Cat’s Meow
Reading Project

by
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ABSTRACT

This study chronicles my student teaching journey as I tried to answer the question, “How does or doesn’t the use of audio-taped books help emergent level NES (Native English Speakers) students with fluency and reading comprehension?” Some emergent level readers are not exposed to fluent oral language at home, and are not read to on a regular basis. The goal of this project was to discover if using tape-recorded books at home could help improve five students’ reading comprehension, fluency and reading strategies over a three-month period. Before starting this project students were exposed to many emergent level texts in a daily read aloud. Afterward, the books became available for students to read during silent reading time in class. Once ten new books were introduced, the students were loaned tape recorders to keep at home. They also received a canvas bag for transporting the book/tape sets back and forth each day. The students listened to the tape at least three times per night while following along in the book. Each day the students used a check-out card system to exchange their books for new titles. Detailed data was collected and analyzed throughout the study, and all students showed improvement in reading fluency, comprehension skills and the acquisition of reading strategies.
INTRODUCTION

I remember the morning of January 16 very clearly. It was raining hard as I made my 45-minute commute to school. It was a big day for me. Hours of planning and preparation had gone into what would happen that morning. Before leaving the house, I had carefully packed five canvas book bags and shoebox tape recorders into my trunk, along with over forty homemade audio-tapes, which were accompanied by emergent level texts from my first grade classroom.

I had been student teaching in the classroom for nearly five months, and found the experience amazing. Over the course of the placement, I had learned a great deal about the diverse community population and the students of the Title 1 school. Many learners needed a high level of support from staff, and I had taken on the challenge with enthusiasm.

In the previous weeks, I had chosen five students to participate in a reading/listening project in cooperation with my mentor teacher. These students would each be loaned a tape recorder and would check out a new book/tape set to read along with each night. All five of the participating students had returned their “listening spot” pictures to me the day before after having drawn a picture of where they planned to keep the tape recorder and listen to the tapes each night (Appendix A). Additionally, all five parents had signed a consent letter, which permitted their child to participate, and allowed me to collect ongoing data that documented their progress (Appendix B). I knew after
hearing their excited chatter the day before that they were eager to receive their tape recorder and first book/tape set. It was the first day of the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project*!

However the roots of this action research project began long before the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project*. It stemmed back many years to when I was a first grade student myself. I had a very difficult time learning to read, and I can remember being one of the last students to “get it.” Even at such a young age, I felt stupid, self-conscious and embarrassed about my abilities. I compared myself to the other students, and felt like I never measured up. Luckily, I had a parent who spent tireless hours practicing with me and I eventually not only “got it,” but I excelled at it. I truly consider myself a reading success story.

Over the years, I have come to understand that the ability to read fluently and comprehend text are two of the most important skills students can have. If learners can master these skills at an early age, they are much more likely to feel confident and be successful in school. However, as my story illustrated, reading does not come easily for all learners, and sometimes students need extra support to help ingrain reading strategies into their minds.

As this project evolved, I found that my love for teaching and learning took a firm hold of me. The research process took me through a gamut of emotions, ranging from euphoric, to ambivalent, to downright depressed. The data I collected made me ponder, stew, analyze and then reanalyze ideas I once thought were concrete. I felt like I was “learning through doing” when it came to being a lifelong learner, because I was constantly re-examining the data, my students, and myself as a teacher.
I chose to collect data in a variety of ways, which I hoped would illuminate and illustrate my research findings as a whole. The use of running records (Appendix C), student attitude questionnaires (Appendix D), parent questionnaire (Appendix E), buddy reading (Appendix F), repeated reading and reading observations gave me several different ways to study the student learning. These sources were integral teaching/learning tools that allowed me to adjust my strategies and interventions when necessary, and showed me which strategies were most effective at improving student learning.

When I began student teaching in September, it was clear that several students could have benefited from additional reading support. But what kind of support was necessary? I began to contemplate how to provide an experience where students could be consistently exposed to fluent language and begin to feel successful about their own reading journeys. A possible answer occurred to me after reading an article about repeated reading through the use of audio-taped books. Could tape recorders be the answer for my students who needed extra reading support in the classroom? I continued to research the subject, and before long, the idea formalized into a research question: “How does or doesn’t the use of audio-taped books help emergent level NES (Native English Speakers) students with fluency and reading comprehension?”
WHAT I LEARNED FROM DISTANT COLLEAGUES

When reviewing the literature, I came across three main themes, which helped me analyze and interpret the above question. I read several articles that suggested positive results from students listening to books on tape as they followed along with the text. I also read literature that outlined effective strategies for students to employ while reading to help increase their fluency and comprehension skills. Lastly, I examined books that showed me how to effectively assess students’ reading gains, concepts about print, and how to collect meaningful and measurable data.

Students who come to school with little exposure to books begin at a distinct disadvantage to their peers who have stories read aloud to them for years. Although teachers read aloud to the whole group in their classrooms, students with limited language exposure need more listening opportunities than what is offered to them in a regular school day (Reissner, 1996). Audio-taped books provide an opportunity for students to hear books in their home environments by using familiar literacy instructional materials from school (Koskinen et al, 1995). The exposure to audio-taped books at home expands the language and literacy experiences of young readers and supports classroom instruction in another context (Koskinen et al, 1995). Without frequent independent reading, children will not become proficient readers (Allington, 1977). And in order to become proficient readers, they need to hear stories and become familiar with language in the context of stories (Reissner, 1996). From this idea stems the need to create a learning environment where students read with understanding, feel successful, learn strategies to
improve reading, monitor their reading, and are motivated to practice (Koskinen et al, 1999).

Most of the students in my study were not getting the exposure to fluent oral language at home and were not being read to on a regular basis. It was my goal for the tape recorders and books on tape to give students reading independence so they did not always have to depend on an adult for at home for reading support. Also, these students needed to hear the material read several times before they were able to comprehend its meaning. Listening to audio-taped stories at home provided extra time and support for them to be able to read independently (Reissner, 1996). Also, repeated listening to audio tapes would help increase students’ ability to recall details, help them become more familiar with print and concepts about print, improve their focus, and help them develop a sense of their own reading ability (Reissner, 1997).

Koskinen et al (1992) emphasized that the support provided by an audio model extends language learning by “providing a form of scaffolding, or supported practice, which is critical for beginning readers. Hearing the text while reading helps readers to make connections between more familiar oral language and less familiar written language. As time goes on, children become more able to recognize vocabulary that was previously unknown.” This model also provided students with several forms of reading motivation that they previously lacked. It gave students choices about what they read and allowed them to pick “just right” books from predetermined bins. It offered students opportunities to interact with their peers successfully about the books they read on tape. It created a sense of excitement and anticipation about reading that was previously lacking. It gave students the time and support they needed to develop effective reading strategies.
And finally, it provided consistent shared reading opportunities between the teacher and students, which helped to increase students’ motivation and interest in reading.

According to the text, *Conversations* (Routman, 2000), poor readers read with less fluency for a variety of reasons. It is possible they:

- May not have been read to at home
- Have fewer opportunities to read in context
- Find the text too difficult
- Have fewer opportunities to read silently
- Focus too much on accuracy
- Have received instruction over-focused on words, sounds, and letters

The audio model provided students with a form of added support that enabled them to focus less on what they didn’t know, and allowed them to start building skills to be successful readers. There are many reading strategies that readers can employ to increase fluency and overall comprehension of the text they read. Over the course of this project, I modeled effective strategies for students to add to their reading “tool box.” Some of these strategies included repeated reading, reading aloud, guided practice and oral cloze (Routman, 2000).

During repeated reading, students reread predictable texts, easy books, and familiar books to improve their fluency and reading confidence (Routman, 2000). By having multiple opportunities to listen to books on tape, students were able to become “experts” about the text. When used effectively, this led to increased student reading comprehension, fluency and motivation.
When students hear text read aloud by a teacher or parent, it demonstrates the value of reading books. It lets students see readers thinking aloud, pacing themselves, re-reading for clarification, connecting to known information, and making predictions (Routman, 2000). When I read new texts aloud to students during read-aloud time, it allowed me to repeatedly model what a good reader does. This also gave students a chance to become familiar with the text before they were expected to read and listen to it on their own at home.

Guided practice includes “reading with a partner who provides feedback or tape recording as one reads, listening to the tape, and then re-taping” (Routman, 2000). The audio-tape model has gone one step further by providing students consistent guided practice with books. It allowed students to continually practice reading along with the tape until they felt confident and in control of the text. Partner reading gave students positive peer feedback and allowed them to feel like participants in their own reading journey. Partner reading and the subsequent discussion also gave me the opportunity to listen in on conversations and assess how well students understood what they read.

Oral cloze was a method of learning I used in which “getting the right word” was not stressed. The point of using oral cloze was to help students focus on word meaning by hearing whole parts of the text read fluently. According to Routman (2000) using Post-It notes to cover several words throughout the text can be an important lesson demonstrating how context clues and surrounding words can give the reader hints about unknown words.

As I reviewed the literature for this project, I became increasingly aware of the importance of using effective assessment tools to monitor and gauge students’ reading.
progress. I read several books by author Marie M. Clay, (1979), (1993a), (1993b), and used running records as major part of my assessment data. Running records provided accurate and useful information about the following:

- The evaluation of text difficulty
- The grouping of children
- The acceleration of a child
- Monitoring progress of children
- Allowing different children to move through different books at different speeds and yet keeping track of (and records of) individual progress (Clay, 1993a).

The use of running records helped me evaluate the students’ reading progress over time (Appendix G). It also helped me monitor what reading strategies the students were using and discover what other strategies needed to be stressed. Running records use a cueing system that tracks what kind of errors a child is making. Does the child use meaning? Is what he or she says grammatical? Does he or she use visual cues for the letters and words? Does he or she self-monitor and self-correct (Clay, 1979)? This kind of data has been an invaluable tool in my research. I would not have known how to effectively individualize learning if I didn’t know where the reading difficulties stemmed from.

Another valuable assessment tool was called the “Concepts About Print” test (Clay, 1993). “This test is designed to indicate the reading behaviors which support reading acquisition. The test reflects changes in reading skill during the first year of reading instruction” (Clay, 1979, p. 47). Administering this test allowed me to gauge
whether certain students understood basic yet significant concepts about printed language. Some of these were (Clay, 1979):

- The front of the book, that print (not the picture) tells the story
- What is a letter?
- What is a word?
- What is the first letter in a word?
- Big and little letters
- The function of the space
- Uses of punctuation
- Reading from left to right

According to Clay, while the test usually reflects improvement in reading skill during the first year of instruction for average readers, problem readers tend to remain confused about the basic elements of text. The data collected from this test helped me determine if a student was being hindered by basic misconceptions about print, and allowed me to implement strategies to correct the problems.

This literature review was instrumental in bringing into focus the techniques I needed to employ to make this action research study successful. I needed to implement strategies that enabled students to read for meaning and monitor their own reading. I hoped that the audio model would help to improve students’ abilities to independently use strategies such as self-monitoring and self-correction, picture cues, and applying known information to decode text. I knew I needed to be constantly aware of what was happening with my students in order to make the project effective. Margaret Mooney (1995) said it best when she wrote, “Knowing what’s happening is dependent on knowing

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the children, knowing how children learn, making appropriate selections of materials and approaches, and observing and understanding the interdependence of these factors throughout the entire day (p.30).
CLARIFYING MY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Some emergent Native English Speakers find it difficult to participate successfully in school-related literacy-based activities. Furthermore, some NES students are not getting the support and practice they need at home to learn to read successfully. Their parents lead busy lives and have little left-over time for reading practice. And since the students cannot read by themselves, they are unable to practice. Because of this lack of literacy support, the students can fall behind in reading fluency and comprehension skills (Koskinen et al, 1992).

In order to answer the question: “How does or doesn’t the use of audio-taped books help emergent level NES (Native English Speakers) students with fluency and reading comprehension?” I implemented a program using tape-recorded stories with four emergent Native English Speaking first graders. Based on the recommendations of my mentor teacher, a fifth English Language Learner was added to this group. We both believed this student might make significant gains with the additional support of the project. All five first graders were assessed as being below grade level in reading.

The study was conducted at an elementary school located in a rural community experiencing significant population growth. The elementary school serves 510 Kindergarten through grade 5 students. Fifty-nine percent of the students are white. The remainder of the student population is a mix of Hispanic, African-American, Asia/Pacific, and American Native. This particular elementary school serves lower income families.
The five children in the study were introduced to many emergent level books (text heavily supported by pictures) in a daily small group read-aloud. After the books were read aloud, they were placed in a student “re-read” tub. The students were then able to choose books they had already heard to re-read during silent reading time. This process continued on a daily basis until the students were introduced to ten new books during the small group read-aloud setting (Appendix H).

Once the initial ten books were introduced, the Cat’s Meow Reading Group was implemented. Each student was loaned a tape recorder to keep at home until the second week in March. Each student was also loaned a canvas bag with the Cat’s Meow logo, and the title, Boot’s Book Picks to carry the books back and forth to school in. (Boots is my cat, and the students knew about him.) Each day they picked a book/tape set from the ten they had already heard read aloud to take home overnight. The students listened to the tape at least three times per night and tracked the text with their reading finger. They brought the book/tape set back each day, in exchange for a new set. On Fridays, each student picked a picture book/tape set to take home (Appendix I). The goal of listening to these more advanced texts was for students to hear fluent language read aloud.

