A study examining the impact of scaffolding young children's acquisition of literacy in primary grades

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A STUDY EXAMINING
THE IMPACT OF SCAFFOLDING
YOUNG CHILDREN’S ACQUISITION OF LITERACY
IN PRIMARY GRADES

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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in
The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the implementation of scaffolding in literacy learning in a first grade classroom setting. The complexities and nuisances of scaffolding present in the elementary school classroom context during reading and writing instruction are examined. Ten first graders, five from a pilot study an five from the case study, are followed in reading and writing in a public school classroom. Themes indicate that students in lower elementary grades benefit from reading and writing instruction that include the following strategic elements: 1) leveled predictable texts; 2) small group guided reading and writing instruction; 3) systematic, strategic instruction based upon performance-based observation of student’s interaction with texts and self-generated writing; 4) integration of reading and writing lessons; and 5) teacher/student dialogues and conversations supporting language acquisition and development of student understandings.
CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTION

During the last decade many individuals and special interest groups have demanded that teachers and schools involved in the instruction of students in this country employ the most effective research based practices to deliver instruction to these students in classrooms. In an effort to determine which educational practices are truly most effective, numerous studies have been run and teachers have been encouraged to become reflective regarding their own pedagogy. This study examined the affect of scaffolding young children’s acquisition of literacy in the context of school classrooms.

Individuals, who are involved in the continual struggle to assist young learners as they acquire literacy skills, especially those involving reading and writing, constantly strive to examine and review those methods that seem to be producing competent readers and writers. Earlier in the previous century, it was thought that teachers possessed a natural aptitude for teaching others how to do something new. It was almost as if this ability to teach were simply as natural as breathing. As educators studied the art of teaching during the past century, it seemed to become clearly apparent to researchers that this “art” is clearly something that can be improved and developed with study and practice. Marzano (2001) stated that until about 30 years ago teaching had not been systematically studied in any scientific manner (p. 1). Researchers are not attempting to say that effective teaching did not exist before this time; prior to the 1970’s, however, educators had not examined the art of teaching in a systematic manner. Early in the 1970’s researchers such as Brophy and Good (1986), Rosenthal (1991), Hunter and Schmidt (1990), began to examine the effects of instruction on student learning. In summarizing his research Coleman (1966) in his famous “Coleman Report,” concluded that the quality of
instruction a student receives accounts for only 10% of the variance in student achievement. This report concluded that the factors that influence student achievement are aspects (e.g. student ability, socioeconomic status) of the student’s life over which the school or teacher has no control. Jencks (1972) corroborated Coleman’s findings, concluding that “Most differences in student’s test scores are due to factors that schools do not control” (p. 109). Researchers (e.g. Rosenthal, 1991; Hunter & Schmidt, 1990) assert that a more meaningful way to interpret the Coleman Report is to focus upon the percentile gain in achievement instead of the percentage of explained differences in scores as Coleman did in his study. These researchers contend that an average student who attends a good school can potentially have a score that is 23 percentile points higher than an average student attending a poor school. Examining these findings from this perspective seems to indicate that high caliber schools and quality instruction definitely can make a difference in student achievement.

Studies such as these purport that what was once thought of as the “art” of teaching is now quickly becoming the “science” of teaching, a concept that is relatively new to the education arena. Research and studies conducted since the Coleman and Jencks studies have demonstrated that an individual teacher can have a powerful effect upon her students even if the school does not (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Coleman and Jencks examined the “average” effect of schools. Within any school, there is a great deal of variation in the quality of instruction delivered from teacher to teacher. Today, researchers are examining these teachers to determine whether or not it is possible to identify what it is that these more capable, effective teachers do when they deliver instruction (Johnson, 2004; Cunningham & Allington, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1998). The theory is that if it is possible to determine what it is that “effective” teachers do during instruction then instruction might be improved among all teachers, and thus
even more of the differences in student achievement might be accounted for and produced in a more reliable manner. As educators strive continually to review the best educational practices and assessments in order to deliver instruction that meets the needs of today’s diverse student population, it has become imperative that a myriad of research studies must be examined.

During the 1970’s researchers began to assert, as they examined effective teaching practices, that individual teachers could have a significant influence on student learning even in schools that are seen as ineffective. After reviewing hundreds of studies conducted in the 1970’s, Brophy and Good (1986) concluded that the myth that teachers do not make a difference in student learning had been refuted (p. 370). Even more recently, researcher William Sanders and his colleagues (see Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997) noted that the individual classroom teacher has even more of an effect on student achievement than originally thought (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 3). After analyzing student achievement scores across hundreds of schools, they found that, indeed in fact, the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher. Their studies also showed that a wide variation in effectiveness among teachers was present in schools. The immediate and clear implication of their study was that more could be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by addressing any other single factor. They found that effective teachers appeared to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms. In addition, they found that if the teacher were ineffective, students being taught by this teacher showed inadequate progress academically, regardless of how similar or different they were regarding academic achievement (Wright et al., 1997, p. 63).
Statement of Problem

As teachers work within their classrooms to develop lessons, activities, and demonstrations to extend the literacy learning of their students, they must constantly strive to meet the diverse needs of their students by selecting and implementing a variety of instructional models and materials. Many teachers have found that their knowledge of each student’s competencies allows them to adjust lessons and support each student as they extend that student’s literacy learning. Classroom teachers ask themselves how they can help students—especially those low performing children in their own rooms—learn and accelerate at faster rates. Many researchers and reflective practitioners feel that the strategies that will best accomplish enhanced learning are those that support learning within the child’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1933/1978). Very often in education, our focus and attention have been on the child’s actual development as indicated by particular assessments. Educators have looked to particular methods and/or programs, usually expecting the child to conform to the program rather than observing the child and developing strategies, methods, and experiences that build upon the child’s competencies. From a constructivist perspective, new learning does not occur at the actual level of development, but rather it occurs in the zone of proximal development—“the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1933/1978). Individuals, be they an adult, a more knowledgeable peer, or a parent, work within this zone to support a child until she/he is able to internalize and demonstrate independent ability or ownership of new learning. The term used to describe this support is “scaffolding,” which has been defined as a support system that helps children achieve success on tasks that would be too difficult for them
to achieve by themselves (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The International Reading Association’s (IRA’s) brochure, “Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction” (1999), position statement, supports teachers’ accommodating the diverse needs of their students by choosing and implementing a wide variety of instructional materials and instructional methods in classroom literacy instruction. The IRA position statement asserts:

There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Therefore, teachers must have strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and strong knowledge of the children in their care so they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach (p. 1).

