The Effects of Empowering Students with Choice on Reading Levels

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Abstract

Research has suggested that the amount of reading engagement and motivation for reading are important factors in reading achievement and therefore school success (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997; Sparks, Patton, Murdoch, 2014; Turner & Paris, 1995). Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) found that instructional practices can help support student’s reading engagement and motivation. This study sought to answer the follow questions regarding reading instruction and students’ reading engagement. What effects does providing multiple opportunities for choice throughout reading instruction have on first grade students’ reading levels? Can students become empowered through making choices about their reading? Can students’ reading development increase as a result of being given opportunities to make choices?

During this action research project, first grade students learned about how to make reading goals and about different types of reading goals. Following the Reading Goal Mini-Unit instruction students made bi-weekly reading goals. The researcher conducted pre and post running records to determine if reading levels increased during the goals setting period. The researcher also conducted bi-weekly reading conferences with students to record their choices about reading goals and their choices of text to read to meet the goals.

Results of this study indicated that the majority of reading goals that were chosen related to reading stamina. The results also showed reading levels increased during the action research project. Future research should consider isolating the impact of students making choices upon their reading achievement.
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Chapter 1 - Problem

Introduction and Problem

Many studies have been conducted regarding students engagement in learning. A great deal of studies focused on students’ motivation for and engagement in reading. Engagement in learning has continued to be an issue for students and teachers alike. Teachers have looked for ways to connect with their students and have them be actively participating and engaged in all areas of learning. Specifically, student engagement during reading instruction has been studied and found to be a factor in student achievement (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004; Guthrie & Cox, 2001; Lutz, 2006; Williams, Hall, Hendrick, Lamkin, & Abendroth, 2013).

In order to be literate children must engage actively and regularly with literacy activities. In early elementary classrooms finding ways to have students willingly participate in learning in regards to literacy is very important. Setting the foundations of literacy is necessary for students to achieve success later on in school and in life. Offering choices to students about their literacy learning it is a way to engage them (Allington, 2012; Watson, 2013; Williams, Hall, Hendrick, Lamkin, & Abendroth, 2013). Constructivist theories promote the need for students to have decision-making powers concerning their learning. These theories promoted that students need to be actively involved in their own process of learning (Cooper, 1993; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Hence students should be making choices and decisions throughout the process of learning.

This study sought to find the effects of empowering young students with providing reading choices in order to engage them in the process of reading. Specifically, this study explored what effects occurred from providing multiple opportunities for choice throughout reading instruction and the effect upon first grade students’ reading levels. If students can be empowered to make decisions about their reading goals, about what text is read, and about reading individually or in small groups did these choices impact their reading levels? Did students take ownership of their learning and feel empowered through the teacher providing opportunities to make choices regarding the methods, which facilitated their development as readers? This study sought to answer these questions in the hopes of actively engaging students in the reading development that takes place in the first grade classroom setting.
Purpose of the Study

As a teacher of young children, the researcher spends much of the day helping students develop their emerging literacy skills. Helping students notice and become aware of print and then move to learning about and manipulating and interacting with text is a large part of the researcher’s day to day work as a teacher. A challenge that teachers of literacy face is finding ways to facilitate students participating and facilitate students becoming empowered as learners. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of providing students multiple opportunities to make choices regarding reading. By having offered students opportunities to make choices in developing their reading goals and in the methods in which they attained those reading goals this study sought to find if providing opportunities to makes choices effected students’ reading development, specifically their reading levels (as determined through a running record). Do students become actively engaged by making decisions about what goals to work towards and how to meet the goals that were set? Was there positive growth in reading development if there were opportunities for students to make choices?

Justification for the Study

This study was intended to further add to the research regarding best practices for reading instruction. The researcher hoped that the study could benefit both teachers and students. This study may have provided teachers information about instruction and providing students opportunities to make decisions regarding their learning. It may have also provided information about keeping students engaged in reading and empowering students to make choices about their lives as readers. Students who feel in control of their learning may be motivated to grasp concepts and skills, and progress along the continuum of reading development.