Meanwhile at school, I kept introducing new books each day and added them to the initial ten books. At home, I recorded audio-tapes to go with the stories we read in class and then made them available for checkout. The children used a check-out card system so that I was able to monitor which books they had been reading.
ROADMAP TO MY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

When collecting data and documents, I separated my findings into three sections identified as observations, interviews and artifacts. Each section played an important role in the overall data interpretation process. It was not possible to understand what the whole of the data was saying until each section had been analyzed, deconstructed and synthesized individually.

Running records became an important data-gathering tool throughout my research. I conducted four separate data sets, and running records were taken during each set. All of the books used were instructionally appropriate, emergent level texts that the students had never read before. I used the running records to monitor the students’ reading progress and to gauge whether or not they were monitoring their own reading and using strategies to improve fluency and comprehension.

Another valuable observation tool was the one-on-one re-reads I conducted periodically with students. These observations were much more relaxed than the running record observations and allowed me to informally monitor student fluency and ask a few comprehension questions. We also discussed current and future reading goals, and dialogued about what they thought was working and not working for them personally.

Many times students who lack strong reading skills don’t get the chance to successfully discuss books with other students. By missing out on this component, they lose a valuable element of reading. To prevent this from occurring, I often paired up students who were reading at or near the same instructional level and had them discuss the books they were reading at home with the assistance of the tape recorder. The purpose
of this activity was to build students’ confidence by allowing them to feel successful as readers. This tool also helped me assess whether or not the books being read were at the correct instructional level, and how well students comprehended the texts. This exercise also gave students much needed practice at verbally re-telling stories, and understanding the basic elements of a story.

As time progressed in my study, I came across an assessment tool called the “Concepts About Print” Test, which I decided to administer to one student (Clay, 1979). “This test is designed to indicate the reading behaviors which support reading acquisition. The test reflects changes in reading skill during the first year of reading instruction” (Clay, 1979). Administering this test allowed me to gauge whether a student understood basic, yet significant, concepts about printed language, which further informed my instruction.

Interviews were also an important learning tool I used to better understand student reading attitudes. During each data set I conducted one-on-one interviews with the students regarding their current reading attitudes and took notes in my researcher’s journal. The purpose of this exercise was to inform me about students’ reading outlook over time, and if the tape recorder component changed their feelings in any way. I wanted to discover whether or not they found the audio-tapes and books worthwhile, or if they began to lose interest in the activity over time.

Some of the most essential pieces of my data included tape recordings of each child as I conducted their running records. A tape recording was made of each student during data sets 1, 3, and 4 and also during the “Concepts About Print” Test. The recordings were used to monitor reading fluency and comprehension and to document
student answers to comprehension questions. At the end of each data set I reviewed the tapes, making notes, collecting additional data, and interpreting my findings.

An additional artifact collected was a “listening spot” page in which students were to draw a picture of the place where they planned to keep the tape recorder in their home. I sent the worksheets home the night before the tape recorders were to go home, and the completed paper served as the each students “ticket” to receiving their tape recorder. This allowed me to know where the tape recorder would be stored, and gave me some insight as to where the student would be reading and listening.

Each student was loaned a tape recorder, headphones and a canvas tote bag to take the book/tape sets back and forth to school in (Appendix J). On the day students received their tote bags and recorders, I took digital pictures of them to document the event. Each bag also contained a calendar in which parents were to sign each night verifying whether or not their child listened to the tape (Appendix K). This allowed me to monitor the consistency of the project, and also alerted me to when I needed to call home to ask why a student had not been listening.

Although a parent survey was not included in my original research design, it became clear that parental feedback was an essential component to my understanding the full scope of the tape recorder use at home. When asked, the students always said they liked using the tape recorder at home, but could not explain in depth or detail the reasons why. I tried to gain more insight into this by sending home a parent questionnaire, which asked for parents’ opinions about how the use of the tape recorder impacted their child’s reading progress.
Over the course of the research project I kept a researcher’s notebook organized by data set in a portable hanging file folder box (Appendix L). The data was organized into four sets, and contained all of the information listed above (Appendix M). I also kept a researcher’s journal in which I made notes and documented useful information over time. I considered data sets 1, 3, and 4 critical analysis points, and the data gathered during those sets was especially important in informing my overall research.

It was necessary to analyze the components of my data, which included running records, the “Concepts About Print” Test, one-on-one re-reads, oral attitude surveys, parental questionnaires, taped recordings of running records and comprehension questions. I grouped the data into sections in order to better analyze the parts before I looked at the whole. I took time to discover patterns in my students’ reading and reviewed which reading strategies were the most useful to each student. I continuously followed my instincts and tried not to influence the data with my own assumptions. I kept records of my impressions, questions and speculations as I went over the data. I also categorized the students according to their attitudes about reading, progress with comprehension and fluency and their feelings about the books on tape.

After having broken my research down into several manageable parts, I put it back together by asking how my data related to my overall question: “How does or doesn’t the use of audio-taped books help emergent level NES (Native English Speakers) students with fluency and reading comprehension?” I looked for patterns as to when students made noticeable progress with fluency and comprehension. I also looked to see which students did not seem to make progress. What was hindering them? How could I
have made the project more valuable to them? How could I have individualized learning
to make reading comprehension and fluency “stick” for these students?

I tried to be careful about the assumptions I made during this project. When I
came to conclusions, I tried to backtrack and see what assumptions my conclusions were
based on. I tried to deconstruct my assumptions by doing more observing and asking the
students more questions so that I could break my findings down into smaller parts. I
stayed in close contact with my cooperating teacher about my research findings. I was
also keenly aware about how my attitude and motivation played into making this project
successful. The students saw my enthusiasm every day, and I believe this motivated them
to participate, practice and keep on reading!
THE STORY OF THE CAT’S MEOW

I fondly refer to them as the “Tape Recorder Kids,” but this title scarcely does justice to how I feel about them. They are five students, who over the course of the last three months have changed me. They have taught me to see learning to read in a different way. They have shown me that there is not a magic formula to learning or to teaching. They have given me the opportunity to wrestle with the complicated and sometimes overwhelming factors of teaching emergent readers. I started this journey trying to answer a complex question and have realized as I near the journey’s end that I still have so much to learn and discover. This is the story of five students and their teacher learning together.

As a student teacher, I took on the challenge of teaching emergent readers with a passionate yet naïve mindset. Although I knew that the tape recorder and the books on tape would be another piece in the complex puzzle of learning to read, I couldn’t help but hope that it would be just the scaffold that these five students needed to go from being emergent readers to readers. However, what I discovered was that the tape recorder helped these students in ways I wasn’t expecting. The tape recorder did more than just read the words aloud; it helped inform me as a teacher. The tape recorder became a mechanism for me to see students’ motivation, reading strategies, fluency, comprehension and emerging sense of self as readers. It gave me insight into what these children were saying about themselves as readers, and as students. As a whole, it allowed
me to assess the students in multiple ways for multiple factors of reading success and emerging sense of self.

In order for the data to inform me about the students’ progress, I broke it down into several sections, analyzed it, and put it back together so I could see the big picture. The data sections included reading strategies, fluency, comprehension, motivation and sense of self as a reader. It was impossible to analyze the overall reading progress of students without looking at the parts individually and discovering how they worked together over time to form a whole.

Each of the students was given a tape recorder, canvas bag, headphones and their first book/tape set on January 16, . Before they received the tape recorder, each student drew a picture showing where their “listening spot” was. This allowed me to monitor where the recorder would be stored and ensure that students were listening and reading in an appropriate place, free from outside distractions. The bags also contained a calendar for parents to sign nightly to verify that their child listened to the tape at least three times.

For being only seven, Student One has already had an amazing journey. Just two years ago he was adopted from an orphanage in a remote section of India. Although he did not speak any English until arriving in the United States, it is hard to tell now. He has an insatiable appetite for learning. He was the student in class who was always asking the “why” questions. He was intrigued by the tape recorder from the start. When I recorded our first running record together, he wanted to know all about how it worked and begged me to play his voice back so he could hear how he sounded. He was extremely excited to start the Cat’s Meow Reading Project.
I was surprised by the amount of errors Student One made in the baseline assessment running record conducted on December 4, 2003. As a teacher, I knew that he was an ELL learner, but at the same time he always “looked” like he was “getting” reading. I realized that although it may have seemed that way, he was really struggling. This was one of the reasons he was a perfect candidate for using the tape recorder at home. The tape recorder would provide him the extra time and reading support he needed to build his confidence and allow him to hear fluent language in the context of stories.

When Student One and I started working together, he was not a reader. He was not consistently applying reading strategies to help decode the text. During our baseline running record, he missed the same word repeatedly in the text, and used only meaning and structure cues, not visual ones. He had not learned that he needed to follow the word all the way through to make sure the letters and sounds matched. He would start to say a word, and when it didn’t match the text, he would blurt out a bunch of different sounds and laugh. He did not see himself as a reader. When I asked him why it was important to learn to read and practice, he said, “It is important because when you get to 7th, 8th and 9th grade, you have to do a lot of reading. You need to know how to do it.” He had a broad understanding of why reading was important, but had not moved to a “me”-centered one in which he saw himself as a reader now.

Throughout the three-month duration of the project, Student One diligently brought back the book and tape sets. He would carefully set the bag on my table, and ask if he could pick out a new book for the next night from the re-read tub (Appendix N). He particularly enjoyed the checkout process in which he took the card out of the back of the book, and put it in his “check-out” slot (Appendix O). His parents never missed a night.
signing his calendar and were very supportive of the tape recorder program, saying, “This has been a great way to reinforce beginning reading. Thanks so much for taking your time to make the tapes and keeping track of all the kids’ reading. It’s been great!”

The tape recorder became a positive motivator for this student. He enjoyed using it and even wrote a short story about the experience (Appendix P). When I asked him originally how he liked reading on a scale from 1 to 10, he said he was a 7. “I feel good about it, but it is not my first choice of things to do if I have free time.” The tape recorder became the mechanism that bridged the gap between reading being a chore and it being fun. During our second meeting on January 30, he said, “I really like using the tape recorder. I like pushing the buttons.” Although he still was not a reader, the tape recorder was motivating him to keep reading. My data showed me that motivation played a huge role in the process of learning to read.

There was noticeable improvement in his strategy use when comparing the first data set to the second. Student One was still using structure and meaning cues to decode text, but he was beginning to use visual cues more often. He was starting to incorporate reading strategies such as sounding out letters and looking at the pictures for clues. He was able to read a “D” level story fairly fluently. There were pauses, but not extended ones like in the baseline running record. I noticed he had trouble blending sounds together to make words. He knew all the letters and sounds, but he was unsure how to make the step from the letters being individual sounds to pronouncing them as one blended word.

Another development during this data set was the use of self-correction. He was beginning to re-read the sentence and then use self-correction when the initial word did
not make sense. In three of his five self-corrections he repeated the sentence and decoded the correct word on the second try. He also didn’t give up as easily when he didn’t know a word. He was starting to apply multiple strategies to decode words and word meaning.

This student always had a high level of comprehension; however, it was very important to him what he read. He told me several times during interviews that he liked books that were fun to read. By this he meant they were funny, interesting and had good pictures. I tried to tailor the kinds of books I gave him to meet this need.

It was during the third data set on February 20, hat I saw the biggest difference in Student One. He had been using the tape recorder for a month and the improvement in his reading ability was beginning to show. He was consistently using structure, meaning and visual cues to decode text, although most of his reading errors resulted from not following the word all the way through. His comprehension level remained high and he was able to make literal, evaluative and text-to-life connections about stories.

When I asked him how he felt about reading, he said he was now an 8 on a 1 to10 scale. “I like it more than I don’t like it,” he said. He told me that he felt good about reading with the tape recorder because he knew all the books. But sometimes I (the teacher) threw him off because I gave him a new book that he didn’t know. I asked him how he dealt with that and he said, “I just keep trying anyway.” Further notes from my researcher’s journal indicate that he liked books that were fun to read and also liked chapter books because, “It’s fun that there are chapters, and the stories are usually more exciting to read.” He said, “The easiest part about reading is looking at the pictures to help you. It makes reading easier.” The hardest part about reading is “when there are not any pictures to help you.”

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The most profound piece this data set showed me was the change in this student’s attitude about reading. When I asked him why it was important to learn to read he said, “You have to practice to get better at it. I am enjoying learning how to read.” His self-perception moved from a broad understanding about why learning to read was important in the future, to a “me”-centered one in the present. He no longer saw reading as something that was important to do in 7th, 8th and 9th grade; it had become something that was valuable to him now.

I saw this as an important shift in attitude. Whether it was a conscious choice or one that happened as a natural progression, he took ownership of his own reading. He stopped seeing it as something someone else does and started seeing it as something he does. When I asked him how he felt about the tape recorder he said, “It helps me because it will say the word if I don’t know what it is. I like to listen to the tape two times and then read the book on my own once without using the tape recorder.” I asked him how that helps him, and he said, “The third time is easier because I know the words and have already practiced twice. It helps because if I listen to the book many times, I remember the words.”