Research has shown that it is helpful for all children within all classrooms to build upon the strengths and prior knowledge of young children to extend their literacy learning (Allington, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Hall & Cunningham, 1994). Use of instructional methods that include all learning modes (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) allows teachers to address the needs of all students at all performance levels (Allington, 2001; Dorn, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Lyons, 2003; Stewart, 2002).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of scaffolding in literacy learning within the classroom setting with young learners. Scaffolding has been widely used with very young children in preschools and kindergarten settings. More study and qualitative research is needed to explain the nuisances and complexities of scaffolding present within the elementary school classroom context regarding the acquisition of reading and writing. This case study examined the use of scaffolding techniques as young learners in a first grade classroom extend their knowledge of reading and writing within a public school classroom.
The Setting

The Community

The School’s county is located in the southeast portion of the state on the east bank of a river. The city has served as the capital of the state since 1842 and is the headquarters for all branches of county, state, and federal government. The Chamber of Commerce website gives the following demographic information for the county. In June 2006 the county’s population was estimated at between 425,000 and 430,000. The 2004 US Census reported the county population as 227,818—of this total 107,791 (26.20%) are in the birth-18 age group. The Metropolitan Surrounding Area population is listed as 602,894 in 2000, but grew to over 750,000 following a recent natural disaster. During the last six to nine months these numbers have fallen as residents of affected areas either moved home or elsewhere to reestablish their lives. The median family income is listed as $37,204 as of 2003. Per capita personal income in 2000 was listed as $19,790. The chamber website reports in their city demographic publication that the largest employment sector in the city was in the service area, followed by wholesale and retail, government, construction, and manufacturing.

In addition to serving as the seat of county, state, and federal government, the city is also a key industrial city and a center for a vast chemical and petroleum complex on the river. The port of this city is ranked among the top ten port cities in the nation and is thirty-second in the world in total tonnage. It ranks ninth in the nation in waterborne commerce. The port is the farthest inland deep-water port on the river and the Gulf of Mexico. The city is also home to the largest major oil refinery on the North American continent.
The Educational System

The city is home to the state’s largest university (enrollment over 30,000). The Chamber of Commerce’s website states that this university is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as the state’s only Research Extensive university. The largest historically African-American university in the nation is also located in this city.

The county has both public and private school systems. There are more than 102 public and 60 private elementary and secondary schools. The majority of school age children attend the 102 public schools in the city. For the current academic year, 2006-2007, the county serves approximately 25,000 public elementary students (78% Black and 22% Non-black) in the 58 elementary schools within the county boundaries. The county school system employs over 3,000 teachers, and of this number, 28% have earned advanced degrees (School System 2004-2005 Fingertip Facts).

The School

Daisy Elementary\(^1\) (pseudonym), a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 inner city school, is located in the downtown area of the city. The school is located approximately five miles from the Research 1 University campus. The student enrollment, 326, is determined by an enrollment cap put in place by the court order when the district’s desegregation suit was ended. The school enrollment is 99.5% Black and .5% Non-black. Daisy Elementary campus consists of 17 classrooms, two special education classrooms, one Title I classroom, one special education resource room, one guidance room, a cafeteria, an auditorium, a library, a literacy library, a computer lab, a social worker’s classroom and one speech classroom. The physical facility is 50 years old, and is, for the most part, well maintained and cleaned. The school is in the process of receiving gradual renovations throughout the campus. The administrative leaders over the past

\(^1\) All places and people other than the researcher have been given pseudonyms to provide anonymity.
twenty years have assembled a strong faculty focused on meeting the social, emotional, and
academic needs of the students at the school. The administration sets high expectations for staff
members and students at the school. The school’s and the system’s mission statement is as
follows:

The mission statement of the Green County Public School System, owned
jointly with the community, is to provide quality education which will equip all
students to function at the highest potential in a complex and changing society, thereby
enabling them to lead full, productive and rewarding lives.

Daisy Elementary has 15 classroom teachers and 11 ancillary teachers who instruct in reading,
speech, physical education, special education, computer lab library, music, guidance, and
adaptive physical education. The School Report Card for Parents for the 2005-2006 school year
available on the state department of education’s website reports that 95% of the faculty is highly
qualified category.

Demographic data provided from the School Improvement Team (SIP) is as follows: 1) The student population (333) consists of 99.5% African-American, .5% Caucasian); 2) Approximately 94 of the population are from single-parent families with a female caregiver; 3) The majority of the families are below the poverty level of $12,158.00 for a family of three. Approximately 10% of the students were in Special Education in 2005 as reported in the School Report Card for Parents for 2005-2006.

The School Report Card for Parents for the 2005-2006 school year confirmed that the
state average School Performance Score (SPS) was 87.6 in comparison to Daisy Elementary’s
2006-2007 performance score of 89.7. This score was classified in 2006-2007 as One Star
performance label or Exemplary Academic Growth (improves, and exceeded the Growth Target
by 23.5 percent). The school performance score is calculated annually using index results from Louisiana Educational Assessment Program for the 21st Century (LEAP 21) tests, the Iowa Tests, and attendance rates.

Significance of the Study

The information gained from this case study of the inherent effects of scaffolding young children as their knowledge base is extended in reading and writing contributed to the knowledge base of this educational area. An additional contribution was the acquisition of knowledge that will assist practitioners in implementing and improving an effective instructional program to enhance literacy skills of young elementary school students.

Research Questions

The following questions served to structure and guide this research study:

1. What impact does the use of scaffolding have on the academic performance of students especially in reading and writing?

2. What impact does the use of scaffolding in reading and writing have on student learning as measured by changes over time in student behavior and as evidenced by their assumed responsibility for their own learning and self-regulation? How do these learners come to view themselves as readers and writers?

3. To what extent do the teaching styles, philosophies, and instructional strategies of the teachers influence the reading and writing acquisition of the children involved in these classrooms? How does the use of scaffolding in the learning environment to support the growth of students impact the learning and professional growth of the three teachers who are participants in the study?
CHAPTER 2.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

As scholars engage in peer discussions in the hopes of clarifying and understanding how young children acquire literacy, more specifically the ability to read and to write, it has become increasingly obvious that a common language or terminology is helpful to increase communication and understanding. For purposes of this research, the following terms have been listed and defined to support understanding and discussions.

Useful Definitions

**Context** n. 1. the sounds, words, or phrases adjacent to a spoken or written language unit; linguistic environment. 2. the social or cultural situation in which a spoken or written message occurs (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 44).

**Contextualized** adj. 1. literally, “kept in context,” as in reading a full text rather than an excerpt from it. 2. referring to language that can be easily assimilated into an existing schema. 3. in reader response theory, referring to the broader social and psychological context in which a literary response is viewed. Note: “Not only what the reader brings to the transaction from past experience with life and language, but also the socially molded circumstances and purpose of the reading provide the setting for the act of symbolization. The reading event should be seen in its total matrix.” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 45; as cited in Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 44).

