when applying the strategies while reading. The teachers were able to reduce their active role and act more as a coach to give feedback. The authors believe that students strongly need to be encouraged to perform these strategies when reading other texts independently.

Stricklin (2011) identifies the three primary responsibilities of teachers during a RT session. Before students read, the teacher must activate prior knowledge. While students are reading text, the teacher must encourage the use and application of RT strategies. After reading, the teacher needs to encourage students to reflect on the strategies that helped them the most and explain why.

Kelly, et al. (1994) also identify the importance of the teacher's role when implementing RT in the classroom. They think that teacher dialogue serves as a model for the students because they hear the teacher asking questions, modeling strategy usage, and providing feedback about their learning.

Rosenshine and Meister (1994) conducted a review of 19 studies that used RT to help students improve their reading comprehension abilities. The studies were conducted with students ranging from age seven to adulthood. The goal of the studies reviewed was to compare RT to traditional basal instruction, explicit comprehension instruction, and reading and answering questions. Using standardized measures to assess RT, the results favored RT because students outperformed the other groups. Rosenshine and Meister identified a core principle of RT to be scaffolding and student feedback during independent practice.

Pilonieta and Medina (2009) used Rosenshine and Meister's core principles of RT to design the instructional method of Reciprocal Teaching for the Primary Grades (RTPG). They adapted the traditional format of RT from Palincsar and Brown as well as Rosenshine and Meister's principles that were found in their analysis of RT studies. Pilonieta and Medina (2009) implemented RTPG with first grade students, but they encourage its use for other primary grades. They created a five phase instructional method that incorporates principles from past research on RT. The zone of proximal development was an

important principle because each strategy was individually introduced and applied in the first phase. In the second phase, the teacher was the leader and had some students participate in a RTPG group as other students watched in a fishbowl type exercise. In the third phase, all students participated in RTPG groups, but they reported their responses to the teacher. This allowed for teacher scaffolding and monitoring so that students could eventually move toward independent practice. The fourth phase was students working in independent groups with the teacher walking around as a coach. Finally, the fifth phase integrated the independent groups with writing so that the teacher had evidence to measure progress in each student's knowledge and application of the strategies. Throughout the phases of RTPG, scaffolding was evident because the teacher gradually released the responsibility of using and applying the strategies to the students. Throughout the phases, the teacher gradually removes himself or herself and becomes a coach to support the learning environment.

Expert scaffolding was integrated throughout the process of implementation. At first, the teacher is the expert when the strategies are introduced. Then the students who are selected during the fishbowl phase become familiar with RTPG and provide a scaffold for their peers. During independent group work, students use worksheets and cue cards to stay engaged and remember the roles of the strategies.

In a three-year study, Hacker and Tenent (2002) examined the implementation of RT by 17 elementary teachers in two large urban schools.

Teachers were given the opportunity to make any modifications and additions to RT they believed were necessary to help their students become better readers.

Hacker and Tenent observed the teachers two to five times throughout the data collection period, focusing on the use of the four RT strategies, student dialogue, teacher scaffolding, and any additional elements to RT that the teachers thought were meaningful for students to be successful readers.

Hacker and Tenent (2002) found that not all of the students used all four of the RT strategies, and that it was challenging for students to apply the strategies independently without highly scaffolded instruction. Students had great difficulty engaging in meaningful dialogue, which Hacker and Tennant attribute to “inadequate knowledge, misunderstandings among participants, widely disparate knowledge of the participants, and a lack of discourse skills” (p. 712).

Teachers modified their implementation plan by extending the whole group instruction time of RT strategies by two months, and they also added writing as an important component to reciprocal teaching to support the quality of student dialogue and application of RT strategies. The implications of this study were that most of the teachers continued to place strong emphasis on the strategic processing of text. This effort had a positive effect on students’ reading comprehension scores in the following years.

Overcoming Obstacles

Hacker and Tenent's (2002) study gives a concise account of the types of problems that may occur when implementing RT in a classroom setting. The authors clearly describe the modifications made to solve the problems that both teachers and students were facing. Through their observations and teacher feedback, they identified the major difficulties that students faced with each of the four strategies. They created suggested solutions as ways to make students successful so that they could better comprehend text.

The major obstacles students faced with making predictions were that they were not using textual clues, making wild predictions, making only surface-level predictions, and not automatically checking predictions to see if they were accurate. Hacker and Tenent (2002) suggest that teachers allow more time to model making a variety of predictions by using think-alouds. Teachers should also spend time stopping to summarize what has happened so far and then adding prediction statements. Since Hacker and Tenent observed that making predictions was very awkward in expository texts, teachers should ask students to carefully preview illustrations and headings to make hypotheses about what they will be learning from this type of text.

Hacker and Tenent (2002) identify the problems that students faced when they were question generating. They found that students were mainly only asking very literal questions instead of asking inferential ones. Hacker and Tenent

conclude that the students simply needed more practice in asking questions. They suggest making more time for teacher modeling and guided practice so that questions are not superficial.

Hacker and Tenent (2002) explain that the clarifying strategy was rarely used independently because students would think that there was nothing that needed clarification. When students would use this strategy, it would most often be to clarify words, not ideas. A suggested way to remedy this situation is to require students to be accountable for making clarifications. If they are unable to think of a word or idea that is difficult for them, they should select something from the text that a younger student might have trouble reading. This still gives them the practice of clarifying a word or idea to break down its meaning. Teacher modeling is strongly suggested throughout the RT process to continually review examples of making a variety of clarifications.

Hacker and Tenent (2002) finally identify common problems that students faced when summarizing selections of text. Most of the challenges involved word-by-word retellings of text, summaries that were too long and missed the main points, and negative attitudes about summary writing because students thought it was difficult. Some of their suggestions for modifications are to have students work collaboratively in their groups to write summaries along with teacher feedback, more whole group practice of writing summaries, and more instruction of writing summaries.

Many of the modifications in Hacker and Tenent's (2002) study involved more time in the whole group setting. When the students could not apply the strategies independently, the teachers took a step back to have a higher level of scaffolded instruction.

Conclusions

Palincsar (2003) believes the RT strategies provide an outline for organizing conversation so that students can interact with text to gain comprehension. "The reciprocal teaching process appears to be effective in making novice readers more expert in the cognitive encoding, organization, and integration of material they read and in the executive functions of self-monitoring and control of comprehension, thereby helping them to find that memory" (Kelly, et al., 1994, p. 59). The reciprocal teaching procedure provides a natural structure in which teachers can model what expert readers do so that students can become independent readers (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Student engagement, motivation, and academic progress are effects of implementing RT strategies in the classroom (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). Lubliner (2001) also supports RT as an effective teaching technique because it not only improves comprehension skills needed for taking tests but also for an information age.

Methodology

Introduction

When designing this research study, my main focus was to create a structure that would include a strong framework along with the flexibility to make adaptations when found necessary for student growth and success. This study was created with the goal of motivating students to read by using four comprehension strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. I recognized students' need for scaffolded instruction of the four strategies by modeling, guiding, and applying the strategies while reading. I also identified that many of the students had a variety of learning strengths and needs that had to be acknowledged for the implementation of the study.

The plan of this study included the idea that students' thoughts and opinions about instruction and their learning are very important. The plan focused on students becoming aware of their learning through metacognitive activities and self-reflection. Through various modes of instruction and learning activities, students became part of the broader framework of reading comprehension.

Setting

The setting for the study was a suburban elementary school in eastern Pennsylvania. The total enrollment of the elementary school for the 2011-2012

school year is about 1,045 students. There are eight third grade classrooms with about 20-24 students in each room.

The classroom for the study was set up with student desks in groups of two side by side. All students' desks faced the front of the classroom. The seating arrangement provided opportunities for buddy work and collaboration. There was a kidney shaped table used for small group reading instruction where students were able to interact with each other. There also was a large carpeted area where students sat for whole group instruction, small group work, and collaboration.

Further, the classroom is a co-teaching environment, where I work with a special education teacher who is certified in both general education and special education. The co-teacher is in my classroom 50% of the day. When he is not in my classroom, I have a paraprofessional in the classroom for additional support.

Participants

The participants for this study were 19 third grade students. The participants were 12 girls and 7 boys, 7 of them with individualized education plans (IEPs). These students have specific learning disabilities in the areas of reading, writing, and math. The classroom is heterogeneously mixed with a variety of academic strengths and needs.

Procedures

Before I began my study, I applied to the Human Subjects Review Board (HSIRB) at Moravian College for approval of my study, which was granted (see Appendix A). I then gained permission from my building principal to conduct the study in my classroom (see Appendix B). I introduced the topic of my study to my students before sending home parent consent forms to make the students' parents aware of my study (see Appendix C).

Students were given a pre-study survey (see Appendix D), which focused on gathering information about students' perceptions about reading and their knowledge of the four RT strategies. I carefully analyzed the surveys to obtain background information that would affect instruction. The surveys also provided the opportunity to get to know the students better.

Throughout the data collection period, students experienced two units of study in the *Scott Foresman Third Grade Reading Street* program that focused on "Smart Solutions" and "People and Nature." The study was designed to be a more interactive way to read text by applying the RT strategies and to motivate students to be thought provoking readers.

When students were engaged in the reading strategies and learning activities, students worked independently, in pairs, and in groups. I observed students daily and recorded my observations and reflections in a double entry field log. This log became a very important part of the data collection process

because I noted what I observed and my relevant thoughts and reflections about those observations.

Unit 2: Smart solutions. The first five weeks of my study focused on introducing students to the four RT strategies and how to apply them while reading. Students were also introduced to the RT 4 Square Chart (see Appendix E), which they used when reading text of varying lengths and complexity. Throughout this half of the study, students spent much time in whole group instruction listening to both teacher-led and student-led think-alouds. Many of the RT 4 Square Charts were completed together as guided activities with scaffolded modeling for support. Students also had opportunities to work both individually and in pairs when applying the RT strategies during reading. During the last two weeks of the unit, students participated in teacher-led RT groups.

The following section outlines the progress of my planned activities for Unit 2: Smart Solutions.

Week One

- Introduced study to the students
- Administered pre-study survey (see Appendix D)

Week Two

- Introduced “Readers at Work” toolbox of strategies to the students

- Introduced the RT 4 Square Chart (see Appendix E) and modeled each strategy during teacher read and think-aloud of *The Honest-to-Goodness Truth* by Patricia McKissack
- Students participated in the RT process for *The Honest-to-Goodness Truth* in a whole group setting
- Reviewed the four RT strategies from the toolbox
- Students participated in a shared reading of *The Grasshopper and The Ant*
 - Guided completion of the RT 4 Square Chart for *The Grasshopper and The Ant*

Week Three

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *The Rampanion* by Arlene Erlbach
- Instructed a mini-lesson on making predictions
- Students participated in a shared reading of *The Stamp Collector*
 - Students made predictions following model from mini-lesson
 - Whole group guided practice during the completion of the RT 4 Square for clarify, question, and summarize strategies with a think-aloud
- Students read *Prudy's Problem and How She Solved It* by Carey Armstrong-Ellis in a whole group and with a buddy

- Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
- Teacher feedback of strategy application

Week Four

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Why Possum's Tail Is Bare* by Gayle Ross
- Instructed mini-lesson on clarifying ideas from text
- Students read *Salsa Garden*
 - Clarified ideas in the text through guided practice
 - Instructed mini-lesson on clarifying words from text
- Students read *Farming*
 - Students independently completed RT 4 Square Chart
 - Instructed mini-lesson on clarifying ideas from text
- Students read *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens in a whole group and with a buddy
 - Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
 - Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Introduce teacher-led RT groups
 - Introduce Be the Teacher Bookmark (see Appendix F)
 - Introduce Directions for the Foreman

- Introduce RT job cards (see Appendix G)
- Yellow group read *Our Garden* by Jessica Quilty and participated in RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *The Magic of Coyote* by Joyce A. Churchill and participated in RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Week Five

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Colonial Homes* by Walter Hazen
- Instructed mini-lesson focusing on asking questions
- Students read *How to Build An Adobe House*
 - Modeled with think-aloud how to ask teacher-like questions about the text
 - Students practiced creating questions from this text
- Students read *Like the Good Old Days* independently
 - Students responded to the story by applying the 4 RT strategies when completing the RT 4 Square
 - Teacher conferencing with students
- Students read *William's House* by Ginger Howard in a whole group and with a buddy

- Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
- Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Yellow group read *The Colonial Adventure* by J. Matteson Claus and participated in RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *Houses Past and Present* by Donna Watson and participated in RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

After the completion of the first half of the study, I had two main goals before beginning the next reading unit. I first conducted mid-study student interviews (see Appendix H). These interviews were a very powerful tool because students felt at ease to be candid and describe their thoughts and feelings about reading and the progress of the study. I conducted the interviews individually, allowing students to express their opinions. I asked them questions focusing on their favorite reading strategy thus far and if and why they thought they had become better readers.

I also wanted to take some time to introduce collaborative work goals. Students in my classroom had worked in groups before in the subjects of science and math, but I wanted to review general strategies of group work.

The following is an outline of the sixth week of my study.

Week Six

- Mid-study student interviews focusing on attitudes and perceptions about Readers at Work
- Introduce cooperative learning goals

Unit 3: People and nature. At the beginning of week seven, I knew it was time to begin the next unit in reading. I also knew that it was time to provide more independent practice during completion of the RT 4 Square Charts. I was also anticipating the introduction of the student-led RT groups. After spending the first half of the study clearly modeling how to use the RT strategies, I had to release the teacher control and lead students to gain more independence.

The following is an outline of the activities conducted during the second half of the study.