Although it may sound like simply memorizing the words isn’t really reading, the literature says this about re-reading: “Within the comfortable territory of a well-known text, developing readers can practice multiple strategies and experience the success of reading with growing fluency and comprehension” (Routman, 2000). There is no doubt in my mind that hearing the language read fluently and having had the time and resources to decode the text at his own pace made a huge difference in this student’s reading progress.
During our final data set together on March 16, something amazing happened. This student who had been reading at a “D” level, made the jump to reading at an “F.” During the running record he commanded the 200-word book, incorporating multiple reading strategies. He read with inflection and fluency and was able to answer several difficult comprehension questions that incorporated inferential, evaluative, text-to-life connections.

All of a sudden the difference in him was huge. He was a reader now. He was not before. He understood strategies and knew how he could use them to his advantage to decode text. He had been diligent about using the tape recorder. He loved doing it, and I believe that hearing the fluent language helped propel him to the next stage in reading. I have to a laugh about his response when I asked him if still liked using the tape recorder during our last meeting. Up until then, his response had always been an enthusiastic “yes!” But something was different this time. He covered his face and smiled like he didn’t want to hurt my feelings. I asked the question again, and he said, “Well Mrs. P, you know I am reading in the chapter books now…” Then he paused.

“Are the tape recorder books too easy?” I asked.

“Well…” he said, “I am in the chapter books now…and I can read them…” He finally told me sheepishly that he didn’t need the tape recorder anymore because he could read.

*Student Two* always had a lot to say. If given the chance, he would talk my ear off about hunting and camping with his dad, or about his dreams of becoming a fighter pilot in the Army someday. He could draw airplanes like I couldn’t believe. He was enthusiastic, fun-loving and had a vivid imagination. He was excited to start the *Cat’s*
Meow Reading Project because he really wanted to wear the headphones. He had never had a pair of his own before, so it was an exciting day for him.

During the baseline assessment running record conducted on December 4, 2003, this student was reading at an “A” instructional level. The running record results indicated he was using meaning and structure to decode words, but not visual ones. He heavily relied on the pictures for clues to decode word meaning. He comprehended the literal parts of the text, but had problems understanding the evaluative, inferential and text-to-life connections. When asked what the easiest part about reading was he said, “Reading the books from my book box.” The hardest part about reading was, “when I read a word right, but then forget it the next time I see it in the sentence.” When I asked him why it is important to learn to read he said, “It is important because the more you practice the better you get and you don’t have to ask your mom and teacher to help you.”

It was apparent to me from the first data set that this student had an excellent attitude about reading but was not making connections when it came to the text. He needed a lot of assistance while reading to succeed. He did not have a high vocabulary and needed to hear more stories read fluently to increase his word knowledge. He was a prime candidate for the tape recorder because he needed both oral and visual reading support to succeed.

Throughout the three-month duration of the project this student brought back the book and tape sets nearly every day. However, there were periods of time when his parents did not sign the calendar to verify his reading and listening at home. I asked him each day if he was listening, and he always said “yes.” However, it was hard to monitor the reliability of the program without consistent parental participation. When asked about

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the program, his mother said, “This is a good thing to do,” but questioned whether the tape recorder was truly a motivating factor in her child’s reading progress.

The second running record conducted on February 2 helped to better inform me about this student’s reading progress. I discovered that he continued to rely heavily on the pictures to decipher word meaning and did not use visual cues to decode words. He simply said a word based on what the picture showed, but did not look at the word to make sure the letters and sounds matched. He had a very slow processing rate and his understanding of the text was often skewed. He didn’t seem to comprehend what the text was saying, which led to misconceptions regarding what the story was actually about. This caused him to give answers that were completely off-target.

The data showed me that this student had difficulties processing information. I have observed him in class and noticed that he tuned out of activities quickly, and didn’t ask for clarification when he was unsure about what to do. What struck me about him the most is that he didn’t seem to know when he was off-task. He didn’t realize that he didn’t know what was going on. He simply went through the motions, but didn’t make the connection between himself as the learner and the work that needed to be done in order for him to learn. He did not take ownership of his own learning.

During the third running record taken on February 25, this student reported that he really enjoyed using the tape recorder. He liked it because my voice was on all the tapes and I always reminded him to use his reading finger. His favorite part about the stories was the “dinging” noise reminding him to turn the page. He said, “If there wasn’t a dinging noise, I would not know when to turn the page.” It took this student a long time
to answer the questions. He needed an extended amount of processing time to think about them.

Student Two did fairly well answering the story comprehension questions but was clearly at a literal stage in development. His immaturity showed in his answers and he used several stalling techniques when thinking about the questions asked. The technique he used most often was to say “hmmm,” and tap his finger on his temple to indicate he was thinking. I believed this to be a defense mechanism he adopted to cope with the fact that he did not understand. He still did not comprehend how actual reading strategies can work for him. He could recite what the strategies were when asked but still did not know how to actively apply them in his own reading.

During the fourth data set taken on March 16 Student Two was given a book at a “B” reading level. Although he had been reading at an “A” level for the extent of the project, I wanted to see what he would do with a more complicated book. He did well reading the book, having only one error and one self-correction. He showed improvement in his ability to recognize beginning sounds and follow words through to make sure the whole word matched. He also started to go back and repeat a sentence if a word he read did not make sense.

Something interesting happened during this data set. Student Two was able to answer all of the comprehension questions I asked fairly easily without long pauses for processing. The story was about two children who were using their imaginations and thinking about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Student Two related to the story and for the first time seemed to already have some background information about the text. I realized that this student had had very limited experiences when it came to

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“real life” connections with stories. However he could relate to this book because he used his imagination all the time. I recognized that in order for him to be successful in reading, he needed to be exposed to books he had some basic information about and could relate to on a personal level.

Student Two showed me that the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project* would have multiple levels of success. I won’t say the program failed for this child—but more that there are drastic differences between where students fall on the spectrum of learning to read. In the case of Student Two, the program worked by allowing him to hear fluent language read in the context of stories. It facilitated learning at his reading level and got him listening to new books. Because this student did not have many books at home, this program made exposure to books possible where they normally would not have been available.

The key to ultimate reading success for this student will be more practice and the time to do so. He needs continued exposure to books that are at his reading level and that he is interested in. I believe that the tape recorder could continue to benefit this child, providing the scaffold he needs to bridge the gap between wanting to be a reader and actually being one.

Student Three was a quiet boy who seemed standoffish and out of place in a classroom. He didn’t have a lot to say verbally, but his eyes told another story. He had an inquisitive look about him and a bright smile. He was full of energy on the playground and loved to play soccer and kick ball. He was excited to start the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project* because he had never used a tape recorder before, and was excited to push the colorful buttons and make it play.

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Student Three was on a Speech and Language IEP and was actively working with the school’s speech pathologist to better verbalize his thoughts out loud. During the baseline assessment running record conducted on December 4, 2003, this student had five errors and three self-corrections in an “A” level book. He repeated the same error several times and self-corrected each time until the last two sentences where he did not make the error at all. He used meaning, structure and visual cues to decode words in the text. I noticed he was easily thrown off by long words and appealed before even trying to use strategies to decode the text.

The first data set showed me that Student Three lacked confidence in his own ability to attack words and decode them. Because he didn’t have a very rich vocabulary, he was unable to figure out word meaning even after sounding the word out. When asked what the easiest part about reading was, he said, “Sounding out the words.” And the hardest part was, “The big words. There are too many letters and I feel sad because it is really hard.”

When I asked him why it is important to learn to read and to practice he said, “Reading is important so that you can read to your own children and you can read signs that tell you about danger.” This student still had a very broad and general understanding about how reading applied in his own life. He didn’t see it as something that was useful to him now, but rather something that he would need in the future.

On a scale from 1–10, this student rated his like for reading at a 10. I agree that he wants to learn to read, but his actions indicate that he is easily discouraged by text he does not understand and gives up quickly. He requires heavy reading support from the teacher and needs practice learning to successfully implement strategies on his own.
noticed that Student Three responds when reading and learning are turned into games and are fun. He was a prime candidate for the tape recorder because he needed to hear language read fluently in the context of stories. Also, the tape recorder could be the mechanism that made reading more fun and less of a chore.

During the second running record conducted on January 30 with an “A” level book, Student Three continued to use meaning and structure to decode words, but not visual ones. He looked only at the first part of the word and said the first word that came to mind. He did not consistently sound out words correctly. Even if he was close to getting a word, his limited vocabulary prevented him from being sure what the word truly was, or what it meant. He had a habit of appealing after looking at the word for only a moment.

The book he read was about fruit salad. When asked what kinds of fruit were used to make the salad, he named several kinds that were not in the story. Some of the fruits named in the book were more obscure, like pineapples and cherries. Instead of saying the correct word he said, “Pears and carrots.” I realized that he named the fruits and vegetables he knew. He did not know what cherries or pineapple looked like so the pictures did not help him.

When I asked him how he liked listening to the tape recorder at home, he said, “I like listening to the books and I am getting really good at reading them.” He said the tape recorder helped because, “It will say the word when I don’t know it.” He also really liked hearing my voice on the tapes. He said, “It makes me feel happy.”

This data set informed me that this student needed more practice with the basics of language. I couldn’t expect him to read if he didn’t have a strong understanding of

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how letters and sounds fit together to form words. Although he said he felt fine about reading, I saw him frustrated daily in class and knew that he viewed the process of learning to read as a burden. The tape recorder exposed him to fluent language; however, he heavily relied on it to tell him what the words were. He was not making an effort to remember the words or implement strategies when he didn’t have the tape recorder to help him.

Data set three was conducted on February 20. During the running record, Student Three demonstrated that he was beginning to use more strategies in his reading. He had one error and one self-correction in a level “A” book. He used meaning and visual cues to monitor his reading. On his error, he did not use structure to make sure the word sounded right. There was a long pause before he self-corrected. I prompted him by asking if he had checked the pictures for clues. Then he was quickly able to get the word “smile,” which was correct.

Student Three had problems coming up with an accurate prediction of what the book was going to be about before he read the story. It took heavy prompting on my part to get him to answer. He sighed, stared at the cover and said, “hmmm.” He used stalling techniques as a defense mechanism to act like he was thinking and to buy himself more time. However in reality he was unsure about what he was supposed to say and what he was supposed to be getting out of the book.

After I allowed an extended amount of processing time, it was clear that he did have a good overall understanding of the story. However he had a hard time making a text-to-life connection about the text. At the end of the book, the boy’s mother gives him
a hug to make him feel better. When I asked Student Three if that had ever happened to him he said, “Nobody has given me a hug in a long time.”

Data set three helped inform me about Student Three’s ongoing reading attitudes. When asked how he felt about reading he said, “I feel fine about reading. I like it best when I have time to think about what the words and the pictures are saying.” He also said he liked the “Friday books.” These were fluent reader picture books that students listened to for pleasure and didn’t have to follow along with. He said, “I like to listen to stories that are too hard for me to read yet.” Because this student had language difficulties, the Friday books helped expose him to new language that would over time help strengthen his vocabulary. The literature supported this technique by saying, “It has been suggested that listening to challenging material that builds a student’s background knowledge may well be the most effective way to increase vocabulary (Routman, 2000).”

Throughout the three-month duration of this project, Student Three’s mother was extremely diligent about signing the tape recorder calendar, verifying that her son was listening to the tapes each night. However, as time passed she became increasingly frustrated with his reading progress. She was concerned that he was just memorizing the books on tape and not actually reading them. In a conference, my cooperating teacher and I explained that memorization is a natural step in the reading process. I agreed to tape a few longer stories to hold his interest for longer periods of time and we discussed ways she could support his reading at home.

When asked in a survey how she felt about the overall success of the tape recorder program for her son she said, “I feel this program has helped my son’s reading and you should continue to offer this program.” She felt that all aspects of the program engaged

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her son and she would have liked to continue the program all year, rather than just the three-month time span. When Student Three was asked how he liked the tape recorder he said, “I like the tape recorder because I get to read with it. It feels like somebody is right by you. It makes me feel like I can read even when nobody is there. I like everything about the tape recorder and I would be sad if you stopped sending home tapes.”

During the fourth data set taken on March 16, Student Three was given a book at a “B” reading level. Although he had been reading at an “A” level throughout the project, I wanted to see what he would do when given a harder book. Overall, he had three errors and one self-correction. He was still not using visual cues to decode text or following through with the whole word to make sure it matched the sounds he said. However, the incorrect words he used were close approximations and made sense in the story. I chose not to correct him while he was reading in order to help build his confidence.

Overall, he was very confused about the point of the story. The children in the book were imagining all the different professions they could be when they grew up. The pictures clearly supported this, but Student Three could not make the connection between the children now and the children as adults. He thought they wanted to be those things when they were still children. I suggested that he look back in the book to help him answer the questions, but he did not. He simply sat and sighed, staring at the cover of the book.

Student Three did not understand that the answers to the questions are in the book. He was in a hurry to get the reading over with and be done with it. He was simply going through the motions of reading and doing what I asked him to do. Everything related to reading came from an outside source, telling him what to do.

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Although Student Three was still not a reader, I think he will be in time. It will take continued exposure to books and reading for pleasure to make the difference. He did not derive any joy from reading, viewing it as a chore. And it was a battle he didn’t want to fight. The tape recorder became a mechanism that allowed him to access books successfully. He was able to hear fluent language and enjoy books without the pressure of getting the words wrong. This student taught me that as a reading teacher, I need to be careful not to stamp the joy of reading out for children. There is a fine line between learning to read being an adventure and it being a stifling experience. The ultimate goals when teaching reading must be to create readers who enjoy books, read for pleasure and want to read.

