

Title of Study: *Reading Fluency in the First Grade Classroom*

Dates of Study: 2018-2019

Researcher: *Jehisol Urbina*

Email address: *jurbina36@yahoo.com*

Purpose of the Action Research: *The purpose of the action research is to determine whether or not explicit, leveled small group instruction will move targeted students from intensive towards benchmark fluency in reading grade-level passages, using DIBELS fluency strategies, as measure by DIBELS.*

Research Question/Hypothesis: *The research question that will guide my action research is: How well does reading fluency, including both speed and accuracy according to DIBELS, improve for struggling students from two different first grade classrooms, using the suggested intervention practices provided by DIBELS, for 20-minute periods three times per week?*

The Existing Need: *The problem that first grade students face is typically seen in the middle of the school year, as it is during this time that students are first expected to make the jump from basic understanding of letter recognition, sound-letter correspondence, and some sight word awareness to reading grade-level passages. Additionally, for many first graders this developmental milestone becomes a challenge, especially for those who have not yet master basic phonemic awareness skills and/or phonic skills.*

Research Connection: *The importance of early literacy, including the impact fluency has on reading acquisition has received lots of recognition, as research has presented the positive effects fluency has on one's ability to comprehend what they read (Goldstein, 2011). Nonetheless, there is still no universal definition to define fluency across all educators (Hall, 2006). For some, they recognize fluency as accuracy and automaticity. In reading literacy, automaticity refers to being able to read effortlessly and rapidly. Hall (2006) asserts that fluency includes prosody, or the ability to produce expressive reading, or reading naturally, as if speaking. Thus, in order to best describe the impact fluency has on reading achievement the following factors are topics to address, as they pertain to the development of early literacy: oral language and reading fluency, the effect of early literacy intervention, and the variables that impact low-performing students.*

Participants: *Students who demonstrate a need for intensive fluency instruction, according to their DIBELS Middle of the Year (MOY) scores will be selected to be a part of the action research's intervention plan.*

Sex: *Male and female students; mixed ethnicities*

Grade: *1*

Intervention: *I will be using DIBELS as my resource to assess my group of students' baseline and end of intervention results. I plan to implement the intervention for a total of five weeks. The intervention will take place in my first grade classroom, and will be conducted by me, the classroom teacher. I plan to meet with students in small groups of no more than five students at a time for 20-minute periods, three times per week. The targeted population will comprise of students who are considered to need intensive intervention, per their DIBELS assessment scores in reading fluency. Students who demonstrate an intensive need for intervention, per their DIBELS scores will be selected from two first grade classrooms to take part in the action research. Once students have been assessed, DIBELS provides teachers with an intervention plan that supports students' needs. I will use the district's new Language Arts program, which is Benchmark Advanced. The Benchmark Advanced curriculum provides leveled decodable-readers that I will use to target the needs of my small- group students. I will then use DIBELS as a progress-monitoring tool to monitor the students' progress at the beginning of the intervention, during the third week of intervention, and at the end of the intervention.*

Results: *Based on the qualitative information I gathered in my teacher-observation journal, I noticed three trends that may have impacted the intervention results. The trends were (a) student absentee, (b) student tardiness, and (c) teacher-absentee. Additionally, there was a growth in the overall reading accuracy levels of the students' scores and about half of the students' reading accuracy scores dropped after being absent for part of the intervention, whereas for the other half, they saw a continued increase in their reading accuracy scores, despite their absences.*

Conclusions: *Overall, based on the qualitative data provided by my teacher-journal, students displayed some noticeable trends that impacted the students' reading fluency development. One of those trends was student absentee and tardiness (attendance). Every student in the intervention had at least one absence/tardy during the duration of the intervention. These absences were mostly all due to illness. The impact that the missed attendance had was influential to the students' scores, as after most-all absences students' saw a decrease in the amount of words per minute they were able to read in a minute, with half of the students also having their accuracy levels impacted due to the missed fluency practiced.*

Recommendations: *Overall, based on the information I have been able to gather from this action-based research, I find that a study limitation is intervention attendance by participants and teacher. As a result, I find that a longer intervention period would be appropriate. This would allow for more concrete, long-range scores, in both reading speed and accuracy. I would also extend the intervention times from three, 20 minute weekly sessions, to a daily 20-minute intervention model.*