**Contextual Meaning** 1. the interpretation of a linguistic unit as affected by the text in which it occurs, as the meaning of a sentence within a larger discourse. 2. the interpretation of a linguistic unit in terms of the social context in which it is used, as in an informal social interaction, a religious ceremony, etc. (Harris & Hodges, 1995 p. 44)
Modeling n. 1. the act of serving as an example of a behavior. 2. the imitation of another’s behavior, especially as a behavior modification technique. (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 156)

Reciprocal Teaching n. A method of teaching based on Vygotsky’s theory, in which a teacher and two to four children form a collaborative learning group. Dialogues occur that create a zone of proximal development, in which reading comprehension and subject matter knowledge are likely to improve. (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 171)

Reliability n. Consistency in measurements and tests; specifically, the extent to which two applications of the same measuring procedure rank persons in the same way. (Harris & Hodges, p. 218)

Scaffolding n. 1. in learning, the gradual withdrawal of adult (e.g., teacher) support, as through instruction, modeling, questioning, feedback, etc., for a child’s performance across successive engagements, thus transferring more and more autonomy to the child. 2. a process that “enables a child or novice to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (Rodgers & Rodgers, 2004, p. 3).” (Note: “Support activities are called scaffolding because they provide support for learning that can be taken down and removed as learners are able to demonstrate strategic behaviors in their own learning activities.” (Herrmann, 1994). This concept is based on Vygotsky’s (1938/1978) emphasis on the importance of learning assistance that is adjusted to the learner’s potential development. (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 226) A changing quality of support over a teaching session, in which a more skilled partner adjusts the assistance he or she provides to fit the child’s current level of performance. More support is offered when a task is new; less is provided as the child’s competence increases, thereby fostering the child’s autonomy and independent mastery (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 171).
Self Regulation n. The process of planning, guiding, and monitoring one’s own attention and behavior (Berk & Winsler, p. 171).

Tutor n. One who assists learners as they extend their knowledge base (Burch, 2003)

Validity n. a truthful or factual condition. The evidence that the inferences drawn from test results are accurate. The evidence that inferences from evaluation of program effectiveness and teacher competence are trustworthy. (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 270)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) n. “the distance between a child’s actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and [his or her] potential development [level] as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or a collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1938/1978, p.86). Note: The concept of the zone of proximal development is an important cornerstone of social constructivist theories of human learning and development (McCarthey & Raphael, 1992, as cited in Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 288). The distance between what an individual can accomplish during independent problem solving and what he or she can accomplish with the help of an adult or more competent member of the culture. The hypothetical, dynamic region where learning and development take place (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 171).

Zone of Actual Development (ZAD) The child’s independent level of performance, what the child knows and can do alone (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998, p. 4; Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 288).

Review of Literature

The pedagogical concept of “scaffolding” lies in the work of Jean Piaget (1955/1977) and Lev Vygotskey (1938/1978), though neither used that terminology. Other professional education researchers whose philosophical beliefs support this theory are Seymour Papert (1964), Jerome
Bruner (1978), and John Dewey (1900). The concept supports the beliefs of educators who are philosophically aligned with Constructivism. The earliest of these theorist/educators was John Dewey, who is considered to be the father of progressive education in America. Dewey’s beliefs, were that students learned by “directed living,” facilitated by workshop-type projects so that learning was combined with concrete activity and practical relevance (Dewey, 1900). Dewey rejected the practice of rote learning, which was the common mode of instruction in his day (Briner, 1999).

**Language**

Vygotsky and Piaget were two of the earliest advocates of constructivism, adding their own thoughts and beliefs and highly refining what others such as Stern (1924), Buhler (1930), Kohler (1925), and Yerkes (1932) had begun. Vygotsky’s theory held that the key to learning lay in social interaction that played a fundamental role in the development of cognition in students. Vygotsky’s ideas supported the theory that the child’s thinking develops through social interaction mediated by language, and that words provided the labels for the concepts that would be developed cognitively (Vygotsky, 1986; see also, Dixon-Krauss, 1996). He also believed that everything individuals learn is acquired on two levels—first, through interaction with others and next, integrated into the individual’s mental structure. As a psychologist, Vygotsky asserted that a student’s acquisition of new concepts was facilitated by a more experienced partner (not necessarily always a teacher—it might be a peer), who supported the student’s developing understanding of the new concept. Vygotsky’s (1938/1978) theory included the idea that the potential for cognitive development resides in the “zone of proximal development.” This aspect, sometimes referred to as the “ZPD,” designates the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires some help and social interaction by or with the “more
experienced” partner or mentor to fully develop the concept or idea (Briner, 1999). Henceforth for the purposes of consistency and brevity the researcher will use the term “teacher” to refer to this “more knowledgeable” person.

The basic theme of Vygotsky’s work in cognitive development is his idea that the child’s thinking develops through social interaction mediated by language (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Vygotsky, 1934). Language provides the labels and meaning for the objects and ideas in a child’s world—thus, it is through language that a child builds her/his understanding of her/his own environment. Language and conversation provide the means for the child to examine and organize new ideas and concepts as he/she builds cognitive understanding. Language becomes a powerful tool for scaffolding.

Scaffolding

The term scaffolding was first introduced and used in education by psychologist Jerome Bruner (Bruner 1883a, 1983b, 1986; Ninio & Bruner 1978; Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976) to describe the type of interaction that occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1933/1977; see also, Leong, Bodrova, Hensen, & Henninger, 1999). It has its roots in theory developed by Lev Vygotsky. Scaffolding means that the teacher, another adult, or classmate provides temporary support for the learner(s). Scaffolding can be compared with learning to ride a bike. Various authors (e.g., Cooper, 1997; Dorn, 2003, etc.) have viewed scaffolding as anaologous to learning new motor skills, such as bike riding. The new bike rider is held and pushed by a helper through the motor activity of getting on and pedaling and being steadied while making multiple attempts until balance and control is achieved. Feedback from self and others is ongoing. This support, or scaffolding, is needed as the child is learning to ride the bike, but as the child is able to maintain his balance, the scaffolding is taken away (Au, Mason &
Cooper (1997) states that the learner knows what riding a bike looks like; but as he makes his first attempts or approximations, they are not perfect or exact. Just as with the assisted bike ride, the child receives feedback from himself and others each time he attempts to ride the bike. Each approximation allows him to test his ideas and hypotheses about bike riding. As children test these ideas, their mistakes are very important and essential to learning (Cambourne, 1988). Gradually, the child’s attempts become closer and closer to skillful bike riding. In more formal settings, learning follows a similar pattern—learners go through various approximations as they strive to develop their knowledge of new concepts (Cooper, 1997). In each case, the device or person(s) helps learners do what they cannot yet do independently. Often, scaffolding takes the form of collaborative effort and accomplishment. Success through working together starts learners on their way to being able to do the activity independently. When adults “scaffold” student’s learning by helping them do what they cannot yet do alone (Bruner, 1975, as cited in Ninio & Bruner, 1978, p.1-15), we are modeling the processes involved and enabling the learners to become a little more competent each time to eventually carry out the processes themselves.

Bruner (1978) created a concept of scaffolding based on his readings of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development. His use of the term scaffolding seemingly describes what mothers often do to enable and make more manageable children’s learning of language: The mother’s support includes helping the child focus his or her attention to pertinent aspects of the task and modeling her expectations of the child (Bruner, 1978; Stewart, 2002). The teacher brings the student to new levels of skill and understanding by breaking up a task into smaller and more comprehensible steps. Some steps are more complex than others and require more support (intellectually and emotionally). The teacher’s task is to determine students’ current levels of knowledge and skill, and then develop activities that guide these students to higher levels of
practice. Just as mothers extend the range of contexts and serve as “communicative ratchets” for their children helping them to avoid sliding backwards once they have made forward steps teachers must use this skill in the classroom (Bruner, 1978; Stewart, 2002). Teachers must assume this role in the classroom and become the communicative ratchets helping children build and maintain literacy competencies. The desired outcome is for students to need less and less support to complete a task successfully; therefore, the teacher gradually provides less support until it has been removed totally. The student should ultimately perform the task independently, internalize the rules governing the task, and re-create it alone. To extend the student’s learning, the teacher may then create a new level of difficulty, or move the student into a new area of challenge.