Student Four was always smiling. He was cheerful, enthusiastic and eager to please. As I passed through the playground on my way to lunch each day, I could be sure he’d come running to give me a hug and open the door to the building. He was very excited to learn how to use his tape recorder for the Cat’s Meow Reading Project. He caught on quickly and was the first to listen to a whole book during a practice listening session before the students took their recorders home.

During the baseline running record conducted on December 4, 2003, this student had three errors and no self-corrections in an “A” level book. He used structure and meaning to decode words, but did not use visual cues at all. He had a high comprehension level and was able to make an accurate prediction about the book and answer all of the comprehension questions regarding the text.

When asked how he felt about reading, he said he was a 10 on a scale of 1–10. He said he enjoyed the pictures in the books the best and would like to read more books.
about food. (This running record was taken just before lunch and food was on his mind.) He said the easiest part about reading was “the words I already know,” and the hardest part was “the words I don’t know.” When I asked him what strategies he used to decode words he said, “Sound them out, ask a parent or teacher, and look at the pictures.”

From the first data set I gathered that this student had a high motivation to learn to read. He was an excellent candidate for the tape recorder because his vocabulary was low, and hearing the books read aloud would help increase his overall word knowledge. The purpose of many of the tape-recorded books was to build the readers’ base knowledge of sight words. Sight words are words that cannot be sounded out and must be memorized and later remembered when reading.

During data set two conducted on January 30, Student Four had a difficult time decoding the text. Although he knew in theory that he should be implementing strategies in his own reading, he had trouble applying them. He only looked at the first part of the word and did not follow through to make sure all of the sounds matched. He was not reading for meaning. Throughout the book he read, “fruit salad,” but when the structure of the last sentence changed, he read “fruit pie” and did not notice the error.

The data set showed me that Student Four was really struggling. Although he said he enjoyed learning to read, he was very frustrated. He depended heavily on teacher support for both the reading and writing portions of school. He did not know all his sounds and had trouble with basic sound discrimination and letter/number reversals. It was very difficult for him to blend together even the smallest words. He was learning sight words, but needed extra processing time to decode each word. Because he could not remember all of his sounds, the decoding process was laborious and frustrating for him.
Student Four was conscientious about returning the tape-recorded books to me each day, in exchange for new books. However his parent was sporadic about signing the calendar verifying whether or not his child was listening. This was the only family that did not return the parent questionnaire regarding the overall effectiveness of the tape recorder at home.

During data set three, conducted on February 20, Student Four had three errors and one self-correction in an “A” level text. He was making the same kinds of errors as in previous data sets—not using structure, meaning or visual cues to decode words. He was still not making the connection between individual sounds working together to form words and often forgot to use the pictures to help him decode word meaning.

This data set showed that he was making progress in his ability to re-tell the story and make accurate predictions about text from looking at the book cover. The book was about “swinging,” and he said he thought the book was about a boy swinging over water. When I asked him if his prediction was correct after he read the story, he modified it by saying, “I was right about the swinging part, but not about the water part.” When I asked him about the author’s purpose in writing the book he said, “Maybe the story happened to him when he was little.” He was also able to make an accurate text-to-life connection, telling me about a time when he fell, which is something that happened in the story.

When Student Four and I discussed how he felt about reading, I realized that something in him had changed. When asked how much he liked reading on a scale from 1–10, he said he was a 5. This was five full points below where he said he was on December 4. When I asked him to explain he said, “There is other stuff I like to do more
than read. If I were better at it, I’d like it more.” This was one of the most frustrating moments for me as a teacher. I felt like I had failed him.

I proceeded to ask him if he was still enjoying the tape recorder. He said, “Yes, because it is helping me know more words.” Although he liked listening to the tapes, it did not matter to him what he read. He didn’t have a favorite book. This bothered me because in order for students to take ownership of their reading, they need to feel like they play an important role in the process. If he didn’t care about what he read, then he was not actively participating. He was simply going through the motions of reading, but not seeing the importance of the role he played in his own learning.

*Student Four* showed me that as a reading teacher I need to assess students in multiple ways for multiple factors of reading development. I began to wonder if he was having trouble understanding the basic concepts about print. I administered the “Concepts About Print” Test on February 26 (Clay, 1979). I was hopeful that the data collected from this test would help me determine if this student was being hindered by basic misconceptions about print and would allow me to implement strategies to correct the problems. However the results of the test showed that *Student Four* had solid understanding of the basic concepts about print (Appendix Q). I was back to the drawing board again.

During the final data set taken on March 16, this student was given a “B” level book to see what strategies he would use to decode a more difficult text. While reading, he had four errors and zero self-corrections. He read the book easily, but seemed more concerned about getting through it than reading for meaning. During the first error he did not use any strategies and inserted a word that did not make sense. He continued to read *Becoming a Teacher Through Action Research, Second Edition* © 2010 Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
even though what he read did not sound right. The rest of the errors were visual. He did not make sure the beginning sounds matched or follow through with the word. However, he did use a small amount of inflection in the last sentence of the book where it was very appropriate to do so.

*Student Four* did incredibly well with the comprehension questions during the last data set. Although his original prediction was not correct, he changed it after reading the book. He understood the overall meaning of the book and was able to draw literal, inferential and evaluative conclusions about the story. All of his answers were directly on the mark, even though many of the questions were more complicated than he had answered in the past.

This student’s progress has intrigued me as a teacher, but has also frustrated me. He struggled to learn to read, but was an absolute math whiz. He could add and subtract large numbers in his head and do all kinds of complicated counting exercises. My cooperating teacher planned to refer him for special services because the gaps in his learning were so large and disproportionate to each other.

Again, I will not say that the tape recorder failed this child, but that other factors besides being a “late reader” came into play in this case. I believe that hearing fluent language read aloud helped this student improve his basic reading skills and advanced his overall comprehension skills. The literature supported this by saying, “reading a selection over and over again increases fluency and improves word attack skills, building confidence and enabling the student to focus on comprehension” (Routman, 1991). I believe this student will be a reader, but needs more reading support than the tape recorder alone can provide to bridge the gap.

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I felt a special connection to Student Five. Until we started meeting for the Cat’s Meow Reading Project, he felt quite alone in his quest to become a reader. He didn’t think anyone understood his frustration of not “getting” it. Imagine his surprise when I told him I didn’t “get it” at his age either. There was an instant friendship between us. He let down his “tough guy” façade and emerged as a sweet, caring and introspective little boy.

When Student Five and I met for the baseline running record on December 4, 2003, he read through the “A” level book quickly and didn’t care whether he read the words correctly or not. When he finished, he slammed the book shut and pushed it toward me angrily. I was taken aback by his behavior and asked what was wrong. He proceeded to tell me how much he didn’t like reading. He said that I didn’t understand how frustrating it was for him. He said, “I feel horrible because all the other kids know how to read but me.” He went on to say that, “I don’t think I will ever learn to read and you don’t understand how I feel.” It was obvious from his frustration level that he had been feeling this way for some time, but had masked his feelings.

The truth of the matter was that I did know how Student Five felt. In fact, in first grade I was just like him. I remember feeling the frustration of not being able to read when all my friends could. I told him that I knew how he felt because I had been just like him in first grade. His mouth dropped open and he said, “But how Mrs. P? You’re so smart.” I told him that I practiced a lot and that I let people help me learn to be a better reader. We agreed that I would help him and that by working together he would become a better reader. An example of his motivation happened during our conversation. He was thinking of ways he could become a better reader with my help and he said, “Oh I
know…What if you come early to school and I come early to school and we read together…?"

During the baseline assessment *Student Five* had six errors and one self-correction. He used meaning and structure cues to decode words, but not visual ones. His comprehension level was high and he made an accurate prediction about what the story was going to be about and answered all of the comprehension questions accurately after he read the text.

When I asked him to rate how he felt about reading on a scale from 1–10, he said he was a 3. He said, “The words and sentences make me feel scared because there are so many letters and sounds to put together. I only feel good about reading when I make up the words because then I already know what they mean.” He said the easiest part about reading is “looking at the pictures and sounding out the words to match the picture.” The hardest part about reading “are the words that can’t be sounded out.” He said that he didn’t know all his letters and sounds and that made reading harder.

When asked, *Student Five* thought it was important to learn to read because “when you grow up your boss may ask you to read something and you need to know how to do it.” When I asked him what reading strategies he used in his own reading he said, “Sound it out, ask a grown-up and be by myself and practice. It needs to be quiet for me to read. I need to hear myself.” He said he didn’t want to be angry about reading anymore. He wanted to “learn how and feel good about it.” He hugged me so tightly when our meeting ended and seemed relieved that someone else understood his situation. He was eager to take the tape recorder home and begin reading the books from the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project*.
During the second running record taken on January 30, Student Five made three errors and one self-correction in an “A” level book. He used both visual and structure cues to decode his one self-correction. On the other errors, he was quick to appeal after only having tried to say the word once. He attempted to blend individual sounds to make bigger words, but was unsuccessful.

During the running record Student Five was very worried about how he was doing, but was not angry like in the first interview. When I asked him to read, he got very nervous and started to rub his hands on his knees and wiggle around. However, once I reminded him that it was not a test and that I was using the information to figure out ways to help him, he settled down and read.

When I asked how he liked using the tape recorder at home he said, “The tapes are really good and I like them a lot. I feel happy when I can say a word before the tape recorder does. The tape recorder makes me happy and it is fun.” He said that sometimes he wanted to read books to his mom, but she says to go and read with the tape recorder instead. This was a surprising development for me because it was my intention for parents to continue reading with their children in addition to the tape recorder. The tape recorder was never meant to replace parent participation in the reading process.

During data set three, taken on February 25, Student Five had two errors and zero self-corrections in an “A” level text. He continued to use meaning and structure cues to decode words, but not visual ones. He looked only at the beginning part of the word and did not follow it all the way through to make sure the whole word matched. However all the errors he made were close approximations, so I did not stop him while he was reading to correct them. Student Five continued to have a high level of comprehension. He was
able to express himself well verbally and could make literal, evaluative, inferential and text-to-life connections about the book.

When asked how he was felt about reading, he said, “I am getting better and better because I am understanding the words.” He liked reading because, “Every time you turn the page, there is something new to learn.” He thought that “reading is more hard than easy, but I like it when I can say the word before the tape recorder does.” When I asked him what the hardest part about reading was, he said, “The big words get me confused and the words that I have never seen before. Some words I don’t understand and it makes me not understand the story.” I asked him what he did when he didn’t understand a word and he said, “I sound it out, look at the pictures and check to see if it looks right, if it sounds right, and if it makes sense.” Although he was able to list the reading strategies, he still didn’t actively apply them in his own reading.

*Student Five’s* parents were sporadic about signing the calendar verifying their child was listening to the tape recorder each night. However, *Student Five* was extremely honest and would always tell me if he did not have time to listen. According to the questionnaire his parents returned, they were disappointed about the progress their son made using the tape recorder. They did not feel it helped increase his reading confidence saying, “Most of the tapes go too fast.” They felt that the tape recorder and the teacher’s voice on the tape were underlying motivators but felt overall, “My son is still struggling and has a hard time keeping up with the tapes.”

Because his parents’ feelings about the tape recorder were so different from the feelings *Student Five* had expressed, I cross-checked the data by asking him the same set of questions (Appendix R). This cross-check helped me understand that although the *Becoming a Teacher Through Action Research, Second Edition* © 2010 Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
attitude surveys I gave students during each running record were effective, useful information can get left out if the right questions aren’t asked. Throughout the cross-check, Student Five continued to say that he loved using the tape recorder. But when I asked if he could change anything about the books, stressing *anything*, he said, “Sometimes the tape recorder goes too fast. Then I can’t tell what the words are. It is confusing for me on the hard books [Friday books] to find the word I am supposed to be on.” This was a huge development that had never come up before. I asked him what he did when he lost his place, and he said, “I stop and start over.”

This piece of data gave me insight into how I might better serve my students in the future. In this case, I needed to record the “A” level books at a very reduced pace. I also needed to make it clear to students and parents that the Friday books were to be listened to for pleasure, and that students did not need to follow along in the text with their reading finger in them. This data piece revealed to me how asking the right questions to multiple sources and then cross-checking the data is a crucial element in the process of interpretation.

During this data set, Student Five mentioned several times that he had heard on television about a place that teaches people how to be better readers (Sylvan Learning Center). He asked his parents if he could go, but they said it was too expensive. After asking him several questions, I gathered that he thought this was a place where people magically learned to read. I explained that the place he saw on television was just like school. He was already getting the same kind of support from his teacher that he would get there. He was astonished.
I told him that I understood how much he wanted to learn to read, but that he needed to understand that reading was not something that magically happened without a lot of effort and practice. I explained that he must take the “want” inside of him and turn it into effort that he puts into reading practice. He said he understood and that he would keep trying. I saw him doing so on a daily basis.

During the fourth data set taken on March 16, Student Five had one error and one self-correction in a “B” level book. Although he had been reading at an “A” level for the bulk of the project, I wanted to see what he would do with a more challenging book. When he made the error, he did not use visual cues to decode the text. He simply looked at the picture and said the first word that came to mind. He relied heavily on the pictures for support and did not look at the words carefully enough.