Week Seven

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Eat Your Vegetables* by Elizabeth Rusch
- Instructed RT strategy mini-lessons based on students' needs and progress
- Students read *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart in a whole group and with a buddy
 - Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
 - Teacher feedback of strategy application

- Reviewed expectations for group work
- Reviewed the Foreman's directions to lead group
- Yellow group read *Tulips for Annie's Mother* by Peggy Bresnick Kendler and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *Nicky's Meadow* by Juna Loch and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Week Eight

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Greek Mythology* by Mary Pope Osborne
- Instructed RT strategy mini-lessons based on students' needs and progress
- Students read *Pushing Up the Sky* by Joseph Stewart in a whole group and with a buddy
 - Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
 - Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Yellow group read *Pictures in the Sky* by Chanelle Peters and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

- Blue group read *Star Tracks* by Stephanie Sique and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Week Nine

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Wildlife Watching* by Jim Arnosky
- Instructed RT strategy mini-lessons based on students' needs and progress
- Students read *Night Letters* by Palmyra LoMonaco in a whole group and with a buddy
 - Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
 - Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Yellow group read *The First Year* by Christian Downey and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *Follow Me* by Donna Watson and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Week Ten

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Fiddler Crabs to Rhinos* by George W. Frame
- Instructed RT strategy mini-lessons based on students' needs and progress

- Students read *A Symphony of Whales* by Steve Schuch in a whole group and with a buddy
 - Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
 - Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Yellow group read *A Day With the Dogs* by Rena Korb and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *Whales and Other Animal Wonders* by Sharon Franklin and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Week Eleven

- Students participated in the RT process for teacher read-aloud of *Hurricane* by Christopher Lampton
- Instructed RT strategy mini-lessons based on students' needs and progress
- Students read *From Cornfield to Volcano* and completed RT 4 Square Chart
 - Conferenced with students to give individual feedback of strategy usage
- Students read *Volcanoes: Nature's Incredible Fireworks* by David L. Harrison in a whole group and with a buddy

- Students tried to apply RT strategies by using sticky notes and placing them in the story
- Teacher feedback of strategy application
- Yellow group read *Mount St. Helens* by Isabel Sendao and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards
- Blue group read *Earth Movement* by Carol Talley and participated in student-led RT discussion with the Be the Teacher Bookmark and RT job cards

Weeks Twelve and Thirteen

- Administered post-study survey
- Conducted end of study interviews

Data Sources

I chose three main sources in order to compile data that best represents the purpose of my study: artifacts, inquiry data, and observational data. These three sources allowed me to gather data to form the big picture of what occurred throughout the course of the study. I was able to triangulate my data from these three data sources.

Student work. Collecting student artifacts was a very important data source throughout the course of the study. The majority of student artifacts that I collected were the various Readers at Work 4 Square Charts that were completed

throughout the study. These response charts were collected and examined as a formative assessment. I compared the RT 4 Square Charts when completed individually, in pairs, and in collaborative groups. This gave me insight into the strengths and needs of the students' abilities to apply the four reading strategies in different learning environments.

Surveys and interviews. I wanted to capture what my students thought and said about the activities that occurred in the classroom during the study. Student feedback is an effective way to gather data that is directly taken from the students. Their feedback was a way that I could support what I observed and reflected on in the classroom.

To gather authentic student feedback, I administered both a pre-study and a post-study survey to my students. The surveys were used to learn about students' attitudes and perceptions about reading. I also interviewed students at the middle of the study and at the end of the study. The interviews were a way in which students could discuss their progress during the study. Students appeared to share their true thoughts and opinions more easily during interviews than in writing on the surveys.

Observational data. I observed students throughout the course of the study. I took note in my field log of what I saw, what they said, and what they did. I was able to observe students when they were working individually, in pairs, or in small groups. After observing students, I would write my reflections of what

I thought about their actions in my field log. This data gave a glimpse of the students' performance, strengths, and needs during the study.

Trustworthiness Statement

One of the most important goals of my study was to be a trustworthy researcher and to maintain this status throughout the research process. I did my best to be fair to my study participants by keeping an objective view of what occurred. I always kept my students' needs in mind as I was conducting the study.

In order to ensure trustworthiness as a teacher-researcher, I first presented my thesis proposal to the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB) of Moravian College and received full approval to implement my study in the classroom (see Appendix A). Upon receiving notice of final approval, I presented my principal with a consent form that described the purpose of my study (see Appendix B). Once I had her approval to conduct the study in my classroom, I had the students take home a consent form to their parents to be informed of the study that I would be conducting (see Appendix C). The parent consent form described my purpose for the study and the proposed outcomes that I was hoping to gain as a result. I also informed parents that students' identities would be kept anonymous and students would not be penalized in any way if they chose to not have their child included in the data collection of my study. I made parents aware that all children would be participating in the instruction that would occur

throughout the study regardless of the decision to be a participant of the study. I wanted the parents to know that no student would be at a disadvantage if permission was not given.

An important step that I had to take prior to the study was to acknowledge any biases that I had about my classroom and my upcoming research. I realized that if I was aware of these biases before I began the study, I would be able to consider how my expectations for the study compared to the actual results. Before I began my study, I assumed that many of my students did not enjoy reading. I also had the assumption that some of my students were unmotivated readers. These biases were not necessarily true. The study gave me the opportunity to try to impact all learners so that motivation and learning would be encouraged.

Prior to conducting the study, I formulated a plan for data collection that included the process of triangulation. This meant that I collected multiple sources of data including surveys, student interviews, student artifacts, and observations using double entry journal notes in a field log (Hendricks, 2009). I wanted all of the data to show credibility and trustworthiness so that other teachers could believe what occurred in my third grade classroom. The use of double entry journals, surveys, and interviews are all low inference descriptors that narrate my students' thoughts and opinions about my study. The voice was taken directly from the students. I also gathered participant feedback as another way to

ensure credibility. I conducted member checks to confirm that what I said about my data made sense to the students. I also worked with other teacher-researchers in small groups to share my findings and gather questions and insights that were beneficial to my study (MacLean & Mohr, 1999).

After collecting the data, I analyzed the data for both truths and discrepancies. I first began to analyze data by annotating student artifacts, observational data, interviews, and surveys. I made these annotations by also incorporating my personal reflections of what occurred throughout the study. All of the annotations were included in my field log.

I then needed to code all of the data and artifacts that I had analyzed by creating subtopics that related to the study. I organized the subtopics so that I could reveal truths about what happened as a result of the study. I created codes so that I could identify patterns of data that could be further analyzed and reflected upon. Finally, I organized the codes into bins that reflected the major aspects of my study.

Throughout the course of my data collecting, I did come upon new research that was unexpected. When this occurred, I carefully examined the data to determine what new action needed to take place. I considered multiple points of view as I gathered and analyzed the data.

My Story

Getting Started

When I designed my study, I had the strengths and needs of the students in my current class whom I was working with, in my mind. When it was time to begin my study, my school implemented a form of co-teaching for special education students to be included in the regular education classroom as much as possible. I had been appointed as one of the two third grade general education teachers who would be instructing in a co-taught classroom alongside a certified special education teacher and a paraprofessional.

As the school year began, my main goal was to build a strong rapport not only with my students, but also with my co-teaching colleagues. The co-teaching environment was a new endeavor for all of us as we spent much time and energy envisioning how to structure and implement effective teaching practices in the classroom. Time passed quickly as we were assessing each child's reading level and identifying overall academic strengths and needs. I began to feel that the study that I designed over a year ago would be challenging to implement in such a diverse classroom of learners with a wide range of reading abilities.

For those reasons, I modified my implementation plan. I determined that I would model the reciprocal teaching (RT) strategies with guided practice through read-alouds and shared readings during whole group reading instruction with the

support of a paraprofessional. All of the students in my classroom were able to receive this instruction. It was my responsibility to ensure that I modified material when necessary for students with reading disabilities. I then determined that I would focus on the small group aspect of RT during guided reading instruction. Not all students would receive this instruction because of their IEP reading goals using another reading program focusing on decoding. Prior to the introduction of my study, I made many efforts to instill a classroom environment that promoted the idea that being fair does not always mean being equal. I had hoped by at this point in the year, students were beginning to understand that concept. Throughout each school day, students worked with different adults in the room, activities were differentiated according to interest, content, and ability level, and student growth and success were praised. This plan made it possible to carry out RT instruction on a daily basis throughout the course of my study.

Introducing the Study

Before introducing the study to my students, I took a deep breath and promised myself that no matter what happened throughout the study, I would do what was best for my students. I knew that a part of being a teacher-researcher would be to constantly evaluate student progress and motivation to learn. I needed to remind myself that this would not only be a learning experience for my students but for myself as well.

It seems as if it were only yesterday when I had my students sit on the carpet to hear my introduction to the study. I explained how I had been taking classes for many years as a teacher so that I could learn new ways to better teach my students. I found it interesting how some students were nodding their heads, confirming that they understood that teachers also had to go to school to learn new information. Other students seemed confused and immediately put their hands up to ask questions or make comments about what I had just explained. I simply told the students that I would soon be teaching reading class in a different way and that I would be taking notes of their progress and asking them for input throughout the process. I feel that I showed enthusiasm for the change that I was going to be making, but I was intentionally vague about how I was going to teach reading. I thought that if I went into too much detail, students would start to ask many questions that I was not quite ready to answer. I wanted students to have a clean slate before taking the pre-study survey, which focused on some important aspects of RT. I wanted the students to complete the survey as honestly as they could before learning about any aspects of my study. I explained the parent letter that I would be sending home with the students that day. I clearly explained that all students would be participating in the new reading activities, but that students needed permission to be included in the write up of my study. I could tell by the faces that were in front of me that some students were unclear of what I was talking about. Many students were probably unfamiliar with a teacher-researcher

study. This fact reminded me to clearly explain all steps that would happen in the future to make students feel comfortable throughout the process.

Pre-Study Survey

After introducing the study to my students and receiving the signed parent consent forms, I felt very motivated to begin. I felt that I knew my students much better than I had in the beginning of the school year, and my co-teaching colleagues and I had begun to establish more classroom routines and daily teaching practices. Some of my apprehensions about the study began to ease, and I knew it was time to administer the pre-study survey.

Unfortunately the surveying process did not go as smoothly as I would have anticipated. I handed out the original survey that I had designed, thinking that if the questions were read aloud, the students would be able to record and write responses without apprehension. I did not take into account how some students might have felt overwhelmed by the complexity of some of the questions and the task of writing responses in their own words. I think that some of the students may have felt that they were taking a test and not a survey of their thoughts and opinions. Even though I was reading the questions aloud, students still had anxiety written all over their faces.

The responses from the first question on the survey gave me a good idea of what students perceived as their reading strategies. Not one student mentioned any of the reading strategies that I was going to focus on during the study. These

responses confirmed my prediction that many third graders thought being a good reader meant reading the words correctly. On the other hand, I was pleased to see that students included ideas involving taking their time, using their imagination, and looking back in the text. This gave me some insight into their prior knowledge of reading strategies (see Figure 1).

What strategies do you use while reading a story?

Think about what is happening
Think before reading
Try my best
Take my time
Follow along the lines with a bookmark to keep my place
Read in my mind without anybody annoying me
Sound out words
Use my imagination
Just read
Read with fluency
Look back
Look for context clues
Put my finger under the words and read
Skip words I don't know

Figure 1. Pre-study survey question #1.

I had asked the students some questions on the survey involving their knowledge of the RT strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and asking questions. This was extremely challenging for many of the students. Some students left these questions blank, but others tried their best to write a response.

It did not appear as if they had heard these words before. How could that have been possible? I knew I had used some of these words prior to the survey. Then I realized that simply knowing what the strategy words mean was not even the focus of my study. From that moment of frustration, I promised that I would focus on instructing how to use the strategies to become a better reader. By the end of the study, I wanted my students to be able to use the strategies and apply them to their reading.

Not only did I want to know more about my students' prior knowledge of reading strategies, but I also wanted to learn about their attitudes and perceptions about reading and working with others since group work would eventually become an important part of my study (see Table 1).

Table 1

Pre-Study Survey: *Learning Attitudes*

Question	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do you like to read?	9	9	1
Do you like to read with a buddy?	8	10	1
Do you like working in groups?	3	11	5

After looking at the results of the pre-study survey focusing on learning attitudes about reading and learning, I was surprised by some of the information

that I had gathered. I realized that I did not know my students as well as I had imagined. This excited me to begin my study to not only teach my students a new instructional technique but to also learn much more about them as individuals and learners.

Introducing Readers at Work

I introduced the study by explaining to the students that they were going to be Readers at Work. I told them that they were going to be like construction workers with a toolkit that would help them to complete a job. Their job was to be good readers. I then pulled out a real toolbox that would be seen at a construction site. Many students started to laugh. One student, Stephen, cried out, “I can’t believe she has a toolbox!” Before I was able to explain any details further, other children kept asking, “How is reading like being a construction worker?” Some students seemed to panic that they did not immediately understand the connection that I was trying to make. I tried to ease their confusion, as I told them that they would soon have a better understanding of how reading is like being a construction worker with an important job to complete.

Throughout the time that I had worked with my students, I learned how important it was to use visuals to represent important concepts. I originally thought that I would use the RT strategies without using creative role names to correspond to each strategy. Based on my prior knowledge of the students in my classroom, I predicted that many students would feel more motivated to succeed if

there was an engaging factor. I decided to adopt the RT roles that Marcell, DeCleene, and Juettner (2010) created for readers to interact with text when RT is implemented. These roles are the Foreman, Architect, Job inspector, Electrician, and Bricklayer. I used their roles and descriptions as I introduced the topic to my students (see Table 2).

Table 2

Construction Site Roles and Reading Strategies

Marcell, DeCleene, and Juettner (2010)

Construction Site Roles	Toolkit Symbol	Jobs	Reading Strategy
Architect	Blueprint	Draws up the blueprint to predict what the building will look like	Predict
Job Inspector	Goggles	Dons his 'get-it goggles' to clarify better the meaning of words and ideas	Clarify
Electrician	Wires	Keeps the group 'wired' with questions that provoke both big and little sparks	Ask Questions
Bricklayer	Cement	Cements understanding by connecting main ideas, brick by brick, into a cohesive summary	Summarize

Before opening the toolkit, I first had the students guess what they thought would be inside. I then told the students that there were four tools in the toolkit that I would be soon taking out for them to see and to explain how construction workers use each tool. I first took out a pair of goggles. Many students were laughing. They just could not figure out what goggles had to do with being a better reader. Students explained that the goggles were to keep workers' faces safe when building something because dirt can fly through the air and harm eyes. I told them that they were exactly right, and then I continued to take out the next tool from the kit. This time I pulled out a blueprint. Students took a longer time to figure out the purpose of a blueprint, but we settled on the definition that it was a map of what a building will look like when it is finished. Some students volunteered how they had seen a blueprint of their homes before they had been built, but they forgot what the map had been called. To other students, the concept of a blueprint was a new idea. As I was about to pull out the third tool, Alisha called out without raising her hand and exclaimed, "I still don't get it! What does this have to do with reading?" Other students began to call out as well, and I needed to intervene by explaining that I was glad that they were so curious. I tried to calm them down a little bit, and then I proceeded to take out a bottle of cement. Students quickly raised their hands and explained how the cement is used keep a building stuck together or it will all come crashing down. Finally, I pulled out a set of wires, and we decided that wires enable electricity to

flow so things can work in a building. I recorded each definition of the tools on a piece of chart paper.