Zone of Proximal Development vs. Zone of Actual Development

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) further describe scaffolding as a support system that helps children achieve success on tasks that would be too difficult for them to achieve by themselves. Typically classroom teachers ask themselves how they can help young children—especially those low performing children in their own rooms—acquire new learning and accelerate at faster rates. Many researchers feel that the strategies that will best accomplish this are ones that support learning within the child’s zone of proximal development (Bruner, 1983; Cambourne, 1988; Clay, 1998; Cooper, 1997; DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991). Often we in education have focused our attention on the child’s actual development as indicated by particular assessments. We have placed our faith in a particular method or program—usually expecting the child to conform to the program rather than observing the child and developing strategies, methods, and experiences that build upon the child’s competencies. From the constructivist perspective, new learning does not occur at the actual level of development, but rather it occurs
in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978; see also, Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). Support is given and then gradually taken away as the child demonstrates ownership of new learning allowing the child to move on to increasingly higher levels of cognitive functioning (Clay, 1998, 2003; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Stewart, 2002). Researchers (e.g., Bruner, Wood, & Ross, 1976; Piaget, 1955, 1977; Vygotsky, 1938/1978;) believe that new learning and knowledge are built upon and extended from the actual knowledge and understandings of a child.

Scaffolding is a temporary support that teachers create to help extend current skills and knowledge to a higher level of competence (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). The skillful use of observation and the teacher’s knowledge of the child enable the teacher to design and employ the appropriate dialogue, experiences, strategies, and/or models that will scaffold children as they construct their understanding of the concepts that will extend their knowledge to more advanced levels. Scaffolding a child does not mean simplifying the task or concept during the learning experience or event; but, rather, the task or concept remains constant, and the teacher provides varying degrees of support according to how well the child is doing on the task or with the new learning (Dorn & Soffus, 2001). Teachers must use their knowledge of the child and the task to scaffold the child in ways that will allow her/him to create some degree of understanding in order to develop independence. Teachers need to observe their students, become aware of their individual strengths, and use these strengths to support the new learning within the student’s ZPD and make adjustments as necessary (Clay, 1998, 2001; Dorn & Soffus, 2001; Lyons, 2003).

The ultimate goal of scaffolding is to develop an independent, self-regulated learner. This is accomplished by fading the support, or relinquishing the control and assistance provided by the more knowledgeable person as the child begins to achieve more independence and
knowledge. To accomplish this, the more knowledgeable person must permit the child to deal with questions and problems and regulate the joint activity, intervening only when the child is not able to manage effective problem solving. Successfully orchestrating this feat allows the teacher, as well as the child, to share a reciprocal learning position. During this mode, each is responsible for making decisions and determining joint activities. As soon as the teacher and child achieve this mode, the teacher establishes an active withdrawal in response to active takeover by the child, which is crucial for the development of self-regulation by the learner (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003).

Self-regulation is key to the child’s learning and mastery over his own behavior. Self-regulation and independence are also the desired outcome or goal for scaffolding. The key issue at this point is the teacher’s developing awareness through skillful observation and reflection of the child’s level of competence. If the teacher continues to influence the child’s behavior through explicit commands and providing immediate answers to momentary problems, then the child will remain dependent upon the support of the more knowledgeable person (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003;). When teachers, parents, and peers provide the support for the child’s task behavior by asking questions that allow the child to participate in the discovery of solutions, learning and self-regulation are optimized (Diaz, Neal, & Amaya-Williams, 1990; Gonzales, 1994, in Berk & Winsler, 1995; Roberts & Barnes, 1992). It is crucial for the child’s developing independence that the teacher begin to withdraw support until none is needed.

**Brain**

The research on brain development reveals that language is the vehicle through which understanding and meaning are constructed as the brain builds concepts (Pinker, 1994, 1997).
The research on brain development also reveals that the earlier and more often both hemispheres are activated by use, the more dendrite connections are formed; ultimately the more connections made, the faster the processing and the more quickly the individual is able to build and extend understanding (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Lyons, 2003).

Conversation

As the adult and the child collaborate during the learning process, a special aspect of this scaffolding process is the social interaction and environment that are necessary components of the scaffold or support system. It is this collaboration that allows the child to move forward and continue to build and extend competencies and concepts (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In education today, the assistance provided the child oftentimes comes from a teacher or instructional assistant, but it is also possible that the assistance may come from a peer. The interaction and conversation between individuals has been shown to foster general cognitive growth and increase children’s ability, understanding, and performance on a variety of tasks (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The child’s engagement with the topic or activity and the discussion with the more knowledgeable person have been demonstrated to be the “key” that truly fosters and extends the growth of higher levels of learning of new concepts (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Lyons, 2003). A child cannot engage in a conversation or discussion with a television program—there is no give and take or exchange of ideas—thus a child’s cognitive growth cannot be extended as it can be when there is the exchange of ideas and support for understanding that occurs within a conversation (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Lyons, 2003).
Research Investigating Scaffolding

Researchers studying language (e.g., Cazden, 1988; Halliday, 1975) and early literacy development (e.g., Clay, 1975, 1979; Teale & Sulzby, 1986) have found that early childhood experiences such as hearing and sharing stories, dramatizing and observing stories, painting and coloring, writing and reading stories, retelling and listening to stories and the conversations surrounding these acts play an important role in helping children learn to read and write. Research also shows that the sooner children learn to coordinate the left-to-right movement of their eyes to follow the words on a page while listening to stories and attempt to write their names (which is also a controlled sequence of actions), the earlier they will learn to read and write (Lyons, 2003). Recent research (e.g. Loyd, Kameanui, & Chard, 1997; Lyons, 2003; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994, 1995; Stewart, 2002) supports several earlier theories regarding the importance of language and learning. While language is critical to nurturing and human survival, it also provides the means for individuals to carry out five fundamental, compelling human urges: to show and receive love, to connect with others, to be emotionally secure, to understand the world and the people in it, and to reveal needs and desires (Lyons, 2003). Language is much more than the ability to express oneself with words—it includes any means of expressing or communicating to another through gestures, signs, and sounds. An infant knows things about language (a sound system, gestures) long before she/he is able to speak a word. By the age of six months, an infant creates a permanent record of her/his native language in her/his brain that lasts a lifetime (Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 1999 in Lyon, 2003). It has been demonstrated in numerous research studies that language is critical to cognitive, social, and emotional development (Greenspan, 1997; Levine, 2002; LeDoux, 1996). Language plays a critical role in learning and teaching and is closely related to thought processes. Studies demonstrate that even
before infants are beginning to talk, they become skilled at using eye contact, facial expressions and nonverbal gestures to communicate (Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 1999, in Lyon, 2003, p. 10). Infants demonstrate that speech and gesturing are closely related—they produce gestures along with their speech. This coherence is possible because, before infants are able to communicate, gesture and speech are part of a single idea. In fact, gesture plays a critical role in communication. Studies document that expression precedes the intended message, with most information channeled into speech and some information channeled into gesture (Lyon, 2003). Ratey (2001) finds that gesture also plays a critical role in communication. He finds that even deaf children untrained in sign language could employ gestures to problem solve and arrive at an answer to a problem. As young children develop a functional sense of objects and learn how to categorize and label them, they begin to “construct” the needed cognitive ability to carry on interactions with others. These purposeful interactions based in everyday activities facilitate the child’s conceptual understandings and will ultimately facilitate the child’s extensions of additional understanding and knowledge (Lyons, 2003).