Although this student wasn’t a reader at the end of the study, he will be. I consider him a “late reader” who needs extra time and support to make the transition into being a fluent reader. I believe that the tape recorder helped him hear fluent language in the context of stories and helped introduce him to new words. In time the continued exposure to books will allow him to make the connections he needs to become a reader. The literature supports this by stating, “… For struggling readers who learn at a slower pace, daily practice reading accessible books is absolutely essential for developing confidence and success. Most of students’ reading time must be spent practicing; that is, independently reading books at their level of interest, experience and skill” (Routman, 2000). Student Five understood how his effort directly affected his reading success. I believe that in the end, this will be the element that propels him from being an emergent reader to a reader.

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FURTHER REFLECTION AND QUESTIONS ON THE CAT’S MEOW READING PROJECT

During the beginning stages of this action research project, the road ahead seemed endless and daunting. I questioned my ability to create and implement a study that informed me as teacher that simultaneously taught students new ways to learn. I looked at the months of data collection ahead of me and felt as though I had only a vague understanding of how to tackle the whole process of action research. I doubted myself—I questioned my abilities—but kept moving forward despite my fears. As time went on, something changed in me. I found myself evolving as a learner. I began to make connections regarding my findings, and these small victories increased my confidence. I began to worry less about what I couldn’t do, and found myself diving into the data headfirst. Although I didn’t realize it at the time, I now see this as the point when I made the transition from simply being a learner, to being a teacher of learning.

This action research project informed my practice as a teacher in many ways. It allowed me to develop a firm understanding of the major principles that make up the reading process and prepared me to teach literacy in the classroom. In my quest to answer the question, “How does or doesn’t the use of audio taped books help emergent level NES (Native English Speakers) students with fluency and reading comprehension?” I discovered several overarching themes in the data that informed me about the ways children learn. These themes included the acquisition of reading strategies, fluency, comprehension, motivation, and sense of self as readers. As a teacher of reading,
collecting and analyzing the data helped me become more adept at assessing students in multiple ways for multiple factors of reading success, and at tracking students’ emerging sense of self as readers.

I implemented this project in hopes of creating stronger readers in the five emergent level students who were participating. I strongly believe that this goal was met again and again throughout the course of the investigation. Although all five students started and ended at different stages, they all experienced levels of success in each of the thematic areas. Each learned to apply multiple strategies to decode text. All were exposed to fluent language being read aloud, which in turn helped increase their vocabulary and comprehension skills over time.

As a teacher I learned that the books on tape motivated students to read. The oral language coupled with “just right” books helped increase enthusiasm and reading confidence over time. I also realized that if students were exposed to books they already had some background knowledge about, the concepts were more likely to make sense and propel them to continue reading. As time progressed most students began to take an active interest in what they were reading, and I saw this as the first step in the successful acquisition of reading.

I now have a better understanding of the learning process that goes on within students’ minds as they learn to read. It is crucial for students to make the jump from seeing reading as something they will do in the future to something they can do right now. I have also recognized that learning to read is a complex, messy and often frustrating endeavor for both student and teacher. It takes hard work, dedication and practice to transform emergent readers into readers. Although not all of students ended

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my study being readers, they all made strides toward the goal, and were continuously learning and implementing new strategies to make their journey more successful.

The biggest problem I faced during this process was time. The students kept the tape recorders at home for a three-month period, but for most this was not long enough. Four out of the five students could have benefited from having the tape recorder for a longer time period. Most of the students were just starting to blossom as the program ended. When I implement this program in the future, I will start in October and continue sending books home through the end of the school year. Also, several students broke their headphones, or reported that one side of the headpiece stopped working shortly after the program began. Next time I will send only the tape recorder home and have students play the tapes aloud. This will allow students to clearly hear fluent language being read aloud, encourage parents to monitor their child’s reading, and solve the headphone problem.

When I reflect back on how my view of action research has changed, I have realized what an amazing journey this has been. I started out viewing this process as a struggle and have ended up seeing it as my greatest success. This process has taught me how to break down a huge question into manageable parts, analyze it, and then put it back together in a way that informs me as an educator. I have learned how to authentically assess students and then use the information gathered to meet student need at a level where they can be successful.

I see action research as the link into the minds of my students. Without the careful and deliberate evaluation of the students’ learning processes, it is impossible to determine where their needs are the greatest. I can only be as effective as the tools used to determine the problems. Action research allowed me to feel successful and confident about Becoming a Teacher Through Action Research, Second Edition © 2010 Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
implementing practices that will benefit me as an educator, and my students as learners. Although I may never formally write another action research paper again, I plan to use the data collection and analysis skills I learned during this process in my classroom every day.

Margaret Mooney put my feelings into words when she said:

Responsive teaching means the teacher is supporting the children, ensuring that their learning path is free of obstructions, and clarifying and illuminating their goals so they can frequently enjoy the success and rewards of achievement. Each achievement creates its own momentum for further learning. The children’s development becomes a rhythm of success, new visions and starting points, experience and effort resulting in success and new visions. This pattern is occurring in many areas at any one time, so the feeling of achievement and moving forward is always with the child.

The responsive teacher experiences the same rhythm; and his or her tasks become rewarding in the same continuous and satisfying way. The children and teacher become models and respondents for each other, and so a learning community is born and nurtured, and living and learning become one (Mooney, 1990, p. 90).

It is true that this rhythm now exists within me, and I am prepared to teach and learn so my students and I can enjoy the continued rewards of reading success and achievement.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
PARENT LETTER
AND LISTENING SPOT

January 15

Dear Parent and/or Guardian:

Thank you for allowing your child to participate in the *Cat’s Meow Reading Project*. Tomorrow is the big day for students to bring home the tape recorder that they will be keeping at home through the end of February. I would appreciate it if you could spend some time tonight finding a “listening spot” in your home where you plan to keep the tape recorder. The best spot is in a quiet place free from distractions like television and excess noise. Please have your child draw a picture of the place where the recorder will be kept on the attached paper, and return it to me.

Each night students will bring home one new book and tape set in a canvas bag. They should listen to the tape at least three times while following along in the book. You can provide support by making sure they are listening carefully, following along with their reading finger, and speaking along with the book when they recognize words. On Fridays, they will receive a picture book to listen to. These books will be harder for students to follow along with, but hearing the more difficult text read aloud will help improve their reading fluency and comprehension skills over time. Please make sure that they return the book and tape set in the canvas bag every day. They will not receive new books and tapes unless the previous ones were returned.

Again, thank you for your efforts and for your support of my project. I am excited to get started! Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or concerns. I will be in touch.

Sincerely,

Mrs. P

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APPENDIX B:
ACTION RESEARCH
PARENT CONSENT LETTER

January 12

Dear Parent and/or Guardian:

The school year is flying by, and I am enjoying my student teaching experience to the fullest. During the remainder of my student teaching, I will be studying my own practice of becoming a teacher by conducting a teaching/learning project. I will be analyzing whether or not listening to audio-taped books helps increase student reading fluency and comprehension. I will implement strategies I think will benefit the students and then analyze the data I collect. Your child will be loaned a tape recorder and headset that you can keep in your home until the end of February. I will send different books and audio-tape sets home on a regular basis for them to listen to repeatedly. This will be an on-going project that will last through the end of February. In the analysis and final report, I will use fictitious names for the students, the school, and the community. I will present this project in April to University faculty and students.

I would appreciate it if I could have permission for your child to participate in this teaching/learning project, and have a form for you to sign below. Please understand that the tape recorder and the headset will be on loan to you. It will be your responsibility to replace the machine or headset if it is broken. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me, or Mrs. Smith. I look forward to this learning experience and the opportunity to work with your child!

Sincerely,

Mrs. P.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Permission Form

Please return this portion to Mrs. P.

☐ Yes, my child’s responses to specific teaching strategies for reading instruction may be used for Mrs. P’s teaching/learning project. I understand that the data are being used to assist Mrs. P in becoming a better teacher and to improve my child’s reading comprehension and fluency. I understand that fictitious names will be used in the final report and that I may request a final copy of the report. I also understand that the tape recorder and headset are on loan to me and it is my responsibility to replace the machine if it is broken.

☐ No, I would rather not have my child take part in Mrs. P’s teaching/learning analysis.

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APPENDIX C:
RUNNING RECORD EXAMPLE

Date: __________________________

Title: What Can I Be?  Text Level: B

Student: _______________________ Grade: ___________

Teacher: Mrs. P   Recorder: Mrs. P

Instructions:
1. Book Introduction
2. Prediction (Before oral reading)
3. Take running record on book
4. Student reads text silently
5. Follow up with interview questions as needed to obtain adequate assessment.

1. Prediction: What do you think this book will be about?

After reading: Was the prediction correct?

2. Literal: What do the children want to be when they grow up?

3. Inferential: How come the boy and girl want to be so many different things when they grow up?

4. Evaluative: Why did the author write this story?
5. **Story Elements:** Who are the characters? (Boy and girl.)

6. **Story Elements:** What is the setting? (Doesn’t really show a particular setting. Children are thinking.)

7. **Beyond the Text:** What do you want to be when you grow up?

**Running Record Assessment**

**Text Level B**

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<th>ACC. %</th>
<th>Correction Rate 1:</th>
<th>Fluency:</th>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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Comments: ________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

**PAGE** | **Title:** *What Can I Be?* **Level B 40 words** | **E** | **SC** | **MSV** | **MSV** |
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<td>3</td>
<td>I can be a teacher.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I can be a firefighter.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I can be a police officer.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I can be a mail carrier.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>What can I be? I can be me.</td>
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APPENDIX D: STUDENT ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRES

Reading Attitudes Questionnaire
Data Set One

Date:  
Student Name:  
Text Level:

1. How are you feeling about reading?

2. What do you like best about reading? What kinds of books do you like the best?

3. What is the easiest part about reading?

4. What is the hardest part about reading?

5. Why do you think it is important to learn to read and practice reading?

6. What do you do when you can’t figure out what a word is? What strategies do you use?

7. Do you like listening to books on the tape recorder at school? Why?

8. Is there anything you don’t like about listening to books on the tape recorder?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your reading?

Reading Attitudes Questionnaire
Data Sets 2–4

Date:
Student Name:
Text Level:

1. How are you feeling about reading?

2. What do you like best about reading? What kinds of books do you like the best?

3. What is the easiest part about reading?

4. What is the hardest part about reading?

5. Why do you think it is important to learn to read and practice reading?

6. What do you do when you can’t figure out what a word is? What strategies do you use?

7. Do you like listening to books on the tape recorder at home? Why?
8. Is there anything you don’t like about listening to books on the tape recorder?
APPENDIX E:
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Tape Recorder Parent Questionnaire

Please return to Mrs. P.

1. Do you think the tape recorder has helped to improve your child’s reading confidence?
   a) Strongly Agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Unsure (please comment)

Comments? _______________________________________________________

2. Do you think that the tape recorder has been a motivating factor in your child’s reading?
   Please circle ALL of the reasons that apply:
   a) The tape recorder itself.
   b) Teacher’s voice on the tape.
   c) The books.
   d) The bag to bring tapes back and forth in.
   d) Other: ____________________________________________________

3. Do you see your child using their reading finger while they listen to the tape recorder?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Unsure

4. Do you still read to your child in addition to the tape recorder?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Sometimes

5. May I call you if I have additional questions about the tape recorder?
   1. Yes (If yes, please list the best time to reach you and your telephone number.)
   2. No

6. Is there anything you would change about the tape recorder program if you could? Do you have any suggestions for changes?
7. I would appreciate any additional comments you have regarding the use of the tape recorder.

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions. Your participation is greatly appreciated.
APPENDIX G:
STUDENT ONE’S RUNNING RECORD PROGRESSION OVER DATA SETS 1–4

(Deleted here for confidentiality reasons)
APPENDIX H:
EMERGENT LEVEL TEXTS
APPENDIX I:
DAILY BOOK AND TAPE SETS AND
FRIDAY BOOK AND TAPE SETS

Examples of books available for daily checkout

Example of a book available for Friday checkout
APPENDIX J:
TAPE RECORDER, CANVAS BAG AND
HEADPHONES
APPENDIX K:
PARENT CALENDAR

(Individualized scanned calendar for each parent)
APPENDIX L:
RESEARCHER’S NOTEBOOK
APPENDIX M:
DATA SETS 1–4

Action Research- Data Set 1
Baseline Assessment

On December 4th and 5th I conducted baseline assessments with the five students I will be working with during my action research project. I individually tape recorded each student reading a “leveled” book and conducted a running record as they read. I then asked the students seven comprehension questions regarding the text and interviewed them about their current reading attitudes. The data described below is divided into five sections, one for each child, along with my notes on each child.

Student One: Book Level D

Running Record Results:
- 7 errors, 1 self-correction
- Used meaning and structure to decode words. Missed the same word repeatedly throughout the book. Did not use visual cues to determine word choice.
- Reading at a difficult instructional level.

Comprehension Questions: (See attached form for examples of questions used.)
- Student has a high comprehension level. Was able to make correct prediction before reading the book, and answered all the comprehension questions correctly.

Reading Attitudes: (See attached form for examples of questions used.)
- When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is a 7. He feels good about reading, but it is not his first choice of things to do if he has free time.
- He enjoys funny stories, and likes reading books like the Arthur, Bernstein Bears, Clifford and Franklin books.
- The hardest part about reading is those words that he cannot sound out.
- Reading is important because when you get to 7th, 8th, and 9th grade, you have to do a lot of reading. You need to know how to do it.
- Strategies used to decode words are: sound out, skip word, ask someone and look at the picture to help you.