I then explained to the students that each tool represented a job on a construction site. I introduced the jobs of the Job Inspector (goggles), Architect (blueprint), Electrician (wires), and Bricklayer (cement). I wanted the students to understand that each tool symbolized a job that is needed on a construction site. Each one of these jobs plays an important role in creating a building. Without each job, the completed project would not be possible. I then described how the construction site jobs were also jobs that we would be using while reading. This was finally the connection that the students were waiting to hear! I really hoped that I would be able to clearly illustrate the connection between the construction site jobs and the reading roles.

I explained how the Architect predicts, the Job Inspector clarifies, the Electrician asks questions, and the Bricklayer summarizes. I also used the job descriptions that correspond to each construction site role (see Table 2). I asked students if they were familiar with any of these four reading strategies. To my disbelief, not one student in the entire class raised a hand! I would have imagined that someone would have remembered that the strategies were the words on the survey that they were having such a difficult time trying to define. I was so curious to find out if the students were just too timid to take a guess, or if they really were unsure of the reading strategies being presented.

How to Use the Reading Toolkit?

The introduction to Readers at Work was a very time consuming process, and I realized that I was really only connecting the name of the job to each symbol in the toolkit. It soon became time for the students to learn how to use the toolkit to be a better reader. I was hoping that soon the concept of Readers at Work would make sense. To introduce the four RT strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and asking questions, I decided to read aloud *The Honest-to-Goodness Truth* by Patricia McKissack. An excerpt of this story is included in the *Scott Foresman Teacher's Manual* for the read-aloud of the week, to build concept vocabulary before reading the weekly story in the anthology. Before starting the study, I would inconsistently instruct using the read-aloud excerpts mainly due to time constraints. I decided to begin reading them to the students each week as a way to model the RT strategies with think-alouds. I was able to check the book out of the school library so that I would have the entire selection, and the students would also have the opportunity to see the pictures. Before I started reading the story, I introduced the RT 4 Square Chart (see Appendix E). I created a copy of the chart on chart paper. I explained that in each of the four squares, the students had to use the tools in the reading toolbox to complete four jobs while reading. I told the students again that the Architect predicts, the Job Inspector clarifies, the Electrician asks questions, and the Bricklayer summarizes. I saw many puzzled faces as I was explaining all of this

since they had not yet understood the reading strategies. My intention was just to first lay the groundwork of the big picture before delving deeper into the meaning of the four RT strategies.

As I showed the students the front cover of *The Honest-to-Goodness Truth*, I told them that this was a time when they could be the Architects to predict or guess what the story would be about. I pulled out the blueprint from the toolkit, and I modeled how I would predict what the story would be about by closely observing the picture on the front cover and by taking a picture walk through the text. I spent much time thinking aloud so that students would have the opportunity to listen to predictions about a story before it was read aloud. I showed the students that in the RT 4 Square Chart, there was a sentence starter of “I predict that.” I asked the students if they could help me complete that statement while being the Architect. We came up with “I predict that a girl will steal her mom’s money and lie that she didn’t do it.” The students appeared to be fairly comfortable at making this prediction about the story. Amanda exclaimed, “Oh I get it! We are guessing what the story will be about!” After recording the prediction on the chart, I proceeded to begin reading the story aloud. I stopped reading after the first page and asked the students if there was a word, sentence, or idea that they did not understand. Lori had her hand up right away. She said that she did not know what the words “Ol’ Boss” meant. I took the goggles out of the toolbox and put them on my face. The students were roaring with laughter! They

definitely appeared to be focusing on the lesson and were excited to listen to what I was going to say after putting on the goggles. We clarified that Ol' Boss was a horse. The author did not say that directly, but it can be inferred from the illustrations. I told the students that as we read more of the story, we would probably be able to confirm that clarification. As I continued reading the story, I stopped after every page to model how to choose a tool from the toolkit to discuss important parts of the story. The story portrayed a variety of characters' feelings that changed throughout the story. When students were holding the wires to be the Electrician, I gave them some prompts to ask questions involving the characters and their feelings. Stephen asked, "Why is Ruthie Mae sad?" I praised his question by explaining that "why" questions are very important because they make us stop and think about what we have read. When students were Job Inspectors, they identified words that needed clarification. When it was time to be Bricklayers and write a summary of the story, Chloe explained that she had written summaries before! This was the first connection that I had heard about prior experiences using the strategies. She helped us to create a summary that included the main character, problem, and solution. I observed that the students were demonstrating on-task behavior, and they were actively participating in the lesson. As a closure, I had the students write on an exit slip what they had learned in reading that afternoon. Their responses gave some insight into what they had

learned from the guided activity using the RT strategies. This is an excerpt of Christine's exit slip:

I learned how to use the reading toolkit today when reading a story. You just pull out the blueprint, cement, wires, and goggles. It is amazing how these tools help you to be a better reader. I hope I remember to use these tools.

I found Christine's exit slip to be very powerful because I heard her motivation to use the tools. Even though she did not mention the names of the reading strategies, she made the connection to being a better reader. Her last sentence was the ultimate goal of my entire study. Students learn so many skills and strategies as learners, but they need to remember to use them. Hearing that from a student reminded me that many children do want to be active learners and apply what is taught.

Using The Readers at Work Toolkit for Read-Alouds

Each week during the study, I read the teacher read-aloud that is designed to introduce concept vocabulary. When I was able to check out the actual books from the library, I used the picture books instead of just reading the text from the teacher's manual. I found that the students were more engaged in the lesson when I used the picture books. I thought that these weekly read-alouds would be a very powerful instructional tool for my study. The read-alouds provided opportunities for me to model think-alouds for strategy usage. During the read-aloud, I would

stop at key moments for students to use the RT strategies from the toolkit. We would complete a RT 4 Square Chart together for each story. Sometimes students would record their responses on individual charts or other times they would contribute to the large shared chart. Students became accustomed to this routine. I would also try to focus on reteaching specific strategies, which students appeared to need more practice.

The Rampanion by Arelene Erlbach. I was excited to begin this read-aloud because I knew it would lend itself to active student participation in the Readers at Work toolkit. The following is an excerpt of the read-aloud lesson using the RT strategies to build active discussion about text.

Mrs. McNeal: Today I am going to read aloud a story called The Rampanion that is included in The Kids' Invention Book. Remember that we are reading stories about people who face problems that need solutions. Let's take out the blueprint from the toolbox and be the Architect by making predictions about The Rampanion. When you hear the word Rampanion what comes to your mind?

Stephen: I think of a champion in sports.

Chloe: I think it might be a type of machine.

Heather: Maybe it is a type of animal.

Mrs. McNeal: Remember that I had said that this story is in a book about inventions that children have created. Inventions are designed to solve problems and make life easier. Keeping that in mind, can we predict what we think the story might be about?

Hope: I think the Rampanion is a kind of invention, but I don't know what it does.

Alisha: I think it is an invention that helps animals.

Tyler: I hear the word ramp. Maybe it is a ramp that is used for something.

Mrs. McNeal: I am going to take the goggles out of our toolkit. While I read the story aloud, I want you to think of words that are new to you and ideas that are confusing so that we can clarify them to better understand the passage. I will stop after a few paragraphs so that we can record our words or ideas that need to be clarified and I will write them on our 4 Square Chart.

Chloe: What is cerebral palsy? I know it is a disease, but I forget what happens when someone has it.

Mrs. McNeal: There were some clues in the story that were used to help clarify cerebral palsy. Can someone help Chloe out to clarify cerebral palsy?

Elijah: Alison had cerebral palsy in the story. She was in a wheelchair. Since she was in a wheelchair, she couldn't move.

Heather: Her muscles didn't move like ours do.

Mrs. McNeal: Both Elijah and Heather are correct. As I put on the goggles and look back at the text, the author says that cerebral palsy is a condition that makes it difficult to control muscles. This is the reason why Alison had to use a wheelchair most of her life. What was the problem that Alison had using her wheelchair?

Alisha: She couldn't go up the sidewalk, but I don't understand why.

Mrs. McNeal: Alisha just thought of a part in the story that she wants to clarify so that she can better understand the story. Let's be the Job Inspector by trying to clarify why Alison could not cross streets with curbs. What do we know about curbs?

Heather: We have to step up over a curb to get to the sidewalk.

Danielle: Curbs can be high above the street.

Mrs. McNeal: Heather and Danielle are right. Curbs are raised edges of the street, where the sidewalk meets the street. Why do you think that curbs can be a problem for people in wheelchairs?

Stephen: I actually did not think that curbs would be a problem for people in wheelchairs because I always see places that wheelchairs can go up and down.

Mrs. McNeal: That is a great point. There are some wheelchair accessible ramps where the curb is lowered so that wheelchairs can go up and down. This is not always the case.

Alisha: I think I get it now. Alison couldn't get up all sidewalks because there wasn't always a ramp so she created her own ramp.

Mrs. McNeal: Alisha was able to be the Job Inspector and clarify what was confusing for her at first. This is what good readers do when they come across words or ideas that they don't understand. The ramp that Alison created was called the Rampanion. Can someone clarify what the Rampanion is?

Tyler: The Rampanion is a ramp that can be taken with you if you need to go up and down a curb with a wheelchair.

Mrs. McNeal: The author said that the ramp was portable. We can clarify that word by using Tyler's explanation. If something is portable it can be easily carried or moved.

Mrs. McNeal: Are there other words or phrases that we need to clarify to better understand the passage?

Brandon: I don't understand how the Rampanion could only weigh 4 pounds. Wouldn't the wheelchair crush the ramp and break it?

Mrs. McNeal: Does anyone remember the material that Alison used so that the ramp would be light to carry but strong to hold a wheelchair?

Brandon: Oh I remember. Aluminum.

Mrs. McNeal: Aluminum is a metal that is both light and strong. We were just able to use details from the passage to clarify Brandon's question. Now we are going to be the electrician and pose questions that we think are important to understand the story. I am going to first share a question that we can answer using details from the story.

Mrs. McNeal: Before Alison decided to make the Rampanion out of lightweight metal, what two other ideas did she think of?

Amanda: I think she wanted to use other materials at first.

Heather: She wanted to use rubber.

Mrs. McNeal: Why didn't she use rubber to build the Rampanion?

Heather: It was too heavy to carry around. She needed something light to take with her.

Mrs. McNeal: What was the other idea that she thought of?

Christine: She thought of a ramp that she could blow up.

Alisha: It sounded almost like a balloon. Wouldn't the ramp pop and break? That doesn't make any sense.

Mrs. McNeal: Yes, Alison considered an inflatable ramp. She realized that it would have to be blown up before each use. That would not be convenient when you are trying to get up and down a curb easily and quickly. Let's take turns holding the wires so that we can be the electricians keeping our class wired with strong questions.

Cindy: What did Alison invent?

Lori: She invented the Rampanion.

Hope: Why did she invent it?

Amanda: So she could get up and down curbs.

Brandon: Why did she use aluminum to build the Rampanion?

Billy: The rubber was too heavy.

Chloe: Why do you think Alison won the contest?

Alisha: Her invention probably worked better than the others.

Kids' inventions probably don't always work. Hers did!

Mrs. McNeal: Sometimes inventions do work better than others. It sounds like Alison's invention was able to solve a problem. That is what makes an invention useful. You came up with some good questions that we need to understand when reading this story. Now it's time to be the Bricklayer and summarize the passage so that we know what it is all about. I want everyone to summarize the story in their own words in their notebooks. Try to clearly explain what the story is about by giving details from the beginning, middle, and end.

Alisha: Too much happened in the story. I do not know what to write about. I already have forgotten some important parts.

Mrs. McNeal: We'll write this summary together as practice. For the first sentence, what happened in the beginning of the story?

Elijah: Alison had a muscle disease and was in a wheelchair. She couldn't get up and down curbs so she decided to build a ramp that she could bring along with her.

Mrs. McNeal: That is a great beginning to the summary. We still need to piece the story together brick by brick.

Julie: She decided to make the ramp out of aluminum because it was light and strong.

Jordan: And at the end, the ramp was built and she won first prize at the inventor contest.

Mrs. McNeal: By using the main ideas from the beginning, middle, and end of the passage, we were able to create a summary of the story. A person who has not yet read the passage would know the main ideas by reading our summary. We have just been Readers at Work! We used our four reading strategies to discuss important parts of the story.

This was a read-aloud that I had never read before in past years because I did not think that my students could easily relate to it. Through active teacher modeling, I thought that the students understood the main ideas of the passage. I noticed that the students definitely needed much more practice with all of the strategies especially asking thought provoking questions. During the teacher read-alouds, students did not have copies of the text, so I realized that it was more difficult for students to remember everything that happened because they could not look back in the text. I also noticed that some students were off task as I was recording our thoughts on the RT 4 Square Chart. I decided to have students

individually work on the RT 4 Square Charts throughout future read-alouds so that they could become accountable for their work. I also thought that this would help in sharing ideas for the class RT 4 Square Chart because they would have already had time to plan and write responses.

***Why Possum's Tail is Bare* by Gayle Ross.** While planning for this read-aloud, I wanted to allow time for students to practice making many predictions about the story. I wanted them to predict not only prior to reading, but also throughout the story. For that reason, I planned on where I would stop reading so that students would have opportunities to make predictions about upcoming parts of the story. This enabled students to use both prior knowledge and previous story details to predict what they thought would happen next in the story. I also wanted to them to experience when predictions are accurate and when they are inaccurate. The processing of confirming predictions to be true or false was a way that I wanted my students to be active readers and thinkers. I also hoped that the more that this was modeled, the more they would begin to do so independently without prompting.

Prior to reading aloud this passage, I showed the students a picture of a possum and explained that possums are small, light-haired animals with long faces and long, skinny tails that play dead when they are surprised or frightened. I also explained that many Early Native American tribes told stories to explain events in nature that they did not understand. After introducing the story and

showing students pictures from the story, I had them write down a prediction for the story. They then shared their predictions and I tried to record ones that summed up their general responses. As I read the story aloud, I stopped after every few paragraphs so that students could take on the roles from the Readers at Work toolkit. Students used the reading strategies independently at first by recording their ideas in their own RT 4 Square Charts. The students shared their ideas as we completed a class RT 4 Square Chart in response to the read-aloud (see Figure 2).