Language is the primary means of communication with others and it is the means through which we represent our experiences. Even before birth the basics of language are “hardwired” into the brains of infants. The sounds newborns hear, especially those in their native language, allow the brain to construct auditory maps out of the smallest units of sounds in a language (Lyons, 2003; Pinker, 1994). It is the primary avenue of communication with others and the means through which we represent our experiences. It is learned and practiced by young children by participating in purposeful activities organized by parents and other members of their cultural communities. It is practiced through social activities and interactions with others. As children engage in conversations with others, especially others who are more knowledgeable than they,
they practice and play with the structure and semantics of language. They learn the conventions of conversations—listening, taking turns, imitating adult sounds and actions, etc. Conversations also set up the means for interactions between the minds of individuals letting each other know what the other is thinking. But even more important, conversations facilitate communication between individuals and are fundamental to social interaction (Lyons, 2003).

Conversation

The findings of many of these language and cognitive studies have strong implications for teachers and the methods used for scaffolding and supporting young children in our classrooms. Researchers Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl (1999) found that adults working with young children could extend and broaden their knowledge beyond their present understanding. The teacher, by supporting and reinforcing what the child knows and following with additional new information, is able to establish a broader context in which to create additional meaning. This is possible because speech and language help us to define our world and our thinking, and because more open-ended conversations tied to an action may strongly facilitate language acquisition and creative thought processes (Lyon, 2003). The process used by children to integrate their experiences into a growing understanding of their world is how they learn to use language to convey specific meanings. Conversations between the teacher and the child about the activity provide the opportunity for the child to experiment with his thoughts and validate his thinking regarding the task or activity. It is through conversations with others that vocabulary is built. In fact, research has shown that the size of a toddler’s vocabulary is directly related to how much parents talk to him (Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 1999). Most cognitive research has shown that language and new concepts must be used naturally in conversation at least five to six times in order to internalize the concept or the idea—and ultimately make it speaker’s own (Beck,
McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Dickinson & Tabors 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995; Pinker 1996). The critical factor in developing vocabulary is how many times the child hears different words and the complexity of sentence structure. Parents who use more complex sentences with their small children are more likely to have children with larger vocabularies. But an even more significant finding was that only face-to-face conversations, not television, facilitate children’s language and vocabulary development—children cannot have a two-way conversation with people on a television set! Children learn to use language in relation to talking with others about ongoing events (Lyons, 2003). Vygotsky (1978) theorized that language is the major bridge between human beings’ social and mental worlds and the most significant milestone in children’s cognitive development. He viewed language as the vehicle to integrate knowledge and facilitate thought, as the primary avenue to communicate with others, and as the means through which children learn to communicate thoughts, represent their ideas in words, and share their experiences. Bruner’s (1983) studies of language learning revealed that as infants construct meaning, they use each new experience to think how to reorder and expand their knowledge.

Luria (1969) found that language was the source of thought. As children gain the ability to master language they also acquire the potential ability to organize their perceptions and their memory. They also acquire the ability to master more complex forms of reflection on ideas and objects in the external world as well as the ability to draw conclusions from their observations, to make decisions, and to extend their ability to think (Luria, 1969). For young children feedback is tied to a specific action, so they begin to learn how to use language to analyze, generalize, and represent experience—and as such, language is an early self-extending system that confirms and supports new learning for the child—a means of scaffolding children as they extend their knowledge (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Pinker, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978).
Research has shown that scaffolding techniques consistently predict increased learning and positive outcomes in children. Berk and Winsler (1995) describe a common method that researchers use to study the effects of scaffolding upon children’s learning: (1) observe a more knowledgeable person-child pair working together on a problem-solving task, (2) classify teaching behaviors and child responses that occur during the collaborative session, (3) observe the child completing the same (or a similar) task independently, (4) note the child’s task performance and behavior, and (5) examine which components of scaffolding are associated with either positive or negative child behavior and/or performance. Diaz, Neal, & Vachio (1991) found that a child’s independence and self-regulation are obtained when her/his competent performance is affirmed, and tutorial relinquishing of control by the tutor is associated with a child’s task engagement and autonomy. Roberts and Barnes (1992) found in their research that the best predictor of young children’s scores on standardized measures of intelligence was tutor-distancing strategies/relinquishing of control and scaffolding. The systematic and deliberate fading of scaffolding strategies by the teacher gives the child multiple opportunities to utilize their own strategies and skills. As the child experiences successful implementation of his newly learned strategies and skills they are validated and reinforced. Their study also found that directive and commanding tutorial utterances produced a negative reinforcement of child’s task performance. However, use of problem solving questions and verbalizations that gave the child opportunities to think and speak about the task had a positive effect on the child’s learning (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Likewise, children whose tutors stepped back and allowed the child to touch the materials and manipulatives and subsequently only intervened when absolutely necessary also had higher performance scores. Children begin to make decisions regarding this success and begin to self-validate their own success with tasks. A study by McCarthy (1992) showed that
children learned and performed best at spatial construction tasks when the prior teaching by their tutor included two tasks: (1) “chunking,” or dividing the task into smaller, more manageable pieces, and (2) sensitive withdrawal, or reducing assistance when the child no longer requires it. In addition to fostering learning, scaffolding can encourage the development of self-regulation; that is, in addition to acquiring additional knowledge when others scaffold their tasks and activities, children learn how to direct their own learning and behavior. A major means of accomplishing this level of learning through scaffolding is by prompting children to use private or self-directed speech to guide themselves as they problem solve or work on a task (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Instructional Scaffolding

Students in classrooms must work with language—either written or oral—to explore and construct meaning. Teachers facilitate and support this acquisition of language through instructional scaffolding. One of the most important means of supporting young children as they acquire reading and writing skills is through conversation. Conversation helps children learn how to attend to various aspects of the task, guide their behavior during the act, and manage their actions—all necessary prerequisite abilities to learning. Effective teachers are aware of the power of the social and emotional dimensions of learning. They are cognizant of the power of the conversation held with a child and its potential for extending the child’s knowledge. Lyons (2003) research substantiates earlier research by Cole (1998) that noted that the social and emotional aspects of learning have a powerful effect on students’ ability to learn how to read and write, especially those who are struggling. The importance of language, especially the teacher’s instructional language, in shaping the child’s learning through guided participation will be examined and described in this review.
A significant, unique feature of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory is that a social perspective seems to pervade even those instances in which children and adults appear to be involved in private cognitive activity, such as reading a book alone in a room, drawing a picture, etc. And though all higher-level mental functions are initially created through collaborative activity, later they become internalized. This transfer in the cognitive process from the social level to the individual level occurs because of our use of mental tools. Vygotsky believed that speech as the “tool of the mind” was an outgrowth of the primary communicative function of language (Berk & Winsler, 1995). This ability to “think out loud” and carry on a conversation within the mind appears to be an ability that is developed as the child acquires increasingly higher cognitive abilities, but it is an ability necessary for problem solving and higher level thinking strategies.