Tape Recorder:
- He likes the tape recorder because he can follow along with the words. He likes everything about the tape recorder.

My Notes:
I was surprised at the amount of errors this child made and his attitude about reading. He always looks like he gets it, and is very on task. I realized that although it may seem this way, he is struggling, and his attitude about reading is not as good as I had imagined. It is very important that reading is fun and that he is reading books he is interested in.

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tape recorder may be the tool to get this child very interested in reading. He was fascinated by the tape recorder when I conducted the running record.

**Student Two:** Book Level A  
**Running Record Results:**  
- 3 errors, 1 self-correction  
- Student used meaning and structure to decode words. He heavily relied on the picture for clues to word meaning. He did not use visual clues to decode words.  
- Reading at an instructional level.  
**Comprehension Questions:**  
- This student had a good comprehension level, but was confused about what the setting of the story was.  
**Reading Attitudes:**  
- When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is a 10. Student loves to read, and loves practicing reading. There are not a lot of books at this house, so he has been reading books from when he was a baby. Desperately wants to practice so he can get better.  
- The easiest part about reading is re-reading books from his book box. He enjoys stories about frogs and airplanes.  
- The hardest part about reading is when he reads the words, but then forgets them the next time he comes to them in the sentence.  
- Reading is important because the more you practice the better you get and you don’t have to ask your mom and teacher to help you.  
- Strategies used to decode words are: go back and re-read the sentence, look at the pictures to see help decode word meaning.  
**Tape Recorder:**  
- He likes wearing the headphones the best, and hearing a ding so he knows when to turn the page.  
- He does not like the volume to be up too loud because it hurts his ears.  
**My Notes:**  
This student really wants to learn how to read. His attitude is excellent, but his comprehension level needs to be improved. Although he appears to be “getting it,” he is not making connections and needs a lot of assistance while reading to succeed. He does not have a high vocabulary, and needs to hear stories read fluently to increase word knowledge. Student is needs both visual and oral reading support be successful.

**Student Three:** Book Level A  
**Running Record Results:**  
- Student had 5 errors, and three self-corrections  
- Student used meaning, structure and visual self-corrections in his reading. Repeated the same error several times, and self-corrected each time until the last two sentences where he did not make the error at all. Student is easily thrown by long words, and will appeal before even trying to decode the word.  
- Reading at an instructional level.
Comprehension Questions:
- Student has a good comprehension level, but was confused about where the setting of the story was. Was able to make a correct prediction about the story, and answer all the questions correctly except for the setting.

Reading Attitudes:
- This student likes reading. It makes him feel good when he can do it. When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is a 10.
- He enjoys reading about anything.
- The easiest part about reading is sounding out the words.
- The hardest part is the big words. There are too many letters and he feels sad because it is really hard.
- Reading is important so that you can read to your children, and you can read signs that tell you about danger.
- Strategies used to decode words: Sound it out, look at the picture for help.

Tape Recorder:
- It bothers him when the tape recorder won’t work and that he can’t listen to a book on tape in class.

My Notes:
This student always seems to be moving in slow motion. He wants to learn to read, but the effort he puts out to do so is minimal. He is easily discouraged and gives up quickly. Needs heavy support from the teacher, but also needs to learn to implement strategies on his own. This child really responds when reading/learning is made into a game, and it is fun. The tape recorder may be the tool to get his child interested in reading.

Student Four: Book Level A

Running Record Result:
- Three errors, no self-corrections
- Student used structure and meaning to decode words. He did not use visual cues at all.
- Reading at an instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:
- This student has a very high comprehension level. He was able to make a correct prediction and answer all of the questions correctly.

Reading Attitudes:
- This student really likes to read. It makes him feel happy. When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is a 10.
- He enjoys the pictures in books the best and would like to read books about people eating. (This was taken just after lunch.)
- The easiest part about reading is the words he already knows.
- The hardest part about reading is the words he does not know.
- Strategies used to decode words: Sound them out, ask a parent or teacher, and look at the pictures.

Tape Recorder:
- The tape recorder helps him learn to read because he can follow along.

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• Likes using the tape recorder a lot. It is fun.

My Notes:
This student has an awesome attitude about reading. His vocabulary is low, but hearing books read aloud is helping him increase his word knowledge. He is both visual and oral. Continued practice of sight words will help the student excel because he tends to make a lot of reversals with his letters. Needs to learn to use more strategies to decode words. Effort is high.

Student Five: Reading Level A
Running Record Results:
• 6 errors, 1 self-correction
• Used meaning and structure to decode words. Did not use visual cues at all.
• Reading at a difficult instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:
• Student has a high comprehension level. Was able to make an accurate prediction about the story and answered all the comprehension questions correctly.

Reading Attitudes:
• Student is extremely frustrated about reading. Words and sentences make him feel scared because there are so many letters and sounds to put together. Only feels good about reading when he makes up the words because he already knows what they mean. When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is a 3.
• He enjoys reading funny stories that have lots of pictures. Would like to read books about airplanes.
• The easiest part about reading is looking at the pictures and sounding out the word to match the picture.
• The hardest parts are the words that cannot be sounded out. He said he does not know all his letters and sounds, and that makes reading harder.
• Reading is important because when you grow up, your boss may ask you to read something, and you need to know how to do it.
• Reading strategies used: sound it out, ask a grown-up, be by myself and practice. “It needs to be quiet for me to read. I need to hear myself.”
• He doesn’t want to be angry about reading. He wants to learn how to read and be successful.

Tape Recorder:
• He likes the tape recorder a lot. “The tape recorder says it instead of me. If I can hear it before, it makes me feel like I can read it.”
• He doesn’t like the tape recorder because sometimes the words don’t make sense.

My Notes:
This was the most poignant of all the interviews. This student was very angry about reading. He said that I didn’t understand how frustrating it was for him. He said he feels horrible because all the other kids “get it” but him. He feels like he is stupid. I was shocked at his ability to express his feelings. He has obviously been feeling this way for quite some time, and been masking his feelings under a “macho” façade. He said he thought he would never learn to read, and that I didn’t understand how he felt. I
proceeded to tell him that I did know how he felt because I was in his exact position in first grade. His mouth dropped open, and he said, “But how, Mrs. P? You are so smart. How did you learn to read?” I told him that I practiced a lot, and that I let people help me learn to be a better reader. He was in tears, and so was I. We really made a connection. We agreed that I would help him and that he would make extra efforts to learn. I made him promise to stop constantly comparing himself to the other students. I told him that it does not matter where they are at this point; the only thing that matters is where he is. He will learn, and we would work on it together. It was an amazing moment. He hugged me so tightly, and seemed really relieved and grateful someone understood his situation. I was moved and humbled by this boy. I want him to succeed. I will do everything possible to help increase his learning tools so he can help himself. He needs more one-on-one attention, practice with his letter and sounds, more practice with sight words and needs to read “just right” books to build his confidence.

**Action Research Data Set 2**

*Running Record Only*

On January 30th and February 2nd, I conducted running records with the five students I will be working with during my action research project. I individually monitored each student reading a “leveled” book and conducted a running record as they read. The data described below is divided into five sections, one for each child, along with my notes on each child. This is not considered a critical data set, so I did not tape record the running record, or give the student a reading attitudes survey.

**Student One:** Book Level D

**Running Record Results:**
- 3 errors, 5 self-corrections
- Noticeable improvement in using visual strategies to determine word choice from the last running record taken on Dec. 4, 2003.
- For the most part, all of the errors were made because he did not use meaning, structure or visual cues to decode words.
- However, student was able to self-correct using structure, visual and meaning cues because he realized that what he was reading did not make sense. This shows he is beginning to use these strategies and needs to continue to practice.
- Reading at an instructional level.

**Comprehension Questions:** (See attached form for examples of questions used.)
- Comprehension level is very high. Able to answer all the questions correctly, especially the more difficult inferential and beyond-the-text questions.

**Tape Recorder:**
- Student is really enjoying the tape recorder. Would like to have books that are longer because the “little books” are over so quickly. They seem really easy to him when he reads them along with the tape recorder. He enjoys pushing the buttons.

**My Notes:**

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There was noticeable improvement comparing this running record to the last. The student is using structure, meaning and visual cues a lot more. He is trying to use reading strategies such as sounding out letters and looking at the pictures for clues. He reads the story fairly fluently. There were pauses, but not extended ones like in the first running record. I noticed that he has trouble blending sounds together to make words. He knows all the sounds, but cannot make the step from the letters being individual sounds to one blended word. He is reading the sentence over and then self-correcting because the initial word he used did not make sense. In three of his five self-corrections he repeated the sentence and decoded the correct word on the second try. He is not giving up as easily when he does not know a word.

**Student Two:** Book Level A

**Running Record Results:**

- 0 errors, 1 self-correction
- This student relied on meaning and structure clues to decode words. He relied heavily on the pictures for clues to discern word meaning. Does not use visual cues to determine meaning.
- Reading at an instructional level.

**Comprehension Questions:**

- This student had a general understanding of the book, but was still confused about the setting. He said the story took place on the pages of the book and inside the book. He had to be prompted until he was able to discern that the story took place in a kitchen.

**Tape Recorder:**

- He is enjoying using the tape recorder at home. He likes the way I color-coded the buttons so he knows which ones to hit to make the recorder work. He likes hearing my voice read the stories. He said the tape recorder helps him read by enabling him to follow along with his reading finger. When he does not know a word, the tape recorder helps him know what it is. He is feeling happy about reading because he thinks he is getting better.

**My Notes:**

I am concerned about this student’s reading progress. After listening to and watching him read, I see him relying mostly on the pictures to get him through the book. I think that if he were given a book that does not have such strong picture clues, he would not do nearly as well. I’m beginning to wonder if this student is telling me what I want to hear when it comes to how he feels about reading. He is able to express himself orally fairly well, although he does not have a large range of vocabulary words. I think he may be pretending to try, when in fact he is putting forth very little effort to learn to read.

**Student Three:** Book Level A

**Running Record Results:**

- 4 errors, 1 self-correction
- Student used meaning and structure of words, but did not use visual cues to see if the word made sense. He only looked at the first part of the word and said the first
word that came to mind. Student is having trouble sounding out words and blending sounds together especially on longer words. He will appeal after looking at the word for only a moment.

- Reading at an instructional level.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- Student has a basic understanding of the book. However, the book was about fruit salad, and when asked what kinds of fruit were used to make the salad he named several kinds that were not in the story.

**Tape Recorder:**
- He likes listening to the books and feels he is getting really good at reading them. The recorder helps because the recorder will say a word it he does not know it. He also likes hearing my voice on the tapes.

**My Notes:**
Although this student says he feels fine about reading, and is learning to read, I don’t see him putting forth a lot of effort on a daily basis. He likes the tape recorder in part because it does the work for him. I am not seeing him making great effort to remember the words or use strategies when he does not have the tape recorder to help him.

**Student Four: Book Level A**

**Running Record Result:**
- 2 errors, no self-corrections
- On the first error the student used structure, meaning and visual cues to try and decode the word. The word was some. He said fruit, stuff and finally salad. He was looking at the first part of the word on the second two attempts. On the second error he used meaning and structure, but did not use visual cues at all.
- Reading at an instructional level

**Comprehension Questions:**
- Student had a basic understanding of the story, but because of his last error he forgot the story was about salad, and started thinking it was about fruit pie. Some of his answers were skewed because of this.

**Tape Recorder:**
- Is really enjoying the tape recorder. He kept bringing it back and forth to school, but is now keeping it at home after I sent a note home.

**My Notes:**
This student is really struggling with both the reading and writing piece of school. He has trouble with sound discrimination, as well as letter and number reversals. He is learning sight words, but needs extra processing time to decode words. He is really trying, although he has a hard time remembering all his sounds and also has trouble blending together even the smallest words. He puts forth a good deal of effort and wants to read.

**Student Five: Reading Level A**

**Running Record Results:**
- 3 errors, one self-correction
• Used visual and structure cues to decode his one self-correction. He was quick to appeal after only trying to say the word once. He tried to blend individual sounds to make a bigger word, but was not successful.
• Reading at an instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:
• Student had a high comprehension level of the story. However, in his prediction he thought the story was about fruit and veggies, when there were only pictures of fruit on the cover of the book.

Tape Recorder:
• He said the tapes were really good, and he liked listening to them a lot. He feels really happy when he can say a word before the tape does and he gets it right. The tape recorder makes him happy, and it is fun.

My Notes:
This running record went a lot better than the last one. Although this student was very worried about how he did, he was not angry about reading like he was in the initial interview. I could see him tense up when I asked him to read, and he started rubbing his hands on his knees and wiggling around. After I reminded him that this is not a test, and that I am using this time to figure out ways to help him, he settled down. This student likes the tape recorder, but wants to be able to read without it very badly. He said that his mom always tells him to go listen to the tape recorder when he wants to read aloud to her. This is frustrating for me because the books are so small that is would take very little time for his parent to listen. I never thought about the fact that parents might use the tape recorder as an “out” to not read with their child.

