

Title of Study: *Improving Reading Fluency and Comprehension With The Daily Café Program*

Date of Study: *Spring 2014*

Researcher: *Mary Beth Sheaffer*

Email address: *javatalk@sbcglobal.net*

Problem that was addressed: *Low fluency and reading comprehension skills with 2nd grade students*

Subjects (complete, as appropriate)

Sex: *mixed*

Grade: *2*

Racial/Ethnic: *Focus on Hispanic readers*

Academic level: *Low achievers*

Hypothesis:

Would the implementation of Daily Café improve the reading skills of all students, and particularly those of our English Language Learners, as reading comprehension has historically been this subgroup's most challenging academic area at my school, as shown by CST scores?

Data that indicated a Need existed: *46% of Hispanic target group reached Proficient or Advanced on CST versus 81% of White students in reading.*

Intervention (describe what was done):

The C-A-F-E- in Daily Café stands for Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary.

- *The program involved three teachers, including the researcher, in three second grade classrooms.*
- *The researcher designed a monthly checklist for teachers to track independent reading behaviors as well as a 4-point Likert Scale student survey to measure student attitudes about reading. The student survey was given once before implementation and again two months into the program as a way to determine whether attitude correlates with improvement in reading fluency and comprehension.*
- *The team of teachers met to review and adjust the teacher checklist and the student survey before finalizing their formats.*
- *Bi-monthly meetings were held at the onset of The Daily Café Program with an agenda focused on teacher observations and fidelity to the program. Each participating teacher collected the following data: DIBELS Reading Fluency scores, Reading Comprehension Benchmark scores, and teacher observations. The researcher conducted the student surveys. The team analyzed findings.*
- *The two types of qualitative data were triangulated with the quantitative data as a way to check for validity.*

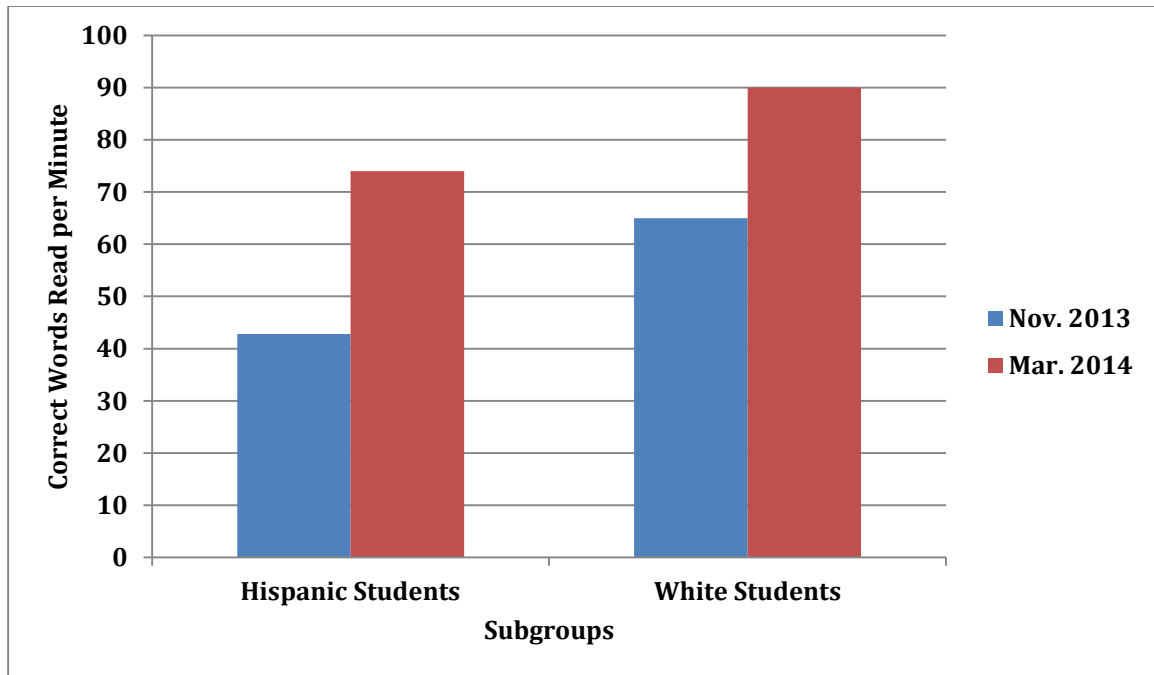
- *While seventy-eight students participated in the program, we collected and measured data involving ten students in each of the three classes. Five students in each class were from the Hispanic subgroup, including English Language Learners, and the other five students were from various subgroups, including the majority White population.*
- *At our bi-monthly meetings, we discussed Teacher Observations and Checklists of independent reading behaviors to see if the implementation of Daily Café was showing results.*
- *Student surveys were collected again at the end of the research, allowing us to measure student attitudes about reading and individual reading habits both at home and at school. DIBELS scores and Reading Comprehension benchmark scores were collected once per trimester.*
- *While students Read-to-Self, the teacher briefly visited each student and employed a variety of previously taught strategies to reinforce reading skills in the areas of comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and vocabulary. For example, the teacher would stop the student's reading and ask comprehension questions about the story. If the student could not answer a question, the teacher advised the student to back up and reread, paying close attention to the meaning of the text, rather than having the student continue. In addition, the teacher would ask a student about new vocabulary in the story and show them how to use context clues or other strategies for determining word meanings.*
- *To practice reading accuracy, the teacher might remind the student to look at the beginning and ending sounds of a word, blend-stretch-reread a word, break the word into chunks, or skip the word and come back to it later.*
- *If a student needed improvement in the area of fluency, the teacher modeled how to pause at a comma and stop at a period, using appropriate intonation and expression. Students were given the opportunity to back up and practice reading with these fluency skills.*
- *Teachers checked for readability in the books that the students chose. Students were taught how to choose books that they could read without too much difficulty. On a weekly basis, students rotated approximately five books in and out of their own "book boxes." This prevented lengthy bookshelf visits.*
- *One of the goals of The Daily Café is to build class reading stamina. First, the teacher gives a lesson about what independent reading looks like and sounds like, listing the desired Read-to-Self behaviors on the board such as staying in one spot, getting started right away, and reading the entire time. The class works together to exhibit these behaviors for longer and longer periods of time. The first attempt is often somewhere around fifteen seconds before someone starts to talk, flips through pages, raises a hand, moves to a different spot, or goes to the bookshelf. When such behaviors begin to occur, the teacher calls the class to the rug to discuss the successes and the concerns of the Read-to-Self period, even when the period is only fifteen seconds long. Class stamina for Reading-to-Self built up to thirty to forty minutes.*