Research Question

The research question for this study was “What effects does providing multiple opportunities for choice throughout reading instruction have on first grade students’ reading levels?”
Definition of Terms

This study referenced several important terms regarding reading, reading instruction, and reading assessment. The terms are as follows:

**Balanced literacy approach:**

Constitutive Definition: A balanced literacy approach according to Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is a combination of whole class, small group, and individualized instruction in reading and writing. The components of reading and writing workshop minilessons, interactive writing, shared reading, guided reading lessons, strategy lessons, and individual conferences between student and teacher occur throughout the literacy block of instruction.

Operational Definition: In this study, the term “balanced literacy approach” refers to the instructional approach to teaching literacy skills in the context of Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop. For the purpose of this study the instruction and activities regarding making reading goals occurred within the researcher’s balanced literacy approach during Reading Workshop.

**Reading development:**

Constitutive Definition: According to the National Institute for Professional Practice states in regards to reading development that: “there are distinct stages of development across this continuum of learning to read and there are specific reading behaviors that can be identified at each of these stages.”

Operational Definition: Reading development for the purpose of this study is the continuum of development of critical skills that directly relate to the various stages of reading including accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.
Running record:

Constitutive Definition: According to Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn (2001), a “running record is a method for closely observing a student’s oral reading of a complete story or book” and running records can be used “to document progress along specific benchmarks.”

Operational Definition: For the purposes of this study a running record is a tool used to gauge the approximate reading level, and therefore the reading development of the participants at the onset of the study and again at the conclusion of the study.

This study also referenced terms regarding students’ abilities to recognize their role as learner. The terms are as follows:

Reading engagement:

Constitutive Definition: Guthrie and Cox (2001) define engaged readers as “students who are intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides” and continues that engaged readers are “strategic” and “wide and frequent readers.”

Operational Definition: This researcher defined reading engagement as the participation in the act of reading text.

Empowerment:

Constitutive Definition: According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “empowerment” means to “to give power to someone.”

Operational Definition: For the purposes of this study “empowerment” will refer to giving students the power and ability to make choices regarding their reading.
Chapter 2 - Background and Review of Literature

Background

A challenge that teachers of literacy face is finding ways to facilitate students participating in literacy activities and facilitate students becoming empowered as learners (Hall, Hendrick, & Williams, 2014). Reading has been identified as a foundational skill for students and reading ability has been identified as an indicator of future success (Kalman, 2008; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014). It has also been found that when students have the freedom to exert control and make choices concerning their learning it positively impacts their engagement and subsequent comprehension of what is being taught (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Guthrie, 2004; Hall, Hedrick, & Williams, 2014; Watson, 2013). However, offering students choices can have both advantage and disadvantages (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Katz & Assor, 2007). When provided opportunities to make choices, can students take ownership of their learning and become empowered readers? Teachers of literacy must recognize and understand the continuums of literacy development of young children and of literacy instruction, and understand how choice can impact students, in order to engage their students and facilitate their empowerment as learners.

Continuums of Reading Development and Instruction

Due to reading being a foundational skill, there has been much research concerning the components that make up literacy and research regarding reading pedagogy and reading development (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Duke & Block, 2012; Kalman, 2008). There has also been much literature and research regarding literacy instruction and best practices for teachers of reading. Both literacy development and literacy instruction occur within a continuum of extremes. Early literacy students demonstrate behaviors and skills that included language acquisition and print awareness (Brown, 2014; Kalman, 2008; Pinnell & Fountas, 2011; Roskos, 2003). At the opposite end of the continuum is a fluent reader/writer who is able to create and make meaning from text and then connect what they’ve read with their own ideas and experiences to make new understandings (Brown, 2014; Naiditch, 2010; Pinnell & Fountas, 2011). Presley, (2008) and Beeman-Rygalski, (2014) describe how literacy instruction can also be viewed along a continuum, where at one end is a phonics-based approach to instruction which
provides students systematic instruction and isolated skill practice regarding the formation of
words from letter sounds and phonemes and word parts. On the opposite end of the continuum is
the whole language approach, where students learn to read through immersion in high quality
text. Teachers instruct students in how to make meaning from the text the student is immersed
in, and smaller language sub-skills are not taught. Presley (2008) and Beeman-Rygalski (2014)
asserted that there was a need for a balanced approach for literacy instruction and it began to
develop in the 1990’s. A balanced literacy approach lies in the middle of the continuum of
literacy instruction where instruction regarding phonological awareness and immersion in high
quality text, are balanced throughout the delivery of reading and writing workshop minilessons,
guided reading lessons, interactive writing, shared reading, strategy lessons, and conferencing.