<p style="text-align: center;">Architect- Predicts</p> <p>Pre-reading Predictions</p> <p>We predict that a possum once had a hairy tail, but now it is bare.</p> <p>We predict that other animals were jealous of Possum's tail.</p> <p>During Reading Predictions</p> <p>We predict that Rabbit is going to trick Possum.</p> <p>We predict that Cricket will cut off all of the hair on Possum's tail.</p> <p>We predict that Possum will be very angry when he realizes that his hair fell off of his tail.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Job Inspector- Clarifies</p> <p>Words to Clarify</p> <p>vain- having too much pride in your looks bragged- boasted humiliated- lowered someone's pride barber- someone who cuts hair</p> <p>Confusing Ideas to Clarify</p> <p>honor dance- This must be a dance to showcase something wonderful about someone.</p> <p>The red string on Possum's tail- This must keep the cut hair together.</p> <p>council- This means a group of leaders who make decisions.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Electrician-Asks Questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do the animals want to trick Possum? 2. What lesson did Possum learn? 3. Where did Possum go to have his hair combed? 4. Why did Possum believe the other animals? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This story is about a Possum who cared too much about his looks. The other animals were tired of hearing him brag about his fluffy tail. Rabbit wanted to trick Possum so Cricket cut off the hair from his tail and tied it together with a red string. When Possum untied the red string, all of his hair fell out. The animals laughed and laughed as Possum bragged about his fluffy tail because he didn't know that it was bare. Possum was humiliated.</p>

Figure 2. RT 4 Square Chart for *Why Possum's Tail is Bare*.

***Hurricane* by Christopher Lampton.** This was the last read-aloud that I conducted for the study. I first asked students what they knew about hurricanes. They were very excited to share their prior knowledge about hurricanes. I had the students record their individual responses to the four strategies on their own charts. I continued to stop reading after several paragraphs so that students could have time to record their responses and contribute to the class RT 4 Square Chart (see Figure 3).

I was impressed with how the students' participation and work had progressed during the read-alouds. This became one of my favorite parts of the study because students were engaged in being active readers during whole group reading instruction. Prior to the study, it was often very difficult for some of the students to sit attentively on the carpet while listening to text being read aloud. I think that having the engaging factor of the toolkit and the interactive element of class discussion using the RT 4 Square Chart motivated students to be active readers. Throughout the process of the read-alouds with the RT strategies, I realized that the read-alouds were a very powerful way to introduce concepts of each week's story in the anthology. I also spent time modeling how to make connections between the read-aloud and the week's story. With time, some students were able to make these connections independently during discussion about the weekly story.

<p style="text-align: center;">Architect- Predicts</p> <p>Pre-reading Predictions</p> <p>We predict that the story will give real facts about hurricanes.</p> <p>We predict that the story will describe what happens to towns after hurricanes hit.</p> <p>We predict that we will learn how to protect ourselves from the effects of hurricanes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Job Inspector- Clarifies</p> <p>Words to Clarify</p> <p>evacuate- to get out of a dangerous area local authorities- people in control of a city or town debris-small pieces of something that has been torn down</p> <p>Confusing Ideas to Clarify</p> <p>ride out the storm- This might mean to stay at your house during the hurricane and not evacuate.</p> <p>hurricane warning has been issued-This might mean that the weather channel tells people that a hurricane is coming to their area. People need to get prepared for a dangerous hurricane.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Electrician-Asks questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why should someone evacuate before a hurricane hits? 2. Why is it dangerous to live in a trailer or mobile home during a hurricane? 3. What is the difference between a hurricane watch and a hurricane warning? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This story is about what people should do in case there is a hurricane in their area. People need to evacuate their homes if a dangerous hurricane is on its way. When a hurricane watch is called, people need to have gas in their cars and have extra food and supplies. When a hurricane warning is called, people need to leave their homes right away. Hurricanes are dangerous, and people need to know what to do when one is coming.</p>

Figure 3. RT 4 Square Chart for *Hurricane*.

Mini-Lessons for the RT Strategies

Through each week's read aloud, I was able to identify strengths and needs of students' strategy usage. I used this information to plan for weekly mini-lessons using short passages from the Reading Street Anthology. These passages were designed to instruct vocabulary words or for strategy practice. I thought that the passages lent themselves very nicely to my strategy mini-lessons because it was not an intimidating amount of text for students to read. I did not want the students to read lengthy text for the mini-lessons because all of the time would have been consumed by that one task. It also was beneficial that these passages were included in the students' reading textbooks. Even though the read-alouds were engaging, students were unable to clearly see text to revisit it for strategy practice and application. Some of the mini-lessons that I instructed had students reading one of the passages from their books, and then we would complete a RT 4 Square Chart as guided practice. This meant that we would either complete it together with teacher modeling to reinforce strategy usage or the students would complete each square independently and then I would base my instruction of a mini-lesson on their needs as I determined when observing independent work. For other mini-lessons, I would specifically choose a strategy that I thought students would benefit based on their previous performance and application.

Farming. For this mini-lesson, I had the students read *Farming* independently. I wanted to see how they could complete the RT 4 Square Chart by themselves without teacher modeling. I then wanted to identify their needs so that I could turn that information into a mini-lesson. At that point, I had already had mini-lessons on making predictions and clarifying words from text. Overall, it seemed as if this task was very challenging for students. Many hands rose almost immediately asking for help. I had to remind several students that they had to read the passage first before being the Job Inspector, Electrician, and Bricklayer. I became easily frustrated that students were not able to complete the RT 4 Square Chart with more ease. Most students were unable to finish the RT 4 Square Chart in the time allotted to complete the task. I chose to focus a mini-lesson on clarifying ideas from the text. The following RT 4 Square Chart shows examples of students' responses for *Farming* (see Figure 4).

<p style="text-align: center;">Architect-Predicts</p> <p><i>Chloe: I predict that this story will be about how to plant crops or own a farm with animals and crops because the story is called farming and sometimes on farms there is animals and crops.</i></p> <p><i>Amanda: I predict the farmers will plant food. Because they have a big garden.</i></p> <p><i>Hope: I predict The story will be about some farmers saying like how to do a job like theres and how lazy people should not do it.</i></p> <p><i>Danielle: I predict that they will tell us what happens on a farm and what they do on a farm because they do that a lot.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Job Inspector-Clarifies</p> <p>Words: <i>Amanda: crops, occupation, and wealth</i> <i>Jordan: occupation, prepared, and countries</i> <i>Kathy: occupation and till</i> <i>Heather: till, harvesting, wealth, and cheated</i> <i>Alisha: occupation, countries, and till</i></p> <p>Ideas: <i>Stephen: Farmers must be partners with the weather.</i> <i>Chloe: The weather has often cheated farmers and ruined their crops.</i> <i>Hope: In the spring they till, or turn up the soil to prepare it for planting.</i> <i>Danielle: The weather can make any farmer look clever or foolish.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Electrician-Asks questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?)</p> <p><i>Chloe: How can rain wash plants away? What if the farmers put something over the plants to protect them?</i></p> <p><i>Kathy: Why do farmers farm?</i></p> <p><i>Julie: Why do people think farmers are lazy?</i></p> <p><i>Elijah: Why do farmers work if they do not get money?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This story is about</p> <p><i>Kathy: planting and digging holes and about the weather and how if there's too much water the plants will die.</i></p> <p><i>Elijah: people farming growing plants and getting prepared for farming</i></p>

Figure 4. RT 4 Square Chart for Farming.

I used some of the students' ideas that they had recorded for clarifying ideas from the text for my mini-lesson. As the mini-lesson on clarifying ideas continued, more students continued to raise their hands to pose ideas that were confusing to them. Some students commented that they just were not sure what to do for that section. All thumbs went up when I asked them if they felt more confident about using the goggles to clarify ideas from text.

From Cornfield to Volcano. Before making predictions about the passage, the students read the title and looked at the illustrations. Students recorded their predictions independently and we shared them aloud. Students appeared to be comfortable at recording their predictions. Each week, I noticed how the students' predictions were getting more detailed. Students then read the passage independently and completed the roles of Architect, Job Inspector, Electrician, and Bricklayer.

Heather was very focused while completing her RT 4 Square Chart (see Figure 5). Heather's prediction used prior knowledge from the teacher read-aloud of *Hurricane*. That passage focused on ways to stay safe during hurricanes. She was predicting that this passage would also have a similar theme focusing on volcanoes. The words that she chose to clarify are words that specifically relate to volcanoes. The idea that she identified as needing clarification was a sentence from the passage. The concept of active vs. dead volcanoes was something that we discussed later in the week. I was impressed that she was able to identify that

that concept was unfamiliar to her. I liked how she used three different question words to provide a variety of different questions. All three of her questions could be answered from the passage. They were all questions that involved looking back in the text to directly find the answers. I decided to conference with her to remind her that it is also important to create questions where the reader needs to infer or draw conclusions. Her summary was concise and told the most important parts of the passage. I found it interesting that she had the correct date for when the volcano last erupted, but she did not put the exact date for when it first erupted from flat land. This showed that she looked back in the text partially. Heather's completion of her RT 4 Square Charts had improved throughout the course of the study.

Name: Heather

Title: From corn field to Volcano

<p>Architect-Predicts</p> <p>I predict that it will tell you about how to stay safe from Volcano's on a corn field.</p>	<p>Job Inspector-Clarifies</p> <p>These words are new to me and I don't know what they mean: eruption, erupt, rotten, Paricutin,</p> <p>This is a confusing idea in the story: Other's are dead and will not erupt again.</p>
<p>Electrician-Asks questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?)</p> <p>1. how high did the volcano get in tow months?</p> <p>2. When was it's last eruption?</p> <p>3. Where do most volcano's grow?</p>	<p>Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This part of the story is about a true story that a volcano grew right in the middle of a farmer's farm and frist erupted in 19 something and last erupted in 1952.</p>

Figure 5. Heather's RT 4 Square Chart.

Billy was an above level reader who scored consistently well on comprehension assessments. He was a reluctant writer who did not expand upon his thoughts with details and examples. I observed how Billy also really focused while completing this RT 4 Square Chart (see Figure 6). His prediction was creative and accurate. He only identified one word that was unfamiliar to him, which was Paricutin. He did not fully explain his idea that needed clarification. The three questions that he created use a variety of question words. His summary demonstrated his lack of details while writing. He focused on the farmer and not Paricutin. After reading Billy's summary, I decided to focus the next mini-lesson on summary writing. Even though we had spent much time practicing writing summaries, it always seemed to help to reinforce the strategy.

After examining both Heather and Billy's RT 4 Square Charts, I realized that students were really making progress with using the four reading strategies while reading. I decided that I needed to spend more time conferencing with individual students to give personalized feedback to strengthen their strategy usage. This practice was very time consuming, but it gave me valuable insights into students' strengths and needs with the strategies.

I continued to conduct mini-lessons throughout the study on specific RT strategies. I found that I spent the most time modeling how to clarify both words and ideas and how to write organized and detailed summaries.

Name: Billy

Title: From Cornfield to Volcano

<p>Architect-Predicts</p> <p>I predict that</p> <p>its about this ^{mexican} farmer and his field was a volcano</p>	<p>Job Inspector-Clarifies</p> <p>These words are new to me and I don't know what they mean:</p> <p>Paricutin</p> <p>This is a confusing idea in the story:</p> <p>nine-year after it = first</p>
<p>Electrician-Asks questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. when did the lastest volcano erupt? 2. how long did the new volcano grow. 3. who's feild explode? 	<p>Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This part of the story is about</p> <p>a mexican farmer and facts about volcano</p>

Figure 6. Billy's RT 4 Square Chart.

Readers at Work in Small Teacher-Led Groups

After two weeks of implementing Readers at Work in the whole group setting, I decided to introduce it in two of my guided reading groups. The two groups were the Yellow group and the Blue group. I was at first a bit apprehensive about starting this phase because not all of my students were able to participate. My co-teacher worked with two other small groups of students who needed special reading instruction targeted at their decoding needs. The leveled reader books and strategy practice that I was designing for my groups would not have been effective for everyone's learning needs. I just had to acknowledge the fact that all students in my classroom were receiving RT strategy instruction and practice during whole group reading instruction.

I first introduced Readers at Work to the Yellow guided reading group comprised of Jim, Amanda, Joshua, Danielle, Hope, Kathy, and Julie. This group of readers could read on-level text independently, but they sometimes had difficulty with reading comprehension. I explained how they would be using the same strategies from our Readers at Work toolkit to better understand what they were reading. I also told them how important it was to have discussions about stories that they read. I wanted them to make the connection that through the use of the toolkit strategies, they would be having meaningful discussions about text.

Instead of handing out the RT 4 Square Chart that they were becoming accustomed to completing, I introduced the Be the Teacher Bookmark. I gave

each student a bookmark and had them look over it before I had a chance to say more.

Hope: This looks a lot like the chart but it's not a chart!

Mrs. McNeal: What makes the bookmark similar to the chart?

Kathy: There is still predict, question, clarify, and summarize.

Those things we have been doing to be a better reader.

Mrs. McNeal: Kathy is exactly right! We have been using the same reading strategies from our reading toolkit. The bookmark is simply another way to practice using the reading strategies while reading. It will help us to have conversations about stories we have read.

After this conversation, we read through the entire bookmark. We discussed the importance of each strategy and the prompts that were given to help apply them while reading. I told the students that I was going to be the Foreman or discussion leader of the construction site for a few weeks before students might have the opportunity to do the same. Students became overly excited and wanted to know when that moment would come. I had to settle them down a bit so that they could focus on first learning the routines of RT in a small group setting. I wanted to spend time practicing the strategies when using the bookmark for discussion techniques.

Mrs. McNeal: As Foreman, it is my job to be the leader of Readers at Work. There are special directions that the Foreman has to follow to make sure that all of the workers are participating. Every week, you will have a different job. Remember that you might be the Architect, Job Inspector, Electrician, or Bricklayer. I am going to be the Foreman until I see that we are ready to start having students take on that job description. Today I will be using the Foreman's special directions to lead our group (see Figure 7).