Results (data based):

- *Outcomes involved a Teacher Checklist for observations of independent reading behaviors and a student survey with questions regarding attitudes toward reading and reading habits at school and at home.*
- *Quantitative data included DIBELS Reading Fluency scores and district benchmark exams to measure reading comprehension.*
- *Baseline data in all of the forms listed above were collected prior to implementation of the Daily Café Program.*

Off Task Behaviors			
	Class A	Class B	Class C
Dec	20	26	20
Jan	28	20	18
Feb	15	21	15
Mar	9	13	10
Apr	10	14	12

Data for Reading Fluency Benchmark (DIBELS)



Conclusions:

- *All students benefitted from this action research project. Virtually all of the students showed improvement, not only in their independent reading behaviors, but in their reading fluency scores (DIBELS).*
- *Our goal of narrowing the gap between the Hispanic population and our white majority indeed closed.*
- *Student motivation and stamina in the area of reading rose.*
- *Off-task reading behaviors diminished significantly.*

Recommendations

- *Further research might include the training of capable peers in third through fifth grades to serve as reading tutors. Research shows that students are more motivated to read with peer tutors than they are with an adult. Whereas Daily Café includes the component of students reading with their peers, the students are not using the strategies that teachers use, such as asking questions about characters, events, or new vocabulary. If trained, upper grade students are able to use these strategies to help their peers improve their reading skills and will multiply efforts to develop independent literacy skills in all students.*

Research base

The Teacher Observation component of my action research was a Silent Reading Checklist, similar to one described in “Facilitating Engagement by Differentiating Independent Reading” (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009), which measured students’ off-task behaviors during silent reading time. Kelley and Clausen-Grace advise educators to use an attitude survey to help teachers pinpoint the reasons for a student’s disengagement in reading.

“Using Peer Tutors to Improve Reading Comprehension” (LaGue & Wilson, 2010), presents a comprehension strategy called the Quick method, a peer tutoring program wherein chosen, capable peers use the following elements when reading with struggling students: Questioning, Understanding new words, Imaging, Connecting, and Keeping it all together (LaGue & Wilson, 2010). The authors attribute the program’s success to the fact that students are more motivated to read and answer prompts with a peer tutor than with an adult.

Peter Winograd and Marilyn Greenlee, “Students Need a Balanced Reading Program” (1986), emphasize that student choice in reading material – both fiction and nonfiction – is a driving force in the motivation students have to engage themselves in the practice of reading.

In “Motivation: Going Beyond Testing to a Lifetime of Reading” (Williams, Hedrick, and Tuschinski, 2012), coincide with my action research project stating: “If intrinsically motivated to read on their own, children will sustain interest in reading and improve their reading abilities” (Williams et al., 2012). The authors define eight principles important for teachers to consider as they work toward fostering reading motivation. Many of these principles are included in the Daily Café Language Arts program.