Balanced Literacy

Balanced literacy instruction provides opportunities for students to receive targeted
literacy instruction while engaged with text in a variety of ways. It allows for strategic
instruction to help readers move along the literacy continuum, and allows readers to make
choices regarding text selection. There is a strong consensus in current literature about students
needing to read frequently from a wide range of material (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Duke &
Block, 2012; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014) which is promoted in the balanced literacy
approach. Furthermore, much research and information regarding the specific reading skills that
are taught as part of helping to ensure that students become effective readers. Exposure to print
and the promotion of high volumes of quality reading were also key factors in reading success
(Croninger & Valli, 2009; Haley-Mize & Reeves, 2013; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2014).

Student Engagement

Educators and researchers agree about the importance of reading and the need for
students to be reading high amounts of quality text. In addition, it is also important for educators
to understand and recognize student engagement with reading. In order to gain confidence in
any skill the skill must be utilized, which is true with reading. In order to develop reading
proficiency, readers must read and be engaged with text. “Increased competence typically leads
to motivation to engage further, generating a cycle of engagement and developing competence
that supports improved student achievement” (Irvin, Meltzer, & Duke, 2007). In order to engage
students in reading we have to instruct and support them, which in turn builds proficiency, which in turn motivates students to engage in more reading and large amounts of quality reading leads to achievement. Linked together the ideas of engagement and motivation can benefit achievement (Hall, Hedrick, & Williams, 2014; Irvin, Meltzer, & Duke, 2007; Smithson, 2012). Through the implementation of reading workshop in a balanced literacy approach students encounter skill-based instruction along with ample opportunities to read and develop their reading skills.

It is important to look at student motivation and engagement when discussing reading instruction. In order for reading instruction to be effective, students must be engaged in the instruction and in reading. The constructivist philosophies promote the view that children are competent learners whose natural curiosities can keep them engaged and learning, because they are actively making meaning from their social situations and the world around them (Cooper, 1993; Wigfield, et. al., 2004). Author Alfie Kohn (1993) promotes the importance of students making choices regarding their learning, “Children should be given a voice not only about the means of learning but also the ends, the why as well as the what” (Kohn, p. 8).

Choice

According to Katz and Assor (2007), offering choice as a teaching practice is a complex endeavor with advantages and disadvantages. Choice can help students engage when the choice options “are relevant to the students’ interests and goals” (Katz & Assor, 2007). However, if the students “are apprehensive that their choices may lead to rejection, humiliation, or teasing” (Katz & Assor, 2007) having choices is no longer beneficial. If choices are not directly linked to students’ values or interests they do not help motivate or engage students. In a study by Assor, Kaplan, and Roth, (2002) it was found that the relevance of the choices to the students’ goals was more important that the amount of choices they were given. When given many choices students can become overwhelmed and therefore less engaged.

Systematic, explicit, skill-based instruction is impactful for building reading proficiency, however many teachers question and debate if choice can be a part of the process. In a phonics-based approach to literacy teachers provide instruction and practice for one skill at a time. The skills then build upon each other to provide the necessary scaffold for readers. Within this
model, there is little room for providing opportunities for students to make choices during instruction. The instruction is designed so that teachers provide the information about a specific strategy or skill, then through repetition and practice students master the skill, and the next skill is taught. Choice is not a part of the approach because of the scripted and routine nature of focusing on one specific skill at a time. The teacher is in control of the particular skill being taught and what text is being read to practice the designated skill (Beeman-Rygalski, 2014; Presley, 2008).

When students have a choice in the “what” and “why” of their learning they feel empowered as decision makers who are in control of their learning and therefore willing to engage in reading a variety of text, improving their reading skills and overall development as readers (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Hall, Hedrick, & Williams, 2014; Turner & Paris 1995). When students are provided opportunities to make choices about how and what they read they: “can develop their own preferences for reading and to experience how real readers read” (Hall, Hendrick, & Williams, 2014). Through instruction and the provision of choice students can be engaged and progress in their reading development. In a balanced literacy approach students make choices about text that interests them within a range of materials that appropriately match the reader’s independent reading level (Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Brown, 2014; Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Similarly Turner & Paris (1995) state “Allowing students to make choices encourages them to develop an interest in literacy, and it provides students an opportunity to plan and regulate their literacy learning”