Directions for the Foreman- These are the steps you need to complete to lead the group at Readers at Work

1. Give each worker 4 job cards.
2. Have the students take a picture walk through the story.
3. Have every student in the group predict what they think the new story will be about.
4. Tell the workers to read the first page of the story. You must also read.
5. When everyone is finished reading, call on volunteers for the Architect, Job Inspector, Electrician, and Bricklayer in any order.
6. Collect the job card from each student who volunteers.
7. Repeat for each page of the story.
8. Distribute the job cards back to the students when everyone had a chance to share for each strategy.

Figure 7. Foreman directions.

I had the students first take a picture walk of *Our Garden* by Jessica Quilty. Each student used the bookmark to look at the prompts for making predictions. I focused on having them make the prediction and adding the word “because.” They then needed to support their predictions with evidence from their picture walk. This was an important part of the prediction making process that students in this group needed to work on. At first, they were not explaining why they were making these predictions.

I modeled how I was using the Foreman’s special direction sheet to lead the group. After everyone made predictions about the story I gave each of them the four job cards. (see Appendix G). Amanda exclaimed, “What do we do with these things?” I told the students that the cards would be handed into the Foreman when he/she asked for job volunteers. I told the students to read page 3 of the story independently, which was the first page.

Mrs. McNeal: As I am looking at the Foreman’s direction sheet, I am supposed to call on one job at a time and take volunteers. As you contribute your thoughts, I will collect your card. This means that you cannot share that strategy again until everyone has had a chance participating with that card. Then everyone will get their cards back.

I saw some very confused faces and some hands were raised probably for questions. I just decided that the best way for all of this to make sense would be to simply begin the process.

Mrs. McNeal: As Foreman I will need to make sure that I hear from all four jobs for each page of the story. I can call on the jobs in any order, so listen carefully! After reading page 3, who can be the Architect and predict what will happen next in the story? Make sure to explain your reasoning.

All of the students raised their hands enthusiastically!

Mrs. McNeal: Jim, you can be the Architect. Please hand me your Architect job card. Remember that you should use the reminders on the Be the Teacher Bookmark to help you make a prediction.

Jim: I think that the children will turn the empty lot into a garden because the front page has a picture of the same children standing by a beautiful garden. They probably fixed up the empty lot.

Mrs. McNeal: Jim did a wonderful job being the Architect for that page.

Other students started calling out that saying they wanted to be the Architect.

Mrs. McNeal: Boys and girls! You will all get to be the Architect throughout the process for reading the story. Who would like to be the Bricklayer for page 3?

I observed students looking at the Be the Teacher Bookmark to check the Bricklayer's job description. Kathy quickly raised her hand.

Kathy: The Bricklayer summarizes the story. Not too much happened on page 3 so far, but I know that the children saw an empty space of land that had garbage all over. They would see this mess every time they walked to school.

Mrs. McNeal: Kathy did a wonderful job of summarizing the main idea of page 3. Even if you think that not much happens on a particular page, there still is always an important idea that readers need to understand. Who would like to be the Electrician and ask a teacher-like question? Use the Be the Teacher Bookmark to look at the sample question words that you can use.

Danielle: What was on the empty lot before it was empty?

Mrs. McNeal: Danielle, you can call on someone with their hand up to answer your question.

Danielle called on Amanda.

Amanda: Do I need to hand in a card to answer a question?

Mrs. McNeal: No, that is a good question though.

Amanda: There was once a store on that land it says right here in the book.

Mrs. McNeal: Nice work looking back in the text, Amanda. Now for the last job for page 3. Who would like to be the Job Inspector and either clarify a word or idea from page 3?

Hope raised her hand immediately.

Hope: I do not know what the word “lot” means.

Mrs. McNeal: When I look back at the Be the Teacher Bookmark, there are tips to try to clarify a difficult word or idea. Hope has chosen a difficult word that she wants to clarify.

I had the students read the tips aloud with me. Hope was able to clarify the word.

Hope: Ok. Well I think that it might be land.

Mrs. McNeal: Why do you think so?

Hope: Because the children are standing in the lot, which means grassy land.

I then continued the process for each page of the story. The process took us a few days to read the story. The students appeared to understand the process of job cards to organize the discussion.

Amanda exclaimed, “Boy! This sure is a lot of work!” All of the children started laughing. I observed that Julie whispered to Kathy and said, “but it is

fun.” I just continued on as the Foreman and prompted students to keep reading. I made sure that all of the students had opportunities to engage in discussion using all four of the strategies. I liked that all students had raised their hands to participate. Students seemed to be the most excited to participate when they were asked to clarify a word or idea. This was a bit shocking to me because I thought that students would have been more reluctant to share what was unknown to them. I also noticed that without the task of writing their responses, they were more easily able to discuss ideas and sentences that were unclear. The most difficult part of this first experience using the Be the Teacher Bookmark was summarizing. Kathy became quite frustrated when asked to summarize a page of text. She exclaimed, “I just don’t know what happened. It was only one page.” After her response, I decided to model how I would summarize that page. I knew that I needed to convey the message to her not to give up and to keep on trying. The students also appeared to enjoy asking questions of their peers. Many of the questions were “right there” questions. I modeled a few that involved higher-level thinking skills. I told the students that sometimes they could ask questions that would enable the reader to think a little bit more before they answered. After saying this, I realized that I needed to spend more time developing this strategy because when some students attempted to create more thought-provoking questions, often they were questions that could not really be answered from the text or by inferencing. I realized that it was probably a good idea to keep praising

students' questions when they made sense and could be answered by looking back in the passage.

The next week, I continued the same procedure for this small group. We read *The Colonial Adventure* by J. Matteson Claus together in our small group setting. I continued to be the Foreman, and students used the Be the Teacher Bookmark and job cards to engage in story discussion. Students kept asking if they were going to be the Foreman. I told them that I wanted them to have another week to observe how I lead the group. The students seemed more comfortable with the process of using the job cards to participate in the group discussion for Readers at Work. I noticed that the students were not as focused during the discussion as they were the previous week when it was their first time taking part in Readers at Work in a small group. Jim and Kathy appeared to have a difficult time listening when others shared. I intervened and talked about being an active listener. Students also had a more difficult time clarifying ideas that were unknown to them. I think this had a lot to do with the content of the story. Students had made connections more easily to the story the prior week because it involved children their age trying to make a difference in their community. This particular story focused on colonial life, which was less relevant to the student's own lives.

During the same two weeks, I also introduced Readers at Work to the Blue guided reading group comprised of Chloe, Christine, Elijah, Tyler, Brandon,

Heather, and Billy. These were students who were above level readers and had strong comprehension abilities when test taking. Many of them continued to need reminders to slow down when reading and to use strategies to better understand text. This group began reading *The Magic of Coyote* by Joyce A. Churchill. I had them read Chapter 1 independently while completing a RT 4 Square Chart for the chapter. When I was able to meet with their group, they had read Chapter 1 and most had finished the RT 4 Square Chart.

I was impressed with the quality of work that students completed independently. They appeared to be understanding the strategies and were applying them to text read independently. I did notice that Christine, Brandon, and Heather did not include an idea or sentence that was confusing to them. Their summaries showed the most need of improvement because they did not give strong beginning, middle, and ending details about the chapter. I used this information to plan future mini-lessons. Students' independent work became the driving force for my modes of instruction.

After students completed Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 using the RT 4 Square Chart, I introduced the Be the Teacher Bookmark. Brandon exclaimed, "Does this mean that we don't have to use the 4 Square anymore?" I sensed excitement in his voice. I was guessing that he probably did not want to write in the organizers any longer. I explained to the students that sometimes in our small group we would be using the bookmark to help having story discussions without

always writing our ideas in the organizer. All of the students in the group started smiling and looking at each other. It was at that moment, that I began to wonder what they thought of the organizers. For the most part, these students had been handing in very strong RT 4 Square Charts with details and examples of their strategy usage. It was not until this moment that I questioned if they were losing motivation due to the demands of writing.

As students read the rest of *The Magic of Coyote* page by page, I acted as the Foreman to lead students in discussion of the chapters using the bookmark and the job cards. Like the other group, they also appeared anxious about when they would be the Foreman. I observed that students were asking more thought-provoking questions than ones that were previously written on paper. They seemed more reluctant to say words or ideas aloud that needed clarification. I wondered if it would be more helpful to have students write these down before sharing them. Were students intimidated to orally share ideas that were confusing to them? Maybe they just needed more time to identify words and ideas that needed clarification.

For the second week of teacher-led RT with this group, I introduced the story, *Houses Past and Present* by Donna Watson. This was a story that I had never particularly enjoyed teaching in previous years because the vocabulary is so complex and the content is not something that most students can easily make connections. I was hoping that with the use of RT, I would change my opinions

about the story and its purpose for third grade students. I first spent much time having students share their prior knowledge about the different types of styles of today's homes. I was the Foreman, leading the group to actively discuss the story using the job cards. The students did a great job of following the RT routine in a teacher-led setting. After reading and discussing the story for the first few pages, I noticed that students were taking a while to volunteer to be the Bricklayer, who summarizes main story events of a particular page. I asked students why they were taking a while to volunteer to be the Bricklayer. Heather responded quickly by stating, "This is a difficult story! I need more time to think about it before I can say what happened on each page." Heather's response was exactly what I needed to hear! I wanted students to be taking their time to reflect on what they had read.

Because of the complexity of the vocabulary words, (daub, kilns, mortise, pug mill, puncheon, tallow, tenon, thatch, and wattle), we spent much time that week clarifying those words. Even though many ideas in the story were also complex, I let the students choose what they wanted clarified when they were the Job Inspectors. There were times when I really wanted to jump right in the conversation and ask students to clarify ideas from the story, but I did not want them to feel too overwhelmed.

I thought that the students were able to understand the story because of the support provided by the RT discussion. The process did seem a bit tedious at

times, but it demonstrated the importance of understanding the main concepts on each page before moving on through the book. Students started to make connections with their prior knowledge of homes.

Readers Hard at Work During Recess!

I vividly remember a rainy Thursday afternoon during the study when I felt both physically and mentally exhausted. My students had seemed off-task in their classwork and some students were having difficulties getting along with each other. I had spent much time that week reminding students how to be respectful and responsible third graders. Just as I happened to be sitting at my desk during indoor recess pondering the hectic week that had almost passed, I turned my chair as I heard Alisha tell Cindy, Jordan, Chloe, and Lori that it was time to be Readers at Work. The students had played school before during indoor recess by using my dry erase easel and their textbooks. They often would have disagreements over who would be the teacher. Students seemed to play school for a few minutes until they got frustrated with their peers and then they would go with a friend to play a game or draw on their own. When I saw this group of girls by the easel, they had taken the toolkit off of the shelf where it was usually stored. I immediately took out my field log and began to record my observations to see what would happen while the girls were playing Readers at Work.

- Alisha: Ok. I am going to be the teacher first. I will take out the 4 things in the toolkit so that you can learn about the story.*
- Then someone else will be the teacher and do the same thing.*
- Cindy: Why do you have to be the teacher first?*
- Jordan: It's ok. Just let her be the teacher first. It was her idea.*
- Alisha: Ok. Here are the wires. Who wants the wires?*
- Chloe: I want the wires! Wait! What book are we talking about?*
- I need to ask a question about a book that we have read.*
- What book have we all read?*

The girls started their own conversations with each other. Alisha was standing by the easel getting frustrated that their playtime had been interrupted.

- Jordan: We all read Night Letters this week. Let's just do that.*
- Alisha: Oh I guess so.*
- Cindy: It doesn't have to be the book that you want Alyssa.*
- Alisha: Ok. Ok.*

Lori was the only student to get her book. She did not open it, but she had it near her.

- Chloe: It was my turn with the wires. Raise your hand to answer my question please. Why did Lily write night letters?*
- Lori: She liked nature. She loved her backyard. She also imagined things.*

Alisha: Ok. Now I have the cement.

Cindy: I forget what the cement means.

Chloe: Summarize!

Cindy: Lily wrote night letters in her backyard.

Alisha: Now I have the goggles.

All of the girls raised their hands and called out that they wanted a turn.

Alisha: It is Lori's turn!

Lori: I need to go back in my book to find something.

Alisha: Recess is almost over. If you look back in the book it will take too long.

Lori: I'll look in the book. Call on someone else for the next tool.

Alisha: I have the blueprint.

Jordan: I don't know. I already read the story. I can't predict now but I thought Lily would be crawling on the ground looking at nature.

Recess was technically over, but I let it go longer to see what would happen next!

Alisha: Lori! Use the goggles!

Lori: I don't know why Lily likes the tree so much.

Cindy: Ok. I will be the teacher next!

At that moment, I rang the bell that recess was over. I told Cindy that they could continue playing Readers at Work another day. The girls all seemed surprised that I had known what they were doing. They all looked at each other and laughed. I was very impressed with how they were being problem solvers. They even used the strategies correctly! This was one of the most exciting moments for me during my study because it made me aware that the children must have liked what we were doing enough to play it during free time! It was also insightful to me that the only student in the recess group who was in the small guided reading groups was Chloe. All of the other girls received RT instruction during whole group reading only. They still seemed to understand the idea of taking on the roles.

Student-Led RT Groups

Before implementing this phase of the study, I acknowledged the importance of spending time to set the guidelines and expectations for what would happen in students' small groups when a student would be the Foreman. We spent much time brainstorming ideas for how to work cooperatively in groups. Students were anxious to find out who was going to be the Foreman to lead the discussion for the first week. I told the students that would be choosing each week's Foreman based on their prior week's use and application of the strategies. I discussed that if I saw someone who was putting much thought and effort into their Readers at Work jobs, I would have them be the Foreman for the following

week. I assured the students that everyone would have a chance to be the Foreman, but that they would have to be patient. I told them that being the Foreman was an important job because they not only had to lead the discussion, but they also had to understand how to help others with using the Readers at Work reading strategies.

Yellow group. I chose Danielle to be the Foreman for the first week of student-led groups. I sat behind the group so that the students did not directly see me observing them. Danielle was able to see me from where she was sitting at the kidney-shaped table. I hoped that I could maybe give her some nonverbal cues if needed. Danielle was a very quiet student in the classroom. I was not exactly sure how she would feel about being the first Foreman, but when I talked to her about it, she was smiling. I told her that she had done such a great job using the toolkit strategies that I thought she was able to begin leading her guided reading group to read and discuss the story of the week. Jim and Amanda questioned why they were not chosen as this week's Foreman. I told the whole group to be patient and focus on being the construction site workers, which is always a very important job. I became a bit worried that they were so concerned with the idea of being the leader. I hoped that this would not affect their strategy usage and application progress that had been made until this point.