Instruction of some sort has long existed. Whether it was one caveman demonstrating to another the art of lance throwing or constructing a campfire, the concept of one person’s teaching another to do something was there. In the times of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, instruction often was accomplished through a series of conversations and dialogue—a seemingly “honored” method that has been passed down into the present decade. For centuries many teachers assumed that if they presented information, either by lecture or a combination of lecture and notes, that they had “taught” the students in their charge the material to be delivered to or imparted to them.

In the context of education and of scaffolding, a major goal is to keep children working on tasks in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). To achieve this goal, teachers structure the task and the surrounding environment so that demands on the child are at any given time within an appropriately challenging level and constantly adjust the amount of adult intervention to the child’s current needs and abilities.
Teachers have always played a critical role in guiding students’ learning; but whenever students become too dependent on their teachers, they lose their autonomy. Vacca (1996) asserts that when students become too dependent upon their teachers rather than their own minds, they are rarely in a strategic position to learn how to learn or to keep their minds alive. Teachers must support a child until the child can self-regulate. It is imperative that the teacher fades support as soon as the child assumes responsibility for the task. Often when this support is not faded as soon as the child has been observed to be capable of performing a task himself/herself, the child will continue to allow the teacher to provide the scaffolding even though it is no longer needed. The ultimate goal must always be to provide support until the child can perform the task independently. If the child is constantly looking at the teacher to confirm whether or not his attempts are satisfactory, he can not achieve independence.

An area of curriculum planning all too often neglected by teachers as they design instruction deals with showing/demonstrating/modeling to students how to learn with texts. Throughout the past century teachers have routinely assigned reading passages in textbooks—the proverbial “read the chapter and answer the questions at the end” assignments. Vacca (1996) stated that reading engages the mind in thinking, offering a very powerful means of putting language to use purposefully, whether it be to learn, to imagine, or simply to enjoy! Each of us must learn to use language to teach and to learn whether written or spoken. Effective teachers are sensitive, reflective, and deliberate in their inquiry regarding teaching. Allington (2001) and Vacca (1994) both assert that there is much more to being an effective teacher than knowledge of content. Eisner (1985) states that teaching, like any other profession, may be done either well or poorly. However, when it is done with sensitive, intelligent, and creative deliberation, it should
be regarded as purposeful action providing examples of humans exercising the highest levels of their intelligence.

Learning how to employ language, whether it is oral or written text, is one of the first dilemmas teachers face daily as they reflect on teaching, learning, and curriculum (Vacca, 1994). During the past decade teachers began to move from viewing learning from text to learning with text in their classrooms (Tierney & Person, 1992). This subtle shift in thought involves a change in paradigms, suggesting that readers are an active, integral part of this learning process through interaction with the texts as they construct meaning and knowledge. But this change has come with a price. Teachers have been forced to consider and explore instructional alternatives that move beyond “assign and present.”

Vacca (1994) and Allington (2001) both propose that, as educators, we must learn to understand the relationships that exist between language, literacy, and learning and building knowledge. Effective teachers find that focusing on identifying the one right method or set of materials that works for all children has not been as productive as acquiring the knowledge and skills to make sound judgments and creating environments that scaffold student learning and maximize children’s opportunities to acquire new and more advanced learning. Optimal learning contexts must develop in classrooms to support and scaffold children as they build their knowledge for the future. Rogoff (1990; Rogoff, Moser, et al., 1993, as cited in Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 20 ) found the type of social experience that seems more effective in stimulating children’s cognitive growth was guided participation. For Wood, Bruner, Ross (1976), as cited in Berk & Winsler (1995), scaffolding connotes a support system for children’s efforts that is sensitively attuned their individual needs. The importance of the more knowledgeable teacher comes into play in the classroom as she/he adjusts the communication she/he provides to the
child’s momentary competence while offering the necessary assistance for mastery and prompting children to take more responsibility for the task as their skill increases.

Unique circumstances are created as the teacher and child interact during the supported task; both tutor and child interact in the reciprocal role of learner and teacher. As the teacher observes the child’s behavior during his interaction with the task, and makes decisions about the verbal prompts and supportive moves, the teacher is often transfixed into the learner. His decisions and actions are guided by the words and actions of the child. Edwards (1993) found the role of the teacher to be seen as “provoking occasions of discovery through a kind of alert, inspired facilitation and stimulation of children’s dialogue, co-action, and co-construction of knowledge (p. 154).” Due to the social processes involved in intellectual discovery, the tutor functions as a facilitator who assists the child in learning to listen to others, to take into account their goals and ideas, and to communicate successfully with others. Effective teachers must develop the ability to skillfully observe the child, reflect on her/his interactions with the task, and skillfully respond to the child.

We [teachers] must be able to catch the ball that the child throws back to them, and toss it back to the child in such a way that it makes the child want to continue the game with them, developing, perhaps, other games and possibilities as we go along. (Flippini, 1990, p. 153).

The findings of recent research studies hold significant promise for classroom implications. Effective educators must begin to look upon education and classroom interactions in a new way—not in terms of the transmission of knowledge but in terms of the “transaction and transformation” (Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993, p 65). The reciprocity that is established between the teacher and learner is an effective model for reflective teaching. In reciprocal
teaching a teacher and children form a learning group in which the leading of discussions is shared by taking turns and is aimed at helping the children understand and learn from the task at hand (Beck & Winsler 1995; Dorn, French & Jones 1998; Lyons 2003; Stewart 2002;)

Reciprocal teaching is a method of instruction originally designed to improve reading comprehension among older elementary school children (Palinscar & Brown, 1984, p. 120). It has since been extended to younger children (Beck & Winsler 1995, p.118). The teacher’s role becomes one of scaffolding the child’s involvement in the discussion in ways that eventually lead to full participation in the dialogue as well as mastery of the task at hand. Children will begin to actively engage in conversations and initiate problem solving techniques.