Reading development, reading instruction, student engagement, and achievement are related in complex ways. Providing instruction that engages students with text in a variety of ways as in the balanced literacy model through reading workshop helps students progress along the reading development continuum. Providing students choices about the text being read and choices about reading goals can engage students in reading instruction and reading activity that occurs in an elementary classroom. The provision of choice can help support readers’ independence by learning to make decisions about their reading lives (Turner & Paris, 1995). There is positive relationship between reading activity and reading achievement.
Chapter 3 Research Design

After reviewing the literature on reading development and instruction, student engagement, and the provision of choices during instruction the researcher sought to determine if the provision of choice made a positive impact on student engagement in instruction and growth in reading levels. The researcher believed that through giving instruction on how to make reading goals and providing choice during reading instruction students would be empowered and be actively engaged in reading. The researcher also believed that students would show growth in reading levels as an effect of making decisions regarding reading goals and how they would be met.

The researcher designed an action research project that took place in the researcher’s first grade classroom. A unit of instruction was developed and implemented. A total of eight mini-lessons were taught, and then the students participated in a twelve week long time frame where they were encouraged to make choices regarding their reading goals and how to attain them. The researcher recorded the 16 participating students’ reading levels at the onset of the project and again at the conclusion of the twelve weeks of choosing reading goals and conferencing with the researcher. The researcher also collected data regarding the choices students made about reading goals and how to meet the reading goals they chose. This action research project was developed to better understand the impact of students having the ability to make choices regarding their learning on their achievement.

Description of the Research Design

This study used action research in which the teacher was also the researcher. This method determined the effects of providing students multiple opportunities to make choices regarding reading. Through having offered students opportunities to make choices in developing their reading goals and in the methods in which they attained those reading goals this study sought to find if providing opportunities to makes choices effected students’ reading development, specifically their reading levels (as determined through a running record). Did the students become actively engaged by making decisions about what goals to work towards and how to meet the goals that were set? Was there growth in reading development if there were opportunities for students to make choices?
The Effects of Empowering Students with Choice on Reading Levels

Description of the Sample

The voluntary participants in this research study were male and female first grade students within the researcher’s classroom. The classroom was located at Thornapple Elementary School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The site was a K-4 school educating approximately 380 students. The population of Thornapple Elementary was comprised of 84% Caucasian, 6% Asian, 2% African American, 1% Hispanic, and 7% Multi-racial students. Of the first grade class of 25 students, ten boys and six girls participated in the research. One of the 16 students received services in the resource room. The study was conducted Monday through Friday during the literacy block for instruction, approximately 8:45 – 11:35 a.m.

A consent form was signed by the participants’ parent/guardian to participate in the study. The researcher examined students’ actions and behaviors as readers during reading workshop. Goal setting was incorporated into student/teacher reading conferences after the class spent several weeks in a unit about reader’s lives and goals. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher compared running record data from beginning of the project to that of the running record data collected at the end of the study.

Description of the Instruments Used

The researcher utilized the Reading Workshop model to teach mini-lessons about making goals as a reader. This model provided a structure for reading instruction, which involved several components including: read aloud, independent reading, guided reading, student/teacher conferencing, partner reading or sharing, and word work. The focus of Reading Workshop was to enable students to develop as readers through focused instruction that encouraged students to develop reading skills and strategies, and then provide ample time for students to read. The researcher developed a series of mini-lessons to provide instruction on how to set reading goals, and what some examples of reading goals could possibly be.

A running record was used to determine a reader’s text level at the onset of the study before the instruction and before the implementation of choices began. A running record is a method of closely observing a student’s oral reading to document their progress of meeting preset benchmarks of literacy development, which then allowed the researcher to determine a student’s reading level. Students read individually with the teacher/researcher who made
observations regarding miscues during reading and observations of the student’s accuracy, fluency, and comprehension of the text selection to determine a text level as per a running record. The text levels, including scores reflecting readers’ accuracy, fluency, and comprehension were recorded at the onset of the project and again and the conclusion of the study.