I handed out the story, *Tulips for Annie's Mother* by Peggy Bresnick Kendler. Before giving the lead to Danielle, I built some prior knowledge of the

Great Depression. After the students shared what they knew about the topic, I had them read the last page of the story, which had facts about the Great Depression. We briefly discussed their thoughts about what was read. I wanted the students to have some context before reading a story about a family who struggled throughout the Great Depression. I then told the students that Danielle was ready to be the Foreman for the Readers at Work discussion to begin. I stepped aside and told Danielle to begin by following the Foreman directions. She handed out the job cards to each student, and then she very quietly told the students to take a picture walk through the story. I was impressed with how the students immediately did that task silently. Often when I had the students take picture walks, they would stop and talk loudly with a buddy about things that they saw in the pictures. They would then become easily distracted and would need prompts to finish their picture walk and to stay on task. I noticed that they did not do this to Danielle. They looked at her when they were finished. She then went around the circle and had each student make a prediction about the story. Most students used phrases from the Be the Teacher Bookmark to help them begin their predictions. Amanda asked Danielle if she should hand in her job card for making a prediction. All of the students started telling Amanda that they did not have to hand in their cards in the beginning. Danielle looked at me when the students started calling out. Amanda soon remembered the process, and I gave Danielle the cue to continue onto the next step. She was following the directions

so carefully. I felt very excited to see what their discussion would sound and look like.

Danielle: We are going to read page 3 by ourselves.

Students quickly read page 3 and put their heads up.

Danielle: Who would like to be the Architect?

All hands rise and Kathy says, “Me, Me!”

Danielle: Hope. I need your Architect card.

Hope: I predict that Annie will have to move like Sue did.

Danielle looked at me nervously. I signaled to her to keep going.

Danielle: Who would like to be the BRICKLAYER?

Most hands were raised. Hope turned back to me to ask if she could volunteer to be the Bricklayer. I quickly intervened and reviewed the card procedure. I anticipated that this would take a little while longer to become more of a natural process.

Kathy: This part is about a girl named Annie who was sad because her best friend Sue was moving. I would be sad too if I was her.

Danielle: Who wants to be the Electrician?

Amanda: Why is Annie so sad?

Amanda looked at me to check if she called on someone to answer. I nodded, and she seemed to understand what to do next.

Amanda: Joshua can answer.

Joshua: Annie is sad because her best friend Sue is moving.

Danielle continued leading the group through the story very well that week. It took two days for the group to get through the story by using the RT techniques. I thought that the group worked very well together especially for the first time. I had recorded some examples of their work in a RT 4 Square Chart. On the third day, I had the students reread the story independently. I then shared the RT 4 Square Chart with them so that they could see some of the ideas that they discussed when Danielle was leading the group. I complimented them on how they worked so well together and listened to Danielle's directions. I was very impressed by their behavior and motivation in the groups. I noticed that many of the questions that they posed were very literal and did not use a variety of the questioning key words. I modeled some examples of some questions that I thought were important to understanding the story. I wrote them down on a dry erase board so that students could see how they were worded. I compared them to the questions that the students had previously created for the story. Amanda exclaimed, "Wow. You are right. Our questions were way too easy! Teachers need to ask tough questions." Amanda brought up a great point that often teachers do ask more thought-provoking questions. I was glad that she was able to identify that important point. I was hoping that other students received that same message. I told the students that I thought they did a really nice job being

the Architect and making predictions. Joshua mentioned, “Well, that is the easiest job!” The students laughed and nodded in agreement. I continued to tell them that even though they were able to easily make predictions, they still need to remember to add the word “because” and explain why they made each prediction. I reviewed the words and ideas that students wanted to clarify when they were Job Inspectors.

After observing the prior week’s RT group, I decided to appoint Hope as the new Foreman for *Pictures in the Sky* by Chanelle Peters. She had been consistently showing strategy usage and application on her RT 4 Square Charts in whole-group instruction. During the prior week’s small group, I observed that her responses were insightful and showed understanding of the story. Prior to the group meeting, I talked with Hope and told her that as the Foreman, she could make comments when someone completes a job. I told her that she could also share her ideas for a strategy to add to the conversation. She shyly nodded and said that she would maybe try that.

I introduced the story to the students by explaining that they would be reading a non-fiction story about constellations. I described constellations as being a group of stars that forms a pattern in the sky. Students shared prior knowledge of stars and constellations. I sat nearby just as I did the previous week. It worked well for me to observe the group and to be nearby if help was

needed. I also thought it was beneficial to be recording their ideas since I had not assigned that yet to any of the group members.

I thought that Hope did a good job of being the Foreman. She kept the group working at a good pace. I observed that Joshua and Kathy were not always listening to others when they were speaking. They were not talking out loud, but they were fidgeting in their seats looking around the room. I needed to prompt them to focus on their group's discussion. I also had to give the group several reminders to get back on track when they began to talk about their experiences seeing constellations in the night sky. I liked that they were adding to the discussion and making connections to the text, but it was difficult for them to regroup without teacher prompting. I thought that their questions when being the Electrician had improved from the prior week's story. Since this story was nonfiction, I think it was a bit easier to pose questions because of all of the factual information. It was much harder to predict what they thought would happen next. After a few pages, I decided to take the Architect cards away because I did not think that it was necessary in this story. The students put much effort into summarizing the text as the Bricklayer. I liked how they went back to the text before responding. The problem this created was the unstructured wait time for the other students who were not participating in a particular job. Amanda did a really great job of being the Job Inspector. She identified several ideas that were confusing for her.

Amanda: How can someone poke their fingers through the night sky? I would not want my finger in the sky. That sentence does not make sense. How can constellations have stories? A story is in a book. A constellation is made of stars.

All of the other students except for Amanda clarified words and not sentences or ideas. When I worked with the group later in the week, I spent time reviewing the facts in the story about constellations. I made it a priority to praise Amanda for her effort in clarifying ideas that were confusing. I showed the class the RT 4 Square Chart that I had recorded from their discussion. We worked as a team to clarify Amanda's confusing ideas, and we clarified unknown words that other students had identified. Jim was very quick to ask me if Amanda was going to be the next Foreman because she did such a good job of clarifying ideas. She anxiously looked at me in wonderment. I told the group that they would find out next week. I reminded them not to worry if they had not been chosen as the Foreman yet. I was questioning if I should have randomly selected the children to be the discussion leaders, but I had been pleased with the success of the two that I had chosen due to their strategy knowledge and application.

I also spent some time with this group about being patient during the discussion. I explained that when you are in a group discussion you talk and also listen. I wanted them to learn how both were so essential to make their work successful and meaningful.

After analyzing student work and observations in my field log, I did decide to appoint Amanda as the next Foreman for her small group. When I told her the news, she yelled, “I knew it! I knew it! I don’t know if I know what to do though.” She laughed a little bit and then looked at me for reassurance. I was so glad that she was excited. I also knew that she would need more prompting than the prior Foremen due to her needs. I spent a little extra time reviewing the direction sheet with her. I even had her practice with me for a few minutes by saying the directions aloud pretending she was leading the group.

I introduced the story, *The First Year* by Christian Downey, to the group by explaining that it would be about a year in the life of early Virginia settlers who used their knowledge of nature to help them survive. I built background by asking the students if they had ever gone camping or if there was ever a time when the electricity or water did not work in their homes. Many of the students were able to make connections to this topic, and they explained what their families had to do to solve their problems. I wanted them to have a strong understanding of that concept before initiating the RT procedure.

Amanda needed several prompts from me to lead her group in discussion. She led her group with a smile on her face and did not show any anxiety. I was very proud of her because she was the first Foreman from her group to add some extra details and opinions after someone talked. I had told the students that this was something that the Foreman had the privilege of doing. I wanted them to

make the connection that the foreman was leading the group like a teacher. Teachers often express more thoughts after students speak to add to the discussion and to help in student learning. Jim nodded in agreement after I explained the rationale for having the foreman add more thoughts in the discussion after someone shared a response for a job card.

I thought that the students really made progress in the quality of their strategy usage for this story. Students made very strong predictions using reasoning to explain their ideas. This had been an improvement from previous stories. Julie, Kathy, Hope, and Danielle had posed strong questions. Jim and Joshua had some difficulty when it was their turn to ask questions. They were sitting next to each other and needed some prompting not to be talking and laughing with each other. I reminded myself that I needed to make sure that they would not sit next to each other again in the small groups. I also realized that they were both probably getting anxious to be the Foreman because all girls had the role up to that point. The greatest need that I identified from this RT group was clarifying both words and ideas. The students were reluctant to share what was new or confusing to them. When I met with the group later in the week, I spent time modeling how to clarify words and ideas from the story. Students worked together to identify more ideas that were confusing in the story. Kathy admitted, “It is hard to tell my friends what I don’t understand. I don’t want someone to think I don’t know something.” It was very brave of Kathy to express her

feelings, but it gave me insight into what may have been affecting the students' motivation to be the Job Inspector.

I decided to have Jim be the Foreman for *A Day With the Dogs* by Rena Korb. After telling him the news, he thanked me for choosing him. I knew how much he wanted to feel empowered by having the role of the Foreman. It definitely became a motivating factor for the students to take on the role of the teacher. I reminded him how he could also share his responses for the strategies to add to the discussion. He smiled and said, "Oh, yes. I can definitely add more ideas to the discussion." I have always admired his enthusiasm and positive attitude for learning.

I first built background for the story by asking students what they knew about animal shelters. Students became very excited to talk about their prior knowledge of this topic. Kathy started to talk a lot about facts she knew about dogs, which caused the group to get off task. Once I let Jim begin his role as Foreman, I noticed that the students were not as attentive as they had been during the prior weeks. After some teacher reminders and prompting to make good choices, they ended up sharing some very strong responses for their job cards.

The students appeared to be enjoying the story, and they were able to confidently make predictions, ask questions, and summarize sections of text. I observed how the group had a more difficult time clarifying words and ideas. I heard Kathy whisper to Jim, "Well this is a pretty easy story. I don't have

anything to clarify.” I decided to focus on making clarifications from the story another day that week in their small group. I identified some words and ideas that I thought would need clarification from a third grader. It turned out that the students were confused by these ideas and needed support to clarify the meaning.

For the last story of the study, *Mount St. Helens* by Isabel Senado, I chose Kathy to be the Foreman. I predicted that she would be able to lead the group with ease since she has a very outgoing personality and likes to be in charge. The main obstacle that this group faced was the complexity of the content of a non-fiction story. I had identified that the students were able to use the reading strategies with more ease when they were reading fictional text. They appeared to have more of a challenge when reading non-fiction text. While observing the group struggle to appropriately use the reading strategies, I decided to join the group as a second Foreman. It disappointed me that for the last story of the study I had to intervene in their discussion, but I acknowledged the complexity of the genre and of the text. I also realized that I probably did not spend enough time clearly modeling the differences in using the strategies for different genres of text.

After my data collection had concluded, I continued to run the student-led RT groups so that Joshua and Julie also had the opportunities to be the Foreman.

Blue group. I initiated most of the same RT procedures as I used with the Yellow Group. However, I knew that this group had different strengths and needs that had to be acknowledged as I implemented the next phase of the study. I decided to change the Foreman's directions for this group so that they students would read two pages of text before discussion would begin. I had a feeling that I would probably have to modify this group's directions as time progressed due to their high reading fluency and eagerness to read independently. I had predicted that it would be very challenging for some of the students in this group to stop reading when designated by the Foreman. In past experiences working with this guided reading group, I had observed that the students would read the story and complete comprehension questions or an activity about the story very quickly. Then when I posed a variety of questions about the story, many students did not know the answers. They did not even know where to look back in the book. For these reasons, I strongly identified the need for RT for this group so that they could learn how to read small sections of text before discussing it using the RT strategies. Four out of the five stories that this group was going to read were non-fiction selections. I knew that I would have to spend more time modeling how to use the RT strategies for non-fiction text. I introduced the stories and activated prior knowledge in the same way that I did with the Yellow Group.

For the first student-led RT group, I had chosen Chloe to be the Foreman based on her strong strategy usage and application throughout the study. Brandon exclaimed, “I knew it. She is such a good reader. I guess she deserves it.” The other students did not say much when they found out who would be the first foreman. They seemed anxious to begin the group.

I first introduced the story, *Nicky's Meadow* by Juna Loch, to build prior knowledge. As predicted, Brandon and Heather did not listen to Chloe's directions to stop after reading the first two pages of text. As this pattern continued, I decided to sit right next to those two students to ensure that they would begin to follow the directions. I felt Chloe's frustration when Brandon and Halle were not listening to her. I needed to encourage her to keep going. The quality of responses using the strategies were very strong. They came up with very strong predictions and questions. Their words and ideas for clarification were also much stronger than I had predicted. I identified the need for this group to practice summarizing text. I think it became more difficult for them to summarize the main events of two pages of text. I observed students reading a sentence that was included in one of the two pages. I explained to the students that was not a way to summarize what they had read. I modeled summarizing text and had students practice writing summaries of designated two pages of text. Their summaries were much more detailed written than orally stated.

After reflecting on this group's first experience with the student-led RT group, I realized that the greatest challenges this group would probably face would be behavioral and cooperative working skills. Many of the students just wanted to read and not be interrupted to discuss story events. I decided to try another week of following the same format before I would make other changes.

I decided to choose Elijah to be the next Foreman due to the strength of his strategy application that he had demonstrated through the previous weeks both in the whole group and small group setting. The students appeared to be very interested before reading *Star Tracks* by Stephanie Sigue. I set the purpose for their learning, and we had taken a guided picture walk together. I wanted to introduce the students to the concept of constellations and celestial navigation. The content of this book was very challenging for third grade students. As I observed the group begin the Readers at Work procedures, I immediately saw many confused faces. Some of the summaries that had been told really did not make any sense at all! Heather whispered to Brandon, "I just don't get this story." She then began to play with her pencil instead of listening to the other students discuss the story using the job cards. I really had to fight the urge to jump right into the group to act as the discussion leader. As it turns out, I am really glad that I gave the group some time to adjust to the complexity of the story. I quickly observed students helping each other to create better summaries than the ones I had earlier heard. I do not know if every student got the same

amount of factual knowledge from the story, but I think that everyone was able to interpret it in their own ways. This could have been a story in which only certain students with prior knowledge of constellations would have participated in discussion. Employing the RT method required all learners to become actively involved in the process. I praised the group for their willingness to help each other. I did however acknowledge that the procedure for this group was not working as well as I would have liked. The format worked well for the Yellow group because their text was shorter and they were students that really needed the guided strategy support. I decided to make some changes for the next three stories that the Blue group would participate.