Action Research- Data Set 3

On February 20th and 25th, I conducted running records with the five students I have been working with during my action research project. I individually monitored each student reading a “leveled” book, and conducted a running record as they read. I then asked them seven comprehension questions regarding the text, and interviewed them about their current reading attitudes. The data described below is divided into five sections, one for each child, along with my notes on each child. This is considered a critical data set, so I tape-recorded the running records, and the interviews of the reading attitudes survey.

Student One: Book Level D

Running Record Results:
• 6 errors, 1 self-correct
• Used meaning and structure to decode words. Two of the errors were on contractions, which he is just beginning to understand. Student does not use visual cues to figure out what the word is. He will stop at the first part of the word and not follow through to make sure the letters match the sound. Needs to use the strategies, does it look right, does it sound right, does it make sense.
Reading at an instructional level D. (Could be moved to an E for difficult instructional level.)

**Comprehension Questions:**
- Student has a high level of comprehension skills. Was able to answer all of the questions correctly and make text-to-life connections about the story. He also thought that the author might want people to know that little boys could go fishing if their parents will let them. (This was in response to my question about the author’s purpose in writing the story.)

**Reading Attitudes:**
- When asked how he likes reading on a scale of 1–10, he said he is an 8. He said he likes it more than he doesn’t like it. He feels good about reading with the tape recorder because he knows all the books. But sometimes the books are new and he doesn’t know them, but he just keeps trying anyway.
- He likes books that are fun to read. He also likes chapter books because, “it fun that there are chapters, and the stories are usually more exciting to read.”
- The easiest part about reading is looking at the pictures to help you. It makes reading easier.
- The hardest part about reading is when there are not any pictures to help you. The chapter book I am reading has some pictures, so it helps.
- It is important to learn to practice reading to get better at it. He said he is enjoying learning how to read.
- Strategies used to decode words are: sound out, look at picture, does it look right, sound right, make sense; re-read the sentence and the words around the one you don’t know.

**Tape Recorder:**
- He said the tape recorder helps him because it will say the word if he does not know what it is. He likes to listen to the tape two times, and then read the book on his own once without using the tape recorder. The third time is easier because he knows the words and has already practiced twice. “The tape recorder helps because if I listen to the book many times, I remember the words.” He said he likes using the tape recorder a lot, and would like to keep using it. He is always trying to figure out if it is my voice on the tapes, or somebody else’s. The only thing he would change is that the books are too short, and he would like them to be longer.

**My Notes:**
Although this student made several errors, his reading fluency and use of strategies is improving. He is beginning to use voice in his reading and is reading for meaning. All of the errors he made actually made sense in the text. He needs to be more diligent about following the word through to make sure it looks right. This student has only been in the United States for two years, and he has an insatiable appetite for learning. I need to keep reminding myself that he is an ESL learner. He needs to slow down and not give up on the word so easily. The tape recorder is a huge motivating factor for him. He loves to pick the book he is going to read and likes putting the check-out card in its spot.

**Student Two:** Book Level A

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Running Record Results:
- 0 errors, 1 self-correction
- The student eventually used meaning clues to decode the word and self-corrected. He appealed, and I had to prompt him to check the picture for clues.
- Throughout the book he looked at the picture for clues to the words. On the page he made the error, the picture did not clearly show the word meaning. He tried to sound out the word using visual cues and knew the incorrect word did not make sense. (Using structure cues.)
- Reading at an instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:
- He has good comprehension skills, but his immaturity shows in his answers. He thought that the author’s purpose was to trick him, because the characters were making faces at him.
- He was unsure about the setting and stalled for a long time while tapping his finger on his temple.
- Was able to make a text-to-life connection that his mom gives him a hug to make him feel better when he falls.

Reading Attitudes:
- Student says he feels great about reading. He thinks he is getting better at reading and is able to read all of the books in his book box during silent reading time.
- He likes to sound out the words so that he gets them right.
- Looking at the pictures helps make reading easier.
- The hardest part about reading is that “I get the first sentence right, but I get the second sentence wrong because it isn’t like the first sentence.”
- Reading is important because he wants to be a fighter pilot and he will need to read manuals when he is in the army.
- Strategies used are: go back to the beginning of the sentence and re-read it, sound out the word.
- Was not able to name any other strategies. I asked him about the ones we had been using and learning about in class, but he could not remember any of them.

Tape Recorder:
- He likes it because it has my voice on the tapes, and I always remind him to use his reading finger.
- If there wasn’t a dingling noise, he would not know when to turn the page.
- He always wonders if the stories really happened in real life.
- Took a very long time to answer these questions. Needs a lot of processing time.

My Notes:
I don’t know what it is about this student, but something isn’t right. He is virtually at the same point he has been at all year. At the beginning of the year, he showed promise to be one of the top students in the class, but he is not making connections. A lot of times, I feel like he is just telling me what I want to hear, and not how he really feels. In class, I notice him tuning out, and he is rarely doing the assignments correctly. However, he does not ask for help when he doesn’t understand; he simply pretends to be doing the assignment. The whole thing has got me stumped. He is going to get his eyes checked.
because my CT and I noticed him playing with his eyelids a lot. It concerns me that he said he would not know to turn the page if he didn’t hear the dinging sound. To me, that means he is not really following along with the words. He sort of treats reading like a game that he can quit when it gets hard. This concerns me. His immaturity also concerns me.

**Student Three: Reading Level A**

**Running Record Results:**
- 1 error, 1 self-correct
- The student used meaning and visual cues to monitor his reading. On his error, he did not use structure to make sure the word sounded right. There was a long pause before he self-corrected. I prompted him by asking him if he had checked the picture for clues. Then he was able to get to the word smile, which was correct.
- Reading at an instructional level.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- He had problems coming up with an idea about what the book was going to be about. It took heavy prompting on my part to get him to answer. He sighed, stared at the cover, said hmmm, and finally said he might be about people swinging.
- He had a good overall understanding of the story. Had a hard time making a text-to-life connection about the story. Said nobody had given him a hug in a long time.

**Reading Attitudes:**
- He said he feel fine about reading. “I like it best when I have time to think about what the words and pictures are saying.”
- He likes to listen to stories that are too hard for me to read yet. He likes the book, *The Mitten*.
- The easiest part about reading is sounding out words and the hardest part is that there are words that cannot be sounded out.
- It is important to practice reading to get better at it. “If you can’t read, you can’t order the correct food at a restaurant.”
- Strategies used: sound it out, look at the picture, and chunk the word. Could not remember the new strategies we were learning in class. (Look right, sound right, and make sense.)
- He just feels OK about reading inside.
- On a scale of 1–10, he says he likes reading at a 10.

**Tape Recorder:**
- He likes the tape recorder because he gets to read with it. It feels like somebody is right by you. It makes him feel like he can read even when nobody is there.
- He likes everything about the tape recorder. He would be sad if I stopped sending home tapes.

**My Notes:**
This is an interesting student. I do believe that he really wants to learn to read, but it is hard. I think this is the first time in his life where he is actually being expected to put forth effort to accomplish something. My CT and I had a conference with his mom,

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because she is really frustrated with his reading progress. At the conference, we found out that he was a really late talker, and has always been a little behind when it came to making connections. (He is also on a speech IEP.) He mom is being exceptionally proactive about supporting her son’s reading progress and goals. She really likes the tape recorder, but was concerned that he was just memorizing the tapes. We explained that memorization is a natural step in the reading process. I agreed to tape some longer Clifford books that would hold his attention for longer periods of time. The batteries already ran out on his tape recorder, so I know he is using it a lot. Also the other day, he came running up to me and told me that he read a whole book without the tape recorder for the first time! He was beaming. I am hopeful that this taste of success will spark his interest further.

Student Four: Book Level A

Running Record Results:

- 3 errors, 1 self-correction
- Student used structure to decode the word he self-corrected. He is not using visual clues to help him decode words. He is looking at the first part of the word, but not following it through. He does not seem to understand the connection between letters and sounds. He is not using meaning cues either and is not looking at the pictures for support.
- Reading at an instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:

- He needed heavy prompting to be able to make a prediction about what the book would be about. He thought it might be about a boy swinging over water.
- He realized after reading the book that he was right about the swinging part, but wrong about the water part.
- Very good at retelling the story.
- He thought the author wrote the story because it happened to him when he was little.
- He was able to make an accurate text-to-life connection about the story.

Reading Attitudes:

- He says he likes reading because it is fun, and because it helps him learn new things.
- The best part about reading is sounding out the words. It is the easiest thing for him to do when he can’t figure out a word.
- Sounding out words is the easiest part about reading and not knowing what certain words are is the hardest part about reading.
- He wants to know how to read so that he can help his children when he grows up.
- Strategies used: sound it out, use word chunks, look at the picture to help, does it look right, does it sound right, does it make sense. (He knows these strategies, but is not actively applying them to his reading.)
- On a scale of 1–10 he likes reading at a 5. “There is other stuff I like to do more than read. If I were better at it, I’d like it more.”

Tape Recorder:

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• He likes the tape recorder because it is fun and it helps him learn and know more words.
• He really likes listening to the tapes, but he doesn’t care if I pick out the books or if he does.

My Notes:
This student is really intriguing. He is struggling to learn to read, but is an absolute math whiz. He can add and subtract huge numbers in this head and do all kinds of counting exercises. My CT is going to refer him for special services because there is such a discrepancy between his math and reading. I know he wants to read, but I don’t think he is getting a lot of support at home besides the tape recorder. He is the only person I did not get the parent survey back from. His oral language is really improving, and he is able to express himself verbally. He is still making reversals with his letter and numbers. His shoes are usually on the wrong feet too.

Student Five: Reading Level A
Running Record Results:
• 2 errors, 0 self-corrections
• Student used meaning and structure to decode words, but did not use visual cues. He looked only at the beginning part of the word, and did not follow it through. All of the errors he made in the story made sense.
• Reading at an instructional level.

Comprehension Questions:
• He had a very high comprehension level. Student expresses himself verbally very well. He has trouble telling where the setting is. He decides it is at home. (It is actually in a park.)
• Made a great text-to-life connection. Said that he fell out of a swing once, and his friends made him laugh, so he felt better.

Reading Attitudes:
• He is feeling pretty good about reading. “I am getting better and better because I am understanding the words.”
• He likes reading because every time you turn the page there is something new to learn.
• Reading is more hard than easy. He likes it when he can say the word before the tape recorder does.
• Big words get him confused and words that he has never seen before. “Some words I don’t understand, and it makes me not understand the story.”
• It is important to learn to read because, “When I grow up I’ll need to read things for work and read to my kids. I want to be a teacher.”
• Strategies he knows are: sound it out, look at the pictures, does it look right, does it sound right, does it make sense. (He is not actively using all these strategies in his reading.)

Tape Recorder:
• “I like everything about the tape recorder.”
He said he is not feeling as frustrated about reading as he did at our first meeting. “It is getting ‘funner’ and ‘funner’ everyday!”

He is a 10 on the reading attitudes scale.

My Notes:
I feel a real connection to this student. I am always amazed at his ability to express himself. I believe so strongly that he can be a successful reader. During our meeting he mentioned several times that he heard about this place on TV that teaches you how to be a better reader. (Sylvan Learning Center.) He bought into the ad and thought it was a place where you magically learn to read. He said he asked his parents if he could go, but they said it cost too much money. I explained to him that the place he saw on TV was just like school, and that he didn’t need to go there—that he was getting the same kind of support from his teacher and me that he would get there. He was astonished. I went on to explain that reading isn’t something that is magically going to happen without practice. I told him that the “want” had to come from inside him. He said he understood.

I know this student wants to learn to read desperately. He initially wanted me to tutor him every night after school, and now he wants to go to SLC. I am hoping to be able to tutor him once the program is done, but I am hoping he understands that reading will not happen without a great deal of effort on his part.

Action Research – Data Set 4 and Buddy Read

On March 16, I conducted running records with the five students I have been working with during my action research project. I individually monitored each student reading a “leveled” book, and conducted a running record as they read. The data described below is divided into five sections, one for each child, along with my notes on each child. This is not considered a critical data set, so I did not tape record the running record, or give the student a reading attitudes survey. I did however talk with the children about the overall tape recorder experience and how they felt about it ending.

Student One: Book Level F

Running Record Results:
- 4 errors, 7 self-correct
- On his first error, he did not use any of the cues, (meaning, structure, or visual.) Although the word did not make sense, he kept reading. The next three errors were all visual. He was not using the “does it look right” strategy.
- He used a large amount of self-correction and repeated sentences when it did not make sense the first time. On all of his self-corrections, he had not used visual, or meaning, but then looked at the word again, realized it did not look right, or make sense and made a self-correction.
- This student had been reading at a D for the bulk of my data. However, he has since jumped to an F. Because he did so well during this running record, it is
apparent that he is reading at an F for his instructional level, and should be at a G for difficult level.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- This student comprehends at a high level. He understands both the literal points of the story and is also able to make inferences about the story. He also is able to go beyond the text, and make text-to-life connections as to how it relates to experiences in his own life.

**My Notes:**
This was an amazing running record for me. I felt like I could explode with pride over the progress this boy is making. When we started this project, he was reading, but wasn’t really serious about getting the words right. He would start to say a word, and when it didn’t match the text, he would just blurt out a bunch of different sounds and laugh. The difference in him now is huge. He is a reader now. He was not before. He understands strategies, and knows how he can use them to his advantage to decode text. He was diligent about using the tape recorder. He loved doing it, and I believe that hearing the fluent language has helped to propel him to the next stage in reading.