The students met individually with the researcher during a reading workshop conferences to record their chosen reading goal, titles of text to read to meet the goal, and method of reading. This information was recorded on the Reading Goal Form, which can be found in the Appendix section. This form documented the goal chosen by the student, the titles of the text to read to meet the goal, and the method of how the student read, independently or in a small group. The researcher collected the Reading Goal Forms and referred back to the form with the student from the previous two weeks. Then the students and researcher filled out the form for the upcoming two-week timeframe.

Explanation of the Specific Procedures Followed

During the first phase of the study, the researcher developed, planned for, and implemented reading workshop mini-lessons to help support students as they began to make their own reading goals. Instruction on determining and developing reading goals occurred over a three-week period. The researcher provided students instruction on why setting reading goals can help us as readers, how to generate personalized reading goals, and provided instruction on the types of reading goals students may want to choose. The reading mini-lessons progressed as followed:

Session 1: Readers think about and talk about what do readers do (focusing on readers’ behaviors and actions while reading).

Session 2: Readers think about and define what a is a reading goal

Session 3: Readers talk about reading goals and how to reach them

Session 4: Reading partners can help us meet and reach our reading goals, they can hold us accountable
Session 5: Readers think about the types of reading goals they might want to have: accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and stamina are all types of reading goals.

Session 6: Readers make decisions about and set goals for their reading.

Session 7: Readers change and grow their goals over time by noticing the reading they are doing.

Session 8: Readers make choices about their books to help them reach their reading goals.

After teaching the unit with mini-lessons on making reading goals for approximately two weeks, students were encouraged to think about and choose reading goals for themselves. During that timeframe the researcher administered the Teachers College Running Record for each student and record data regarding students’ reading level as a starting point to analyze and compare later. Teachers College uses an alphabetic system of leveling, where the beginning leveled books start at A and then progress through the rest of the alphabet. The researcher also recorded scores regarding the students’ accuracy, fluency, and comprehension of the running record.

During the second phase, the researcher then implemented the treatment of providing choices to students about their reading during reading workshop. The researcher met with the study participants during reading workshop to conference. During the conference, the researcher recorded participating students’ a) reading goal, b) titles of text to be read to meet the goal, and c) the method of reading (independently or small group). Subsequent conferences occurred on a bi-weekly basis. Individual students and the researcher reviewed the previous goal and established a new reading goal, list of text, and method of reading. Students chose text that was available in the classroom including leveled readers, books organized by genre, topic, and student interest, and digital text available to students in the classroom. This information was recorded on the “Reading Goal Form” and was collected by the researcher. The researcher collected these forms over the course of a twelve-week timeframe. Also during the second phase of research, readers spoke with each other during reading workshop about the reading goals that had been chosen and about the text that the readers chose to read to meet the goals. Throughout the study the researcher reminded participants during mini-lessons and conferences about possible reading goals and about how the reading goals could be met. At the end of the 12
weeks, the researcher administered another running record and documented information regarding students’ reading levels including information about accuracy, fluency, and comprehension over the course of the study.
Chapter 4 – Results, Analysis, & Data

Through the implementation of the action research project the researcher sought to answer the question “Does the instructional practice of providing students opportunities to make choices and decisions regarding their learning positively impact their reading development?” The researcher intended to verify that through giving instruction, within the structure of reading workshop, on how to make reading goals and providing choice during reading instruction students would feel empowered and be actively engaged in reading instruction. The researcher also conjectured that students would show growth in reading levels as an effect of the opportunities to make choices and decisions regarding reading goals and how the students’ goals were met. Data regarding pre and post reading levels was recorded and compared. Data regarding the types of choices students made was also collected and charted. The data was analyzed for indications of positive reading growth and a relationship to the choices students made. The researcher found that reading levels did increase over the course of the study, that there were relationships between the types of reading goals and the amount of choices students made, and that the students preferred reading independently.

The researcher observed what occurred when students’ made choices and analyzed running record data regarding reading development to identify any possible patterns. The information and observations were compiled and analyzed to see if any patterns or correlations occurred regarding the instruction and provision of choices that students were given. The researcher also looked for patterns to see if the study affected the reading levels, as determined by running records. The researcher charted and compared the pre-test running record versus the post-test running record. The researcher also charted and analyzed the information collected from the Reading Goal Forms over the progression of the study. The information that was collected included the types of reading goals chosen, the number of times each type of goal was chosen, and the titles of text that students chose to read to meet the goals they had determined to work on.
Reading Level Data

Participants in the study began at a variety of reading levels, ranging from levels A to J as shown in the Initial Running Record Chart. Level A is the beginning stage of reading where readers show their understanding of concepts of print and one-to-one correspondence. According to Teachers College Reading and Writing Project students reading independently at levels I, J, K are meeting the first grade end of year benchmark.