Let's try again! I decided to split the Blue group into two smaller RT groups. Group 1 was comprised of Billy, Heather, Christine, and Tyler. Group 2 was comprised of Brandon, Elijah, and Chloe. The students seemed curious as to why I had made a change in the groupings. I told the students that they would now have more opportunities to participate in discussion about the text. They seemed to be a bit apprehensive about the change.

For the last three weeks of the study, students read three non-fiction stories about nature. For all of these stories, I first met with all seven students to build background and prior knowledge about the topics. Students individually read each story while completing the RT 4 Square Chart. Brandon expressed his disappointment about completing the RT 4 Square Charts again in the small group

setting. I told the students that the Charts would help them to be prepared when they met in their small groups. I heard Heather complain that I was giving her too much work. I reassured the students that by preparing their responses before they met with their small groups, they would be better able to have an interactive discussion.

When it was time for the RT groups to work together, it took a while for the groups to stay on task. I thought that their discussions occurred at a faster pace with more interaction since the text was already read. Chloe exclaimed, “I thought this book was going to be hard to read, but it really wasn’t. I was able to discuss it easily.” This showed that Chloe felt confident in her comprehension of the story and her participation in the group discussion. I continued to use the RT job cards and I appointed a Foreman for each group every week. By the third week, I was beginning to hear discussions that were beginning to sound more like conversations, which was one of my goals. It still was not as natural as I would have liked, but the students did make progress. They also showed progress in their overall comprehension of challenging non-fiction topics. Their summaries had improved greatly throughout the small group sessions. Even though this group struggled with cooperative learning behaviors, they showed that they were able to make progress when they had more independence to read independently and work in a smaller group setting.

Strategy Applications to Weekly Reading Stories

Every week during the study, students read a weekly story from the *Reading Street Anthology*. The students read each story at least two times. The first time they read the story, it would usually be in the whole group setting with guided practice and modeling. For this type of reading, the students had a sticky note pad on their desks. I would model how to use the sticky notes to apply one of the RT strategies of predict, clarify, summarize, and ask questions. I encouraged students to choose a strategy for each page. When students would reread the text individually, with pairs, or in a small group with myself or a special education colleague, they would have their sticky note pad nearby. In the beginning of the study, I really only observed students using the notepad to write down words that they did not understand and needed clarified. As time progressed, I noticed that students started to clarify ideas and write short summaries about a section of text. Students also became very comfortable at writing predictions about what they thought would occur next. Not all of the predictions provided an explanation for support, but this was something that improved with time. It was not as natural for students to take on the role as questioner when they were reading for understanding in this format. I observed that students applied more of the strategies when reading fictional text instead of non-fiction.

Student Interviews

One of my favorite times during the study was when I had opportunities to interview students. I had created a list of interview questions that I used throughout the study (see Appendix H). I felt that the students were very straightforward and honest when they answered my questions. The questions focused on a variety of aspects that comprised my study. I also felt that I was able to know my students better after hearing their opinions about the study.

Student Surveys

As I concluded my study, I administered the post-study survey (see Appendix D), which was identical to the pre-study survey. When the students saw the survey, Amanda quickly pointed out that she had seen this before. I was nervous as they began to complete the survey because of the difficulty that they had with the pre-study survey.

Students still posed several questions about to me about the survey, but they seemed much more comfortable with the types of questions that were being asked. I was able to see that students identified some examples of strategy use that we applied during the study (see Figure 8). Many students wrote about the Readers at Work toolkit in their surveys. Not everyone identified the tools as being the reading strategies, but they knew that the tools helped them to be better readers. Their answers for the first question on the survey had definitely shown learning that occurred during the study.

What strategies do you use while reading?

Predict what the story will be about
Use the goggles, blueprint, cement and wires
Summarize what happened in a story
Readers at Work strategies
When I read I try to think of ways to be the Architect, Electrician, Job
Inspector, and Bricklayer
Clarify new words
Think clearly about what I just read
Read the story again and again until it makes sense

Figure 8. Post-study survey question #1.

I was also interested to see if any of the students' attitudes and perceptions had change throughout the study about reading and learning styles (see Table 3). I was hoping to see an increased number of students who thought positively about reading, buddy reading, and group work.

Table 3

Post-Study Survey: *Learning Attitudes*

Question	Yes	Sometimes	No
Do you like to read?	12	7	0
Do you like to read with a buddy?	10	8	1
Do you like working in groups?	10	7	2

The End of the Study

It was very hard to believe when the data collection of the study had ended. I was still continuing some of the student-led RT groups so that other students could take on the role of Foreman, but I had realized that I had collected enough data to reflect upon and analyze to determine the outcomes of the work that I had done during the study. I had a very positive experience instructing RT in my third grade classroom.

Data Analysis

Introduction

Analyzing data is a very important part of the action research process. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) recognize that data analysis involves breaking data down into manageable pieces so that patterns can be identified. These patterns help a teacher-researcher to identify findings from the study. By analyzing my data throughout the collection period, I was able to begin to interpret what had occurred in my classroom and the truths of students' motivation and the effects of strategy application when RT methods were implemented.

Analysis Steps

Field log analysis. In order to be a trustworthy teacher-researcher, I had collected data through multiple sources including observational data, student artifacts, student interviews, and student surveys. All of this data became a part of my field log. Since there was such a large amount of data to analyze and interpret, I took Bogdan and Bicklen's (2006) advice to make important decisions to narrow the study. In order to this, I first decided to create a purpose statement for my study (Wolcott, 2009). I then spent much time reading through the data that I collected from multiple sources. I identified only the data that I thought supported my purpose statement. Following this method allowed me to sort through all of the data that I had collected during the study.

Participant observations. As I was involved in the instruction during my study, I spent much time observing what I saw and heard in the classroom. These observations took place during both the whole group and small group phases of my study. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggest to continuously write many observer's comments to report important insights. I recorded these comments in my field log daily. After recording those observations, I would write my reflections on those behaviors. This became a very crucial part of my study because there were so many different behaviors in the various phases of my study.

When students were participating in the small RT groups, their discussions became an integral part of the study. I tried to record multiple discussions. I analyzed these discussions by annotating common patterns in my field log.

Student work. My study included a variety of student artifacts. I collected work that students completed individually. I collected many RT 4 Square Charts that demonstrated both progress in strategy application and a lack of growth in strategy application. I found it important to analyze both types of individual student work to get an accurate look at students' achievement understanding text and applying reading strategies.

We also completed many RT 4 Square Charts as a shared-writing experience. Even though I helped the students with modeling some examples for strategy application, this work still needed to be analyzed to gather more data of reading comprehension evidence or lack of in the whole group setting.

Interviews. I recorded student responses to interviews on paper that I then transcribed to my field log. I analyzed student responses by writing reflective memos about students' responses. I focused on both positive and negative opinions about the study and motivation to read and to use the RT strategies. Analyzing both sets of data was a resource to find the truths that would lead to the findings of the study.

Student Surveys. The pre- and post- study surveys were designed to include a variety of different types of data including both numerical evidence and written responses from students (MacLean & Mohr, 1999). To analyze the data that I collected from student surveys, I wrote reflective memos describing my insights and reflections on what that information meant at that time.

Codes and bins. While I was analyzing all of the data that I reflected upon in my field log, I coded my qualitative data by identifying common labels that appeared throughout all of the data. (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). I then looked for relationships among those labels. After coding my field log and looking for recognizable patterns and labels, I sorted those ideas into bins. (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997).

Graphic organizer. I created a graphic organizer that identifies my research question and the four bins that led to the findings of my study (see Figure 9). I analyzed the graphic organizer by identifying the data that supported each bin and the corresponding codes.

Theme statements. The theme statements led to the findings of my study. I supported my theme statements by identifying data from my field log that demonstrates each main idea.

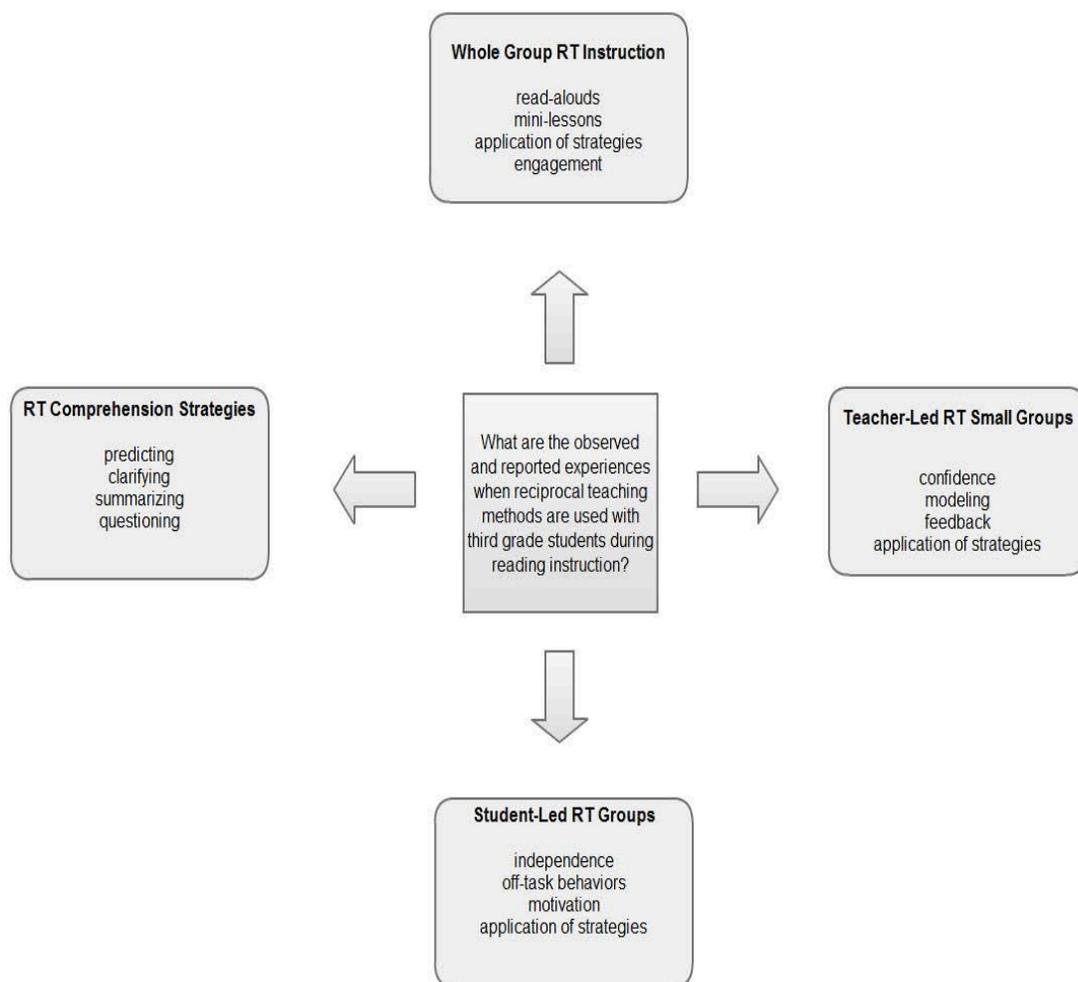


Figure 9. Bins and themes.

Findings

The purpose of my study was to engage students in meaningful story discussion through the implementation of reciprocal teaching techniques so that students would be more motivated to read and would demonstrate an application of reading strategies.

Students' comprehension can be positively influenced when students apply the reciprocal teaching strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and questioning while reading.

When students apply the reciprocal teaching strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and questioning, their retellings and discussions about the text show increased reading comprehension. When students applied the strategies independently or with a buddy when reading weekly stories, their written responses about the stories also showed more content and specific details from the story.

Students who applied the RT reading strategies while reading had more to contribute during story discussions. Their discussions demonstrated knowledge of the four RT strategies. Students' perceptions of reading strategies changed from the pre-study survey to the post-study survey. Students showed a growth in understanding what the four RT strategies meant and knowledge of how to apply them to their reading. Students who had difficulty completing the pre-study survey seemed more comfortable when taking the post-study survey. They

seemed more confident in their knowledge of reading strategies. Kozol (2005) states, “It is harder to convince young people they ‘can learn’ when they are cordoned off by a society that isn’t sure they really can” (p. 37). My goal was to instill a positive learning environment that encouraged students to believe in themselves. By the end of the study, many students acknowledged that they were nervous during the implementation of the study but as time went on they became more comfortable with using the RT methods in different classroom settings.

Students seemed more motivated to read with a purpose of taking on a specific reading role. The roles engaged students because they related to a theme that was of interest to students. It made a new concept seem like an exciting learning experience.

Students showed an overall growth in reading comprehension of fiction stories when applying the RT strategies. Palincsar and Brown (1984) developed the RT procedure for middle school students to read nonfiction content area text. I found that third grade students were more able to apply the RT strategies to fictional text. Interview data suggests that students enjoyed reading fiction stories more than nonfiction stories. This suggests that students are more able to apply reading strategies to assist in comprehension when they like and feel comfortable with the text that they are reading.

Whole group reciprocal teaching instruction can positively influence students' application of reading strategies and engagement through read-alouds and mini-lessons focusing on specific strategies.

Scaffolded instruction benefits students' application of the RT strategies. This can be accomplished through teacher modeling, guiding, and feedback to students. This led to more active participation in whole group reading instruction. Reading in the whole group setting became an interactive process in which all students were involved. Some students did show frustration when they did not know how to use a particular strategy for specific text. The teacher feedback and modeling caused students to refocus and try their best to use the four RT strategies while reading. Lubliner (2001) supports RT in a variety of classroom settings because it enables students to improve comprehension skills needed for many facets of life, not just test taking.