Within the institution of schools and in individual classrooms within that institution, the use of scaffolding as a means of supporting learning in most instances is dependant upon the individual philosophy of the classroom teacher or the individual responsible for the design of the curriculum. Teachers who have found that scaffolding allows them to provide the support needed by their students to learn and become independent problem solvers have experienced the difference this learning model makes in their students learning. Programs grounded in the theories of Vygotsky and constructivism, such as Reading Recovery®, have piqued the interest of reflective teachers who have begun to study the theories and effective practices associated with successful literacy programs. Reading Recovery®, an early intervention program for first graders, is based on the premise that intervention is the key to preventing reading failures. Many teachers strongly feel that a child should not have to fail to receive the support he needs to problem solve independently and successfully at academic tasks. Dorn, French, & Jones (1998) assert that they saw children who were destined for special education services or long-term remediation programs become self-regulated learners after a program of intensive tutoring. They
also maintain that teachers cannot design a program for low-achieving children based on a deficit model of learning. Programs geared to remediate a child’s weakness, such as Title I, are destined to fail (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998, p. 14). These programs focus on the strategies and skills a child lacks as a basis for their instruction.

Many effective teachers have begun to examine the programs they have in place and have chosen instead to identify the knowledge, skills, and strategies their students bring to the learning task and to create learning opportunities and experiences that use these strengths as the means and vehicle to acquire new knowledge. Dorn, et al., (1998), and Lyons (2003) also understand the importance of language, especially the teacher’s instructional language, in shaping the child’s learning through guided participation. Along with many of their peers, they have come to recognize the role of modeling, coaching, and scaffolding children in their learning “zones.” These teacher-researchers develop strong beliefs about the instructional curriculum in classrooms. They advocate that teachers plan instructional interactions that promote the flexible transfer of knowledge and strategies across a wide range of literacy events. They also propose that the goal of instruction is to create self-regulated learners who possess the capacity and ability to guide, monitor, and evaluate their own learning.

Many classroom teachers have come to the realization that instruction, grounded in the theories embracing constructivism and scaffolding, seems to be meeting the instructional needs of students they had previously been unable to reach. The studying, reflection, and understanding these teachers were developing enabled them arrive at a new understanding of the complexity of the learning process and the role of the teacher in promoting young children’s literacy development (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998). They maintain that even today, many teachers (and others—administrators, politicians and the public) continue to look for the quick fix—the
packaged program that promises to “cure” the problems of the struggling readers and writers in classrooms everywhere—thus continuing to perpetuate the problems within classrooms by focusing on various treatments before determining the cause and determining the appropriate intervention. As a result, the same children continue to be designated for extra help each year. Designing programs for low-achieving children based upon remediating their weaknesses is destined for producing less-than-satisfactory results. Many special programs have focused for years on the skills and concepts that the students serviced by these programs did not know; the statistics and results of their program have produced less than stellar results. Many teachers have begun to reflect upon their teaching and have begun to read, study, and form discussion groups with their peers. Through study, reflection, and discussion, many teachers have arrived at an understanding or decision that an apprenticeship approach, which uses the four tenets of modeling, coaching, scaffolding, and fading, is the course best for the children in their classroom. This is especially significant because an apprenticeship approach is one that emphasizes learning and changes in both student and teacher learning. The implications from this apprenticeship model of learning are both clear and significant—teacher and child establish a reciprocal relationship—at times exchanging roles. Teachers have found that scaffolding does not require special programs or materials, but rather, the strategic use of observation, language, modeling, and explicit teaching. As the teacher or the more knowledgeable person reflects and modifies their support for the child based upon the child’s responses and actions as they interact with the task, the teacher becomes the learner—who is being taught by the child (Dixon-Krauss 1996; Dorn, French, & Jones 1998; Dorn & Soffus 2001; Lyons 2003; Stewart 2002;). From a constructivist perspective, language provides the vehicle or means that shapes this higher-level understanding for both the teacher and the child.
Research indicates that if children do not become successful readers and writers by the end of third grade, it is very difficult for them to catch up with their peers—in fact, they continue to fall further and further behind. Clay (1993) has stated that inappropriate reading behaviors or habituated confusions can be a real impediment to higher levels of understandings. Juel (1988, p. 440) found that the probability that a child who is a poor reader in the first grade will remain a poor reader at the end of the fourth grade is 88%. Further research by Barr and Parrett (1995) substantiates Juel’s findings. They stress that all children need to learn to read and write successfully before the end of third grade. These studies further support the role of the classroom teacher as the critical factor in ensuring the success of struggling readers. Snow’s (1991) research documented the relationship between high-quality classroom instruction and the success of at-risk students. The results of numerous research studies and reflective teaching studies have documented that simply immersing children in literacy-rich environments is not enough to successfully offset the difficulties of struggling readers. The most powerful tool for struggling readers is a teacher who is knowledgeable about the literacy process and is capable of constructing and providing students with supportive reading and writing opportunities that will guide them to independent, self-regulated literacy.

Research studies and reflective dialogue between professionals have led many classroom teachers to believe that literacy can no longer be regarded as simply a cognitive skill that can be learned but one that is viewed as a complex interactive and interpretative process whose development is determined by social and cultural context (e.g., Berk & Winsler, 1995; Clay, 1998; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Stewart, 2002). As the more knowledgeable person and the child engage in interactive oral discussions about ideas, concepts, or written language, they acquire important tools for the mind (Bodrova & Leong,
1996). It is here that the role of the teacher becomes the keystone of the model. During these literacy events the more knowledgeable person carefully monitors the child’s interpretation of the situation and provides timely support that enables the child to achieve increasingly higher levels of understanding. These beliefs and understandings are based upon Vygotsky’s (1978) theories. Cognitive development and social interaction are perceived as complimentary processes that work together to promote the child’s intellectual development and growth. An influential force in the child’s learning is the teaching that occurs around the literacy event. From the Vygotskian point of view, mental development, teaching, and learning share reciprocal relationships that cannot be discussed separately (Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

The findings and implications for classroom teachers teaching for higher-level literacy development in young children are quite clear. Teachers must:

1. Reflectively and meticulously observe the children in the process of learning.
2. Plan and construct instructional interactions that engage children in using their own personal knowledge and understandings as the basis for the acquisition of new learning.
3. Observe and note children’s progress in new literacy tasks, being prepared to make spontaneous adjustments in their levels of support to ensure that the child continues to experience success and attain higher levels of learning.
4. Utilize their observations of the child’s learning to evaluate and plan new instructional interactions that validate the child’s knowns and engage and activate him in new learning. (Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Stewart, 2002).
In scaffolding and supporting the child, it is imperative that the teacher makes use of the complementary actions of validation and activation to extend the child’s learning to a higher level of cognitive development and learning (Lyons, 2003, p. 144). Brain research has shown the importance of connecting individual sources of knowledge to a large network of information (Pinker, 1994). Initially, the child needs the validation of the more knowledgeable person that his approximations are on or near target. As young children use something they know to build upon and extend knowledge to learn something new, they begin to discover that their knowledge can be generalized. Young children, especially young children “at-risk” for learning difficulties, many times have not realized that what they already know can be put to use in new learning situations. Quite often they view each new learning situation as a totally new experience. Effective teachers support the young child in such a unique way that it appears that the child is actually in charge; all the while, the teacher is structuring the literacy events in such a manner as to support informative dialogues that emphasize the constructive and generative nature of the child’s learning.