**Initial Running Record Data – Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assessed By</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Words Read</th>
<th># of Errors</th>
<th># of S/C</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Retelling</th>
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<td>teacher</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>T. College</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>teacher</td>
<td>Mom's Secret</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>What Do You See at the Pond</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>T. College</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Pran's Week of Adventure</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
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<td>The Blue Mittens</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mom is a Painter</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>I</td>
<td>T. College</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>I Play Soccer</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>T. College</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>T. College</td>
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<td>teacher</td>
<td>We Like Summer</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>11/21/16</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Car Wash</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the initial running record, the participants in the study took part in a reading workshop unit about making reading goals. The lessons presented helped readers gain an understanding of the types of reading goals that could be made and how to meet reading goals. During the second
phase of the project, students conferenced bi-weekly with the research to discuss and choose new reading goals. At the conclusion of the study the post running record data showed that participants’ reading levels ranged from C to M, shown on Table 2. Twelve of the sixteen participants were on track to meet or exceed the end of year reading levels I, J, K benchmark for the end of first grade.

**Post Running Record Data – Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assessed By</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Words Read</th>
<th># of Errors</th>
<th># of S/C</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Retelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Pran's Week of Adventure</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>I'm Heading to the Rodeo</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>04/24/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>We Like Summer</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>The Blind Men and the Elephant</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Sugar Cakes Cyril</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>04/24/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>In the Mountains</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>The Blind Men and the Elephant</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>04/24/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>In the Mountains</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Surprise Moon</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Sugar Cakes Cyril</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Mud Tortillas</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>04/24/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>In the Mountains</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Pran's Week of Adventure</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Moving Day Surprise</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Moving Day Surprise</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Why Can't I Fly</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>T. College</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The comparison shown in Table 3 of the pre and post running record data showed that all participants’ reading levels increased one to four levels during the course of the study. Of the sixteen participants, half of the readers gained three or more levels. The other half of the readers gained one to two levels.

Pre and Post Running Record Levels with Accuracy Percentages – Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-RR Level</th>
<th>Pre-RR Accuracy</th>
<th>Post-RR Level</th>
<th>Post-RR Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no conclusive data that the provision of choices during reading instruction directly improved students’ reading levels. However, all students made growth as readers during the study either as a result of the provision of choices or as a result of students’ regular, daily participation in reading instruction and activities in the classroom. These findings indicate due to the increase of reading levels, that students were engaged in reading, as lack of engagement would have resulted in no increase of reading levels.
Reading Goals and Methods of Reading

Analysis of the reading goals chosen and the methods to meet reading goals found that students repeatedly chose to have goals related to stamina versus other types of goals. Of the 94 chosen reading goals throughout the study, 51 of the goals chosen, directly related to reading stamina. Some of stamina goals students chose during the study included reading five books four times each, reading five books during independent reading time, and reading a book for five minutes without stopping. Some students chose to use a charts or notes to self-monitor the amount of books read or the amount of time spent reading. In regards to reading goals, students frequently chose to work on building reading stamina. Goals related to fluency and comprehension made up only made up 18% and 11% of the chosen reading goals respectively, with the smallest percentage of chosen goals being about accuracy.

It was also found that students preferred independent reading in comparison to choosing reading with a group or a mix of both independent and group reading. Within the structure of Reading Workshop students participated in independent reading, partner reading, and small group reading times. The large percentage of students choosing to read independently may reflect that students were making personal goals, not goals for a partnership or group.