Interview data suggests that students were engaged in whole group RT instruction because of the Readers at Work theme. Many students identified the toolkit as being a form of play. They were able to use their imaginations to help them be better readers. Interview data also suggests that students enjoyed taking on the four RT roles of Architect, Job Inspector, Electrician, and Bricklayer. Most students were able to explain how the four reading strategies helped them to better understand text.

An important component of RT whole group instruction was the weekly teacher-read alouds. Interview data that I analyzed suggested that students enjoyed the read-alouds because they were able to pretend they were construction site workers. Some data suggests that students liked that they did not have to read the text themselves.

After analyzing data collected from student observations and student artifacts during whole group instruction, I found that student made progress in their application of strategies after mini-lessons focusing on specific strategies. Not all students were able to consistently apply strategies with the same proficiency. Hacker and Tenent (2002) identify that the process of consistently applying the RT strategies is a very long process.

Many of the student artifacts that I collected were completed after guided practice and mini-lessons. Many of the samples reflected the instruction that had occurred. I realized that students were able to complete the RT 4 Square Charts with more ease and confidence as time progressed. It took some time for students to expand their thoughts to demonstrate higher-level thinking skills.

Through the read-alouds and mini-lessons focusing on RT strategy instruction, reteaching, and application, student work began to resemble the guided models that I had spent so much time reinforcing. All learners in my classroom were able to apply the reading strategies to help in comprehending text. Each child was able to grasp their own meaning from the story on a variety of

different levels. This suggests that the modeling associated with RT is a very powerful component of the instructional technique. Vygotsky (1978) stated, “Children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. Using limitation, children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under the guidance of adults” (p. 88).

Students’ participation in teacher-led reciprocal teaching groups with teacher modeling and feedback can lead students to have confidence applying reading strategies while reading.

The teacher-led RT groups provided students with an opportunity to more actively engage in discussion about text. Since I was the Foreman of the group, students identified my role as being the leader. Students were motivated to take on the Readers at Work roles. Their motivation led them to discuss the story by using the Be the Teacher Bookmark. There were times when students struggled to apply particular strategies to their reading prior to discussion. When this occurred, I was able to provide modeling to assist students.

The teacher-led RT groups showed that guided practice and modeling are important components of RT methods. The think-alouds that I provided as the Foreman allowed for students to add more content and details to their conversations as they were taking on the RT roles. Oczkus (2010) strongly believes in the integration of think-alouds by both teachers and students to model thought processes for other learners. It was difficult at times for the students to

model their thinking, but it became more of a natural process as time went progressed.

The teacher-led groups were designed as a model before students had opportunities to lead their own groups. Students need time in teacher-led groups before they are able to work cooperatively in student-led groups. Because of the time constraints of the study, I did not allow enough time for this guided practice. I agree with Freire (2000) that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (pg. 72). The RT small group setting did allow students to explore new learning in different contexts in which they were not familiar. This made learning engaging and motivating for learners.

Students’ participation in student-led reciprocal teaching groups can promote student independence and motivation to apply strategies while reading, but off-task behaviors can be a factor that can affect students’ progress.

Student-led RT groups can lead to student motivation to read text. This motivation can sometimes cause some off-task behavior especially when working collaboratively with peers. I found that the students needed teacher prompting and guidance during their student-led groups. I had never reached the point where I could walk away from the group and feel confident that they would not get

distracted and off-task. Students had independence while discussing text using the RT roles, but I was nearby if the group needed prompting. Dewey (1938) states, “Unless a given experience leads out into a field previously unfamiliar no problems arise, while problems are the stimulus to thinking” (p.79). The problems that the student-led groups faced were important learning experiences. Not all of the challenges were about off-task behaviors or lack of cooperative working skills. Some of the problems faced were when students did not know how to apply a strategy or did not fully understand a story. The effective part of this situation is when students are able to intervene and help someone to be better able to understand the text through story discussion. Deriving meaning from other students can be more powerful than hearing the same message from a teacher.

The social nature of RT can lead to increased strategy usage based on the requirement that all students participate. While students are listening to their peers apply strategies in discussion, they are able to learn more ways to talk about story events using the RT strategies.

I feel that this study was successful because it led students to learn about and use the strategies of predicting, clarifying, summarizing, and questioning in a discussion format. The findings suggest both strengths and needs of the study, which affected both instruction and student work.

Next Steps

Based on the findings from my study, it appears that continuing instructing using reciprocal teaching methods will benefit my students. I plan to continue using the Readers at Work theme to implement RT instruction. I plan to keep my toolkit in a visible location in my classroom to remind students to use those tools while reading to better comprehend text.

One of my goals is to use chapter books for the RT student-led groups. I also hope to have students choose books based on their interests. I feel that both choice and stories with strong plots will add a new element to the small groups. For the study, I decided to use only the *Scott Foresman* resources as text for students to read and apply strategies because I first wanted to try a new way to make the reading curriculum that I am required to teach more motivating and interactive.

I have also spent much time thinking about my earlier mini-study focusing on dialogue journals. I am interested implementing them again with the implementation of RT. I would like my students to have more experiences writing in response to what they have read. The dialogue journals could be a way that they could self-reflect on their strategy application for each particular text, and then I could respond back to them. This was a part of my current study that I thought was lacking. I am interested in seeing the effects would be when I

combine the two topics of research that have been of interest to me over the past several years.

I am looking forward to using RT methods in my future reading instruction. I hope to keep researching the best ways to improve my teaching practices in this area. I think that it is a very valuable instructional technique that has made an impact on my teaching thus far.

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Appendix A



1200 Main Street
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018
TEL 610-861-1300
WEB www.moravian.edu

September 15, 2011

Kristen E. Kuchera
3229 Flatrock Drive
Whitehall, Pennsylvania 18052

Re: HSIRB Proposal, "What are the effects of reciprocal teaching strategies on reading comprehension and written responses to literature of third grade students?"

Dear Ms. Kuchera,

The Moravian College Humans Subjects Internal Review Board has renewed your research proposal, "What are the effects of reciprocal teaching strategies on reading comprehension and written responses to literature of third grade students?" Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your original proposal and your renewal request will remain with the HSIRB Chairs.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB what those topics may be. Depending on the proposed changes, you may have to resubmit an edited or expanded proposal for review. Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-625-7756) or via email (voconnel@moravian.edu) if you have any questions about the committee's decision or any of the conditions laid out in this letter.

Sincerely,

Virginia Adams O'Connell, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board

Appendix B

Dear _____

I am currently working toward the completion of a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. The courses that I have taken thus far have given me valuable opportunities to explore effective teaching practices that benefit student learning. Moravian's program enables teachers to engage in action research in their classrooms to improve student learning and to reflect on best teaching practices. I have previously researched topics such as implementing math journals and reading dialogue journals in my classroom. As a requisite for my thesis, Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. My proposed study focuses on engaging students in reading by implementing reciprocal teaching strategies in my classroom. Reciprocal teaching is a reading comprehension strategy in which students learn to predict, question, clarify, and summarize text. I will first model these strategies during interactive read-alouds. Students will then learn how to use these strategies with a buddy, in collaborative groups, and independently while reading. I am hoping that the implementation of reciprocal teaching will help students to better comprehend stories, improve written responses to literature, and motivate them to be life-long readers. This study will take place in my classroom from October to December, 2011.

I will be gathering information to support my study through student interviews, surveys, student work, observation checklists, and student self-evaluations. All students will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the course of the study. All of the students in my classroom will participate in the reciprocal teaching activities that will occur during reading instruction. However, participation in the data collection of the study is voluntary and will not affect students' grades in any way. Any child may withdraw from the study at any time. Parents can notify me at any time if they would like to withdraw their children from the study. I will only use information collected from students who have permission to participate in the study in any written parts of my research. All of the students' names will be replaced with a randomly selected number, and our school name will also be kept confidential. All of the research materials will be kept in a secure location at my home. All data gathered during the study will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

I hope you will be able to see my teacher research in action by observing my implementation of a new teaching strategy. I look forward to discussing my progress with you.

Sincerely,

Kristen McNeal

I understand that Kristen McNeal will be observing and collecting data as part of her research on the effects of reciprocal teaching on comprehension and written responses to literature.

Principal's Signature: _____

Appendix C

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently working toward the completion of a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. The courses that I have taken thus far have given me valuable opportunities to explore effective teaching practices that benefit student learning. Moravian's program enables teachers to engage in action research in their classrooms to improve student learning and to reflect on best teaching practices. I have previously researched topics such as implementing math journals and reading dialogue journals in my classroom. As a requisite for my thesis, Moravian's program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. My proposed study focuses on engaging students in reading by implementing reciprocal teaching strategies in my classroom. Reciprocal teaching is a reading comprehension strategy in which students learn to predict, question, clarify, and summarize text. I will first model these strategies during interactive read-alouds. Students will then learn how to use these strategies with a buddy, in collaborative groups, and independently while reading. I am hoping that the implementation of reciprocal teaching will help students to better comprehend stories, improve written responses to literature, and motivate them to be life-long readers. This study will take place in my classroom from October to December, 2011.

I will be gathering information to support my study through student interviews, surveys, student work, observation checklists, and student self-evaluations. All students will have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the course of the study. All of the students in my classroom will participate in the reciprocal teaching activities that will occur during reading instruction. However, participation in the data collection of the study is voluntary and will not affect your child's grade in any way. Any child may withdraw from the study at any time. Please notify me by phone or in writing if your child wishes to withdraw from the study. I will only use information collected from students who have permission to participate in the study in any written parts of my research. All of the students' names will be replaced with a randomly selected number, and our school name will also be kept confidential. All of the research materials will be kept in a secure location at my home. All data gathered during the study will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about my research at any time, please feel free to contact me at school at . I can also be contacted by e-mail at

If you approve of your child being a participant in my teacher action research thesis, please sign and return the second page of this letter. Thank you for your support in my endeavors to try to new learning strategy in my classroom.

Sincerely,

Mrs. McNeal

Appendix C

I understand that Mrs. McNeal will be observing and collecting data as part of her research on the effects of reciprocal teaching strategies on reading comprehension and written responses to literature.

Please place a checkmark on the appropriate statement.

I give permission for my child to be a participant in the study.

I do **not** give permission for my child to be a participant in the study.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Reciprocal Teaching Survey
Pre- and Post-Study Survey

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

1. What strategies do you use while reading a story?

2. What do you do when you don't understand something that you have read?

3. Do you like to read? yes sometimes no

4. Do you like to read with a buddy? yes sometimes no

5. Do you like working in groups? yes sometimes no

Appendix D

6. What do you like or dislike about working in groups?

7. What do you think is the most challenging part about being a good reader?

8. What do readers do when they make predictions?

9. What do readers do when they summarize what they have read?

Appendix D

10. What do readers do when they clarify what they have read?

11. How can readers ask questions to help themselves understand what they have read?

12. I get nervous when taking reading tests. yes no sometimes

13. What are some tips you would give another students for ways to do well when taking reading tests?

14. Which is more difficult?

Multiple choice questions Look Back and Write

Why? _____

Appendix E

RT 4 Square Chart

Name: _____

Title: _____

<p>Architect-Predicts</p> <p>I predict that</p>	<p>Job Inspector-Clarifies</p> <p>These words are new to me and I don't know what they mean:</p> <p>This is a confusing idea in the story:</p>
<p>Electrician-Asks questions</p> <p>Here are questions I can ask classmates (who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, how?, what if?)</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p>Bricklayer-Summarizes</p> <p>This part of the story is about</p>

Appendix F

<p style="text-align: center;">Be the Teacher Bookmark</p> <hr/> <p> Predict Architect</p> <p>Use clues from the text or illustrations to predict what will happen next.</p> <p><i>I think...because...</i> <i>I'll bet...because...</i> <i>I suppose...because...</i> <i>I think I will learn...because...</i></p> <p> Question Electrician</p> <p>Ask questions as you read. Ask some questions that have answers in the text. Use the question words <i>who, what, where, when, why, how, and what if</i>. Try asking some questions that can be inferred. Use clues from the text plus your experiences.</p> <p> Clarify Job Inspector</p> <p>How can you figure out a difficult word or idea in the text?</p> <p>Reread, reread, reread! Think about word chunks you know. Try sounding it out. Read on. Ask, Does it make sense? Talk to a friend.</p> <p> Summarize Bricklayer</p> <p>Using your <i>own</i> words, tell the main ideas from the text in order.</p> <p><i>This text is about...</i> <i>This part is about...</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Be the Teacher Bookmark</p> <hr/> <p> Predict Architect</p> <p>Use clues from the text or illustrations to predict what will happen next.</p> <p><i>I think...because...</i> <i>I'll bet...because...</i> <i>I suppose...because...</i> <i>I think I will learn...because...</i></p> <p> Question Electrician</p> <p>Ask questions as you read. Ask some questions that have answers in the text. Use the question words <i>who, what, where, when, why, how, and what if</i>. Try asking some questions that can be inferred. Use clues from the text plus your experiences.</p> <p> Clarify Job Inspector</p> <p>How can you figure out a difficult word or idea in the text?</p> <p>Reread, reread, reread! Think about word chunks you know. Try sounding it out. Read on. Ask, Does it make sense? Talk to a friend.</p> <p> Summarize Bricklayer</p> <p>Using your own words, tell the main ideas from the text in order.</p> <p><i>This text is about...</i> <i>This part is about...</i></p>
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Appendix G

Architect	Job Inspector
Electrician	Bricklayer

Appendix H

List of Possible Student Interview Questions

1. Do you like to work in groups? Why or why not?
2. What kind of people do you like to work with in groups?
3. What should you see when watching students work in groups?
4. What should you hear when listening to students work in groups?
5. What strategies do you use while reading?
6. What does it mean to predict?
7. What does it mean to clarify?
8. What does it mean to summarize?
9. What does it mean to ask questions while reading?
10. Which of the reciprocal teaching strategies is your favorite? Why?
11. Which of the reciprocal teaching strategies is your least favorite? Why?
12. Which reciprocal teaching strategy helps you the most to understand text?
Explain.
13. What does it mean to respond to literature?
14. How can students receive the highest score for Look Back and Write questions?
15. What makes those questions difficult?
16. What are the tricks for answering those questions?
17. What is difficult about reciprocal teaching with buddies? Groups? Independently?
18. How can you use the four strategies when reading independently?
19. Do you use the four strategies when reading independently?
20. What do you do when a teacher reads stories aloud?
21. Describe what happens in a good reciprocal teaching/buddy group.