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Proceedings Submission

1. Title: Less-skilled readers: Studying the effects of paired reading on reading fluency, accuracy, comprehension, reader self-perceptions, and lived experience.
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ABSTRACT

As children advance through the grade levels, reading proficiency becomes more and more important to learning. In general, children who experience difficulties in the development of efficient reading skills are less likely to achieve academically at a level commensurate with their peers. In recent years, one-to-one instruction has received renewed attention as a consideration in many schools for early prevention of reading failure, remediation of reading problems, and in special education programs. Although these kinds of programs tend to be prohibitive (both in monetary and human resource allocation) due to the one-to-one nature of instruction, the long-term advantages for students may outweigh any short-term disadvantages. Therefore, research investigating the effectiveness of one-to-one instructional interventions is critical.

This study had a two-fold purpose. First, reading fluency, comprehension, and accuracy were examined within the context of the paired reading instructional intervention. Second, this study explored reader self-perceptions and the nature of the lived experience of reading for less-skilled readers.

Four upper elementary school students, who were experiencing fluency problems, participated in the study. A single-subject changing criterion design was employed. Baseline data were collected for each participant prior to the introduction of the paired reading instructional intervention. Reading rates and accuracy percentages were calculated and graphed daily during the baseline and instructional phases, and probed during the maintenance phase of the study. In addition, a reading maze procedure was used periodically to monitor reading comprehension skills. The Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) was administered to each student on three occasions to explore how they felt about themselves as readers, and individual informal interviews were conducted and analyzed for recurring themes to explore the lived experience of having reading fluency problems.

Reading fluency improved substantially for all participants, while accuracy and comprehension remained stable and high throughout the study. Measures on the Reader Self-Perception Scale, as well as qualitative data gathered in informal interviews, demonstrated variation over time (within and between individuals) in reader self-perceptions and personal reading experiences. In general, results indicate that the participants felt better about the experience of reading.