Types of Reading Goals and Chosen Method to Meet Reading Goals - Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round 1: Types of Reading Goals Chosen</th>
<th>Round 1: Chosen Method of Reading to Meet Reading Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy 1</td>
<td>Independent Reading 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency 3</td>
<td>Group Reading 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension 0</td>
<td>Independent and Group Reading 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round 2: Types of Reading Goals Chosen</th>
<th>Round 2: Chosen Method of Reading to Meet Reading Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy 2</td>
<td>Independent Reading 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency 2</td>
<td>Group Reading 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension 3</td>
<td>Independent and Group Reading 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was difficult to determine a direct correlation between participants’ improved reading levels and the choices participants made regarding the types of reading goals and the method of reading to meet the goals. The data does support that there are positive relationships between engagement in reading, reading achievement, and making choices related to reading. Students needed to read frequently during Reading Workshop to work on their chosen reading goals. Reading engagement and reading achievement are multifaceted concepts, and both need students
to be reading frequently. During the course of the study students made choices about their reading, had time to read books, and in the end made growth in their reading development.
Chapter 5 - Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the effect of providing students choices during reading instruction on reading levels. Following the implementation of a unit of instruction about making reading goals and a twelve week long process of conferring and recording the choices students made regarding reading goals, method of reading, and the text that was read it was difficult to determine a direct correlation between choices students were given and their growth as readers. The results were promising however, in that the participants did increase reading levels. The majority of chosen reading goals were goals related to reading stamina, building the amount of focus on and time engaged in the act of reading. Some participants’ reading increased as much as four levels over the course of the study. While choosing reading goals may impact reading engagement and therefore reading achievement, it was difficult to determine a direct causal relationship between them. As with the findings of Wigfield & Gurthrie (1997) and Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich (2004), reading engagement, reading motivation, and reading instruction are multifaceted and yet related to each other.

Therefore, a possible answer to the research question, “What effects does providing multiple opportunities for choice throughout reading instruction have on first grade students’ reading levels?” is that there is a positive relationship between the provision of choice on students’ reading levels. However, it might be that more can be done to determine if providing opportunities to make choices directly empowered students as readers. In future research studies, information could be gained regarding engagement in reading using a Likert scale to better understand students’ perceptions about their own reading engagement and choices they make as readers at the onset of the study and again at the conclusion of the study after the final running record is administered. This survey could provide insight into the effect choices have on student autonomy. Students could be surveyed before and after the implementation of the provision of choice to help isolate the direct effects of providing choice as an instructional practice to improve reading skills. Another impact on research in the area of reading instruction could be determining the long-term benefits of making reading goals. The research and data collection could extended over a longer period of time to see if there are benefits to providing choices to students during reading instruction and if the provision of choice has long-term effects on reading achievement.
Engagement in reading does relate to reading achievement as observed in this study. In this study, all students made gains in reading levels while making choices about reading goals. This researcher intends to continue to teach students about reading goals and intends to continue providing students opportunities to make choices during reading instruction. The researcher is planning to implement a survey that may provide more information regarding feelings related to students autonomy and empowerment as readers. When students feel that they can be impactful with their own reading, they continue to develop and grow as readers. Providing students opportunities to make choices regarding their reading can help to engage them and continue a positive cycle of reading engagement, which can help develop reading proficiency, which can lead to reading achievement.
References


Appendices

Appendix A – Running Record Sample Assessment

Appendix B – Reading Goal Recording Sheet
Appendix A

Running Record Sample Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reader's Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Independent Level:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excerpt from <em>Laundry Day</em> by Karen Hjemboe</td>
<td>Set 1, Level C</td>
<td>25 words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Book Introduction:** Show the cover of the book to the student and say this is the reader before he or she begins the reading. The title of this book is *Laundry Day*. It is about a family that does laundry. Read to find out what each member of the family did on Laundry Day.

**Running Record:** Record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words he or she reads. Later, analyze and code miscues with MSV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Miscues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In go the soaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In go the pants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In go the shirts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Out come the socks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Out come the pants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Out come the shirts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Out come the people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accuracy Rate:** Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self-correct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100%</th>
<th>98%</th>
<th>97%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 miscues</td>
<td>1 miscues</td>
<td>2 miscues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98%+100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level. Try a lower level test if the reader made 2 or more miscues.

*August, 2013* 
TCWDP
For more information or samples of Running Record Assessments please go to:

http://readingandwritingproject.org/resources/assessments/running-records
Appendix B

Reading Goal Recording Sheet

#_____

For the dates of: _______________

**Reading Goal**

My reading goal is ______________________________________________________________

To meet my reading goal, I will read the following titles:

- •
- •
- •
- •

To meet my reading goal, I would like to read: (circle one)

INDEPENDENTLY       SMALL GROUP