I have to laugh because I asked him during our last meeting whether or not he still liked using the tape recorder. Up until now, it has always been an enthusiastic “yes!” But something was different this time. He covered his face, and smiled like he didn’t want to hurt my feelings. I asked the question again, and he said, “Well, Mrs. P, you know I am reading in the chapter books now…” Then he paused, and I said, “Are the tape recorder books too easy?” “Well…,” he said, “I am in the chapter books now…and I can read them…” He finally told me sheepishly that he didn’t need the tape recorder anymore because he could read. How amazing and wonderful is that?

**Student Two: Book Level B**

**Running Record Results:**
- 1 error, 1 self-correction
- The student did not use visual cues to during the first error. The word he said made sense, but he did not look at the word all the way through.
- When the student self-corrected, he saw that the word he said and the actual word did not match. He repeated the sentence and sounded out the word correctly.
- He is getting a lot better at recognizing beginning sounds and following through with the word to make sure the whole word matches. He is also going back and repeating the sentence if a word does not make sense.
- The student has been reading at an A level for the bulk of my data. I moved him up to a B to see what would happen. From this data, I see that he is reading independently at a B and is instructional-difficult at a C.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- He has good comprehension skill. Although he is very immature, he is tracking what the story is saying. He really answered the evaluative questions well this time. In the past his answers have been very off-base, but during this story he was right on the mark. He really liked this story, and enjoyed that the children were

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using their imaginations. (This is something that he likes to do and can relate to well.)

**My Notes:**
I can see that this student is making progress. Although is slow, he is incorporating strategies into his reading. One big jump I saw this time was his ability to comprehend the text. In the past, he has always struggled with several of the comprehension questions, and gave off-base answers. However, this time he was able to successfully answer the questions and make literal, evaluative and inferential conclusions. The questions were harder than he has had in the past, so I feel like he is making progress.

I realize that I need to be clearer about the purpose of the fluent reader picture books I send home on the weekends. This student has been trying to use his reading finger and follow along with the story. However, these books are for fluent readers, and he is just supposed to listen to it for pleasure to hear the fluent language. He said, “It was so long and I couldn’t stand it! It was getting me all confused and the ding came too fast.” I felt terrible. This whole time I thought the kids were enjoying those books, and now it sounds like they were confusing them even further.

Although I would not say that this student is a reader yet, I think he is starting to utilize strategies that will propel him to the next point, with practice. I noticed that he had periods in which his calendar did not get signed by his parents. I asked him repeatedly if he was listening, and he always said yes. However, I am unsure.

I saw his mother when she came to have lunch with him. She said that she thought the tape recorder was a great way to motivate him to read. She said she was going to go to the library and get more books for him to listen to.

**Student Three:** Book Level B

**Running Record Results:**
- 3 errors, 1 self-correct
- The student was not using visual cues to decode the text. He did not follow through the entire word to make sure it was correct. The words he did say made sense, but were not correct. He made the same sort of error three times.
- When he self-corrected he used visual cues and saw that the word he said could not be correct. He repeated the sentence and said the correct word.
- He has been reading at an A level for the bulk of this project. I moved him to a B to see what would happen. From the results, he is at an A instructionally, and at a B for difficult.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- He was very confused about the point of this story. The children in the story are imagining all the things they can be when they grow up. The pictures clearly show this. However, this student could not make the connection between the children now, and the children as grown-ups. He thought they wanted to be these things when they were still children.
I told him he could go and look back in the book to help him answer the questions. He did not do it. He sat and sighed. He does not seem to understand that the answers to the questions are in the book. He is in a hurry to get the reading over with and be done with it. He doesn’t want to have to think.

**My Notes:**
After the running record, we went back through the text and talked about what the errors were. We talked about following through with words past the beginning sound and making sure the whole word makes sense.

He really likes the Friday books. I have talked to his mom about how they are just for fun. He says they are really fun to listen to.

He was really excited because he read the whole book *Green Eggs and Ham* to his SMART book buddy.

On March 10, he came running up to me in the hall after school. He was beaming because he said he read a whole book without the tape recorder the night before. “I didn’t need it!” he said. He was so proud. He said he was going to keep on reading!

Although this student is not a reader, I think he will be. He is on a speech IEP, his mom is working with him extensively at home, and he is beginning to try. I think the key factor is that he needs to start wanting to read. Right now he still sees it as a chore and doesn’t feel that he is making a lot of progress. I am disappointed to stop the tape recorder because I think he was really beginning to make some progress with it.

**Student 4: Level B**

**Running Record Results:**
- 4 errors, 0 self-corrections
- He read the book easily and seemed more concerned about getting through it than reading all the words correctly.
- During the first error, he did not use visual, meaning or structure cues. He inserted a word from looking at the picture, but the word did not make sense, look right, or sound right with the sentence. He is not trying to self-correct his error.
- All of the other errors were visual. He looked only at the picture and inserted a word into the spot. He did not try to make sure the beginning sounds matched or follow through with the word.
- He used inflection in the last sentence of the book, where it was very appropriate to do so.
- He has been at an A level this whole research period. I moved him to a B to see what would happen. He is reading an A instructionally and at a B for difficult.

**Comprehension Questions:**
- He did incredibly well during the comprehension section. The original prediction he made was not correct, and he changed it after the book was read. He understood the literal, inferential and the evaluative parts of the book. His answers
were all right on the mark, and the questions were much harder than those he has had in the past.

My Notes:
I am really frustrated about the progress of this student. I feel like I didn’t really reach him to help improve his reading. He will be referred to LRC this year to give him extra support. He has trouble with sound differentiation and hearing/pronouncing the correct sounds.

He said that he wants to be able to read harder books. He really likes it when he is able to sound out the words. He also would like the little books he reads with the tape recorder to be longer.

I would not consider this student a reader. If he did not have heavy support from the pictures, he would not be able to get through the book.

Student Five: Level B

Running Record Results:
- 1 error, 1 self-correction
- When he made the error, he did not use visual cues to decode the word. He said girl, when the word was carrier. When I had him go back, he tried to sound out the word, but could not get it. He appealed, and I told.
- When he self-corrected, he used visual cues to correct his error. He realized that I word was not ballet because it started with a “d.” He self-corrected and said the correct word, which was dancer.
- Although he read this story fairly well, this student is depending on the pictures for most of his cues. He is not looking at the words carefully enough. He will often say the first sound he sees and plug in a word to match.
- I gave this student a B level book even though he has been reading at an A for the bulk of our time together. He did well in the B. He is a B instructional/difficult.

Comprehension Questions:
- He comprehends the story well. He did well answering both the literal and evaluative, but had trouble with the inferential.

My Notes:
When we sat down to do the running record, this student started boasting that he was reading really well, and that he hardly had to try anymore. I had to remind him that it had only been two weeks since I had left the room, and I knew that was not true. I said that I was the same Mrs. P as always, and he didn’t have to try and impress me. He got a sheepish grin, and said OK.

I read a book aloud to the class when I left, explaining how much the class meant to me. I told the class that this student never gives up. My CT overheard him telling the reading specialist that, “Mrs. P says I never give up!” He was very proud.
The motivation to read is off the charts for this student. I hope to be able to tutor him once the program is over. I feel a strong connection to him, and I think that ongoing practice and confidence building will help him improve.

**Note:** I took out all the quotation marks in this section and made several other punctuation changes not highlighted

**Buddy Reading 1: Data Set 4**

On March 2, I paired students together to talk about the books, *Big Mammals* and *What Has Spots!* They have all heard the books on tape at home.

**Mrs. P:** What does the book talk about? Tell each other.

**Both students:** It talks about giraffes, rhinoceroses and animals that are big and are mammals.

**Student 4:** I liked the giraffe the best.

**Student 1:** I think the rhino may be the meanest mammal.

**Student 4:** No, I think the moose is the meanest.

**Student 1:** There isn’t even a moose in the book.

**Student 4:** Oh yes there is, I’ll show you…. See, there it is.

**Student 1:** Oh cool! I had trouble with the moose because I tried to sound it out, but it was hard.

**Mrs. P:** What kinds of books do you like reading the best?

**Student 4:** I like nature books.

**Student 1:** I like books that are stories.

**Mrs. P:** Do you like talking to each other about books?

**Student 4:** It is fun to talk to each other about what the books are all about.

**Buddy Reading 2: Data Set 4**

**Mrs. P:** You both just read this book and have listened to it at home. Please talk about it with each other.

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Student 2: All right! This is my favorite book. There are different kinds of animals who have spots.

Student 5: I liked the leopard and the baby leopards.

Student 2: I like that horse because it looks like it can do tricks.

Students 5: There is a girl on top of the horse!

Student 2: That is dangerous!

Student 2: That leopard is lazy!

Student 5: I like the end—there is the Dalmatian again. That girl has chicken pox! (Picked up another book on the desk.) Look, this book has spots on it too!

Mrs. P: Time to stop and get ready for buddy reading.

My Notes:
What I love about this data is the reactions of the kids. Even though these books have very limited plot/storyline, they are always able to find something to talk about. They get so little opportunity to talk successfully about books to other students. This gives them a chance to interact, and re-tell their favorite parts. It is fun to listen to, because you never know where they will go with it!
APPENDIX N:

RE-READ TUB
APPENDIX O:
CHECK-OUT AREA
APPENDIX P:
STUDENT WRITING

(Examples of student writing were included here)
APPENDIX Q:
CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT

(Sample student assessment was included here)
APPENDIX R:
PARENT/STUDENT QUESTIONNARIE
CROSS-CHECK

Parent Survey Results:
Given the week of March 1st

1. Do you think the tape recorder has helped to improve your child’s reading confidence?
   a) Two parents strongly agree
   b) One parent agrees
   c) One parent disagrees

   Comments:
   • This has been a great way to reinforce beginning reading.
   • Most of the tapes go too fast.

2. Do you think that the tape recorder has been a motivating factor in your child’s reading?
   Please circle ALL of the reasons that apply:
   a) The tape recorder itself. (4 of 4 circled)
   b) Teacher’s voice on the tape. (3 of 4 circled)
   c) The books. (2 of 4 circled)
   d) The bag to bring tapes back and forth in. (1 of 4 circled)

   Comments:
   • All of it was very helpful.
   • I am not sure if the tape recorder was a motivating factor.

3. Do you see your child using their reading finger while they listen to the tape recorder?
   a) Yes (4 of 4 circled)
   b) No
   c) Unsure

4. Do you still read to your child in addition to the tape recorder?
   2. Yes (4 of 4 circled)
   3. No
   4. Unsure
Comments:
• Every night

5. Is there anything you would change about the tape recorder program if you could?
   Do you have any suggestions for changes?
   • I would like to have it available to us a little longer.
   • Longer stories

6. I would appreciate any additional comments you have regarding the use of the tape recorder.
   • I feel this program has helped my son’s reading and you should continue to offer this program.
   • My son is still struggling and has a hard time keeping up with the tapes.
   • This is a good thing to do.
   • Thanks so much for taking your time to make the tapes and keeping track of all the kids’ reading. It’s been great!

Cross-Check of Parent Survey Results:
Given to students the week of March 1st

Student One:
I found that Student One’s parent responses matched what Student One said about reading when given the same questions. Both were very enthusiastic about the reading program.
Parent and student agreed on the following:
• Likes the tape recorder because it helps him follow along.
• Likes to hear the teacher and other voices on the tapes. Tries to figure out who is talking.
• Likes all the books, but the Friday books are harder.
• Listens to the tape twice; then reads the book alone once.
• Uses his reading finger.
• His parents read to him every night.
• He likes that the tape recorder reads the book for him.

Student Two:
Student Two’s student/parent responses matched fairly well.
• Student said he strongly agreed that the tape recorder made him a better reader.
• Parents said they agreed.
• Student liked all of the motivating factors of the tape recorder. (Recorder, bag, books.)
• Parent thought the tape recorder itself was a motivating factor. But was unsure if it was really motivating her son.
• Student uses his reading finger.
• Parent said she sees her son using his reading finger.
• Student said that he did the tape recorder mostly and did not get read to very often.
• Parent said she still reads to her son.
• Student wanted longer stories because it gives his brain more energy.
• Parent wanted longer stories.

Student Three:
I found that Student Three’s parent responses matched what Student Three said about reading when given the same questions. Both were very enthusiastic about the reading program.
Parent and Student agreed on the following:
• Strongly agreed that the tape recorder was helping him learn to read.
• All of the motivating factors helped him to read.
• He uses his reading finger while reading.
• His parent reads to him every night.
• Both feel strongly that the program is helping him learn to read.

Student Four:
Student Four’s parent did not return the survey.

Student Five:
Student Five’s student/parent responses matched fairly well.
• Student strongly agreed that the tape recorder was improving his reading confidence. “I really agree and I love it.”
• Parent disagreed and said that most of the tapes go too fast for her son to keep up with.
• Student said he liked all the motivating factors of the tape recorder, especially the books.
• Parent said the tape recorder itself and the teacher’s voice on the tapes were the only motivating factors.
• Both parent and child said that the student uses his reading finger.
• Student said that his mom does not read to him; he reads to her. She will sometimes read the long books to him.
• Parent said she still reads to him.
• Student says sometimes the tape recorder goes too fast and he can’t tell what word he is on. He stops it and starts over.
• Parent said that her son is still struggling and has a hard time keeping up with the tapes.