During the literacy events, the social cognitive nature of learning employs language to communicate a meaningful message to other individuals. The more knowledgeable person in an apprenticeship setting models the significance of oral and written language as an important tool for communication. If effective teaching and learning are to exist, it is imperative during this event that the teacher have a through understanding of what the children know in order to guide them from behind toward higher levels of learning. During discussions the teacher must observe and listen to the child carefully so that she/he is prepared to make systematic and spontaneous adjustments to her/his contributions that reflect the child’s current ability. Language is a powerful tool with which the teacher and child negotiate and regulate responsibility for
interacting and completing the problem solving within the task. As the teacher and the child negotiate the dialogue, the balance of control shifts between them as they use language to arrive at a solution to the problem (Clay 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones 1998; Lyons 2003; Stewart 2002).

The work of Rogoff (1990) supports these understandings and further emphasizes the importance of language and social interaction for stimulating children’s cognitive growth through guided participation in planned, structured literacy events. Rogoff (1990) views children as apprentices in learning who acquire a diverse collection of skills and knowledge under the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable person. A crucial learning situation for the teacher occurs, because the teacher must acquire the skills necessary to give just the appropriate amount of support at the proper moment. Initially the teacher must assume responsibility for structuring the learning task and orchestrating the interaction. As the child acquires higher-level understanding, if independent self-regulation is to occur, there must be a shift or transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the child. Another important principle provided by the teacher is the assurance that the child will be successful in his risk-taking, eliminating any negative or competitive aspects of the learning situation. In order to achieve this aspect, the teacher must analyze the child’s level of independent functioning on the new task, discover his intentions for solving the task, and ultimately support the child with appropriate language or prompts. It is critical that the teacher fade her/his support as soon as the child is able to independently take responsibility for her/his own learning on a task. The critical but essential aspect of scaffolding is the adult’s ability to determine the child’s level of competence and then provide the appropriate instructional strategies and prompts that will support the critical shift in engagement and
understanding and will move the child to the next level of understanding and cognitive functioning (Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003; Stewart 2002).

The role of the effective teacher in assisting children to acquire higher-level cognitive skills cannot be overstated. Observant, effective teachers collect significant data for making informed decisions that facilitate keeping children working at the “cutting edge” of their development. Because new learning is both generative and recursive for the learner, the teacher must adjust his support with seemingly effortless spontaneity to follow the child and support him in the zone as he responds to the task or event. Chang-Wells (1992) maintains that instructional interactions must be based on the child’s current ability and the adult’s pedagogical intentions and knowledge. The teacher must use this knowledge of his craft and of the child to modify, at a moment’s notice, the level of instructional support being provided to the child, based on the child’s feedback. This suggests that clear models and guided participation are critical elements of successful interaction that have the potential for supporting and moving the child forward to higher levels of cognitive knowledge and new learning. Vygotsky (1978) maintains that instruction is a major and most necessary contributor to children’s growing consciousness and the regulation of their own cognitive processes. As the child participates and engages in literacy conversations with a more knowledgeable person, basic cognitive processes are changed and transformed into higher-level intellectual functions. Vygotsky (1978) further states that each intellectual function must appear two times: first on a social, external plane between two or more people and next on a personal, internal plane within the child. Many researchers and theorists have asserted that the child must use and interact with the new language and concept at least four, five, or six times before it has been internalized and becomes theirs (e.g., Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003). The importance for education is the emphasis on the
interaction between the teacher and the child as integral to independent problem-solving. Children move from other-regulatory to self-regulatory behaviors through interactions with individuals in their environment. The language needed to guide the child toward self-regulation of his own thinking demonstrates its importance in the scheme of instruction. The end point of teaching is a self-regulated learner who exhibits the potential to use his or her knowledge for varied purposes and in different situations (Diaz et al., 1990, p. 130; Luria 1973, p. 45).

Much of the research conducted during the last 10 years has focused on very narrow aspects of scaffolding. It has looked primarily at specific methods used to support or scaffold children (e.g. shared reading, guided reading, etc.) or at language acquisition and its support of new learning in children from birth to four or five years of age. Few researchers or teacher researchers have looked at the language used during the employment of specific supportive models. It seems that insights from conversations during classroom interactions would be significant and quite revealing. This would indicate a significant need to examine the language used by teachers as they support or scaffold the learning of young children within the classroom settings of elementary schools. The implications of the reciprocity of instruction and learning for both the teacher and the learner during the employment of scaffolding also pose important issues for further thought and study. Exploring the language used between teacher and child as they dialogue during learning experiences is worthy of further study. Many individuals support the theory that language is the means through which new concepts and learning are “constructed” within the mind. This may indicate the importance of the selection of words by the teacher during the learning experiences.

To become effective, efficient problem solvers, children must not just learn solely how to attend to and process the information contained in the print (letters, spaces, and words) on the
page, but they must also learn to comprehend the meaning in those abstract print symbols used to form words, which is in itself an individual constructive process. The information inside the text, the linguistic structures must be combined with the information the reader already possesses which is outside the text. The information within the mind of the reader is derived from prior experiences. It is the child’s constructive cognitive processes that combine the information in the text with the information outside of the text within the reader’s mind that a complete and adequate representation of the author’s meaning is formed (Spiro et. al., 1995). Therefore the focus of instruction should be on concept development that is generative in nature rather than on discrete skills.

Social Context of Scaffolding

The social context of the school classroom provides a setting for the culture of the classroom community and the internalization of curriculum concepts. This social context has a direct affect upon the scaffolding that is used within the classroom to support student learning.

Allington (1996), stated that it is the “children who have difficulty learning to read and write alongside their peers that are most often at risk in our schools” (p. 18). Allington also maintains that children who do not experience early school success too often experience no success at all.

Learning has been defined as the ability to read and write (Cooper 1993, p. 6). Smith (1988) proposes that learning is primarily a social rather than an individual accomplishment—one that is not so much learned from conscious emulation as by “joining the club” of people we see ourselves as being like. Smith extends this idea further by stating that one of the most important communities any individual can join is the “literacy club,” because membership ensures that individuals learn how to read and write, and because reading is the entrance to many
other clubs. This would seem to echo the theories and beliefs of Vygotsky, who embraced the theory that learning, and particularly the learning of language, was accomplished in a social context.

In some cultures, the measures of literacy might be the ability to read animal tracks. Various cultural groups require various forms of literacy. Being considered literate by a social group requires one to perform reading and writing skills in ways that are acceptable to that group. For centuries Western European-based cultures have recorded messages with pencils, pens, and print. However, for the child living in the cosmopolitan global cities of the 21st century, writing and reading will be accomplished using a machine (computer) that displays characters that are input by typing or by speaking to the machine. Today, there is hardly a service in the world that does not rely on a computer for some aspect of its operation (Casey, 1997). Wells (1986) states that being fully literate is possessing the ability and disposition to engage appropriately with texts of various types in order to empower action, feeling, and thinking in the context of purposeful social activity. Smith (1988) says that we learn to read by reading and to write by writing—this can be expanded to include writing with the tools of the society we live in—the computer.

Young children freely learn their own spoken language during the earliest stages of their life. A more knowledgeable person, helping (supporting or scaffolding) them to identify and clarify the conventions of print, is necessary to help them to depend on meaning and the larger structures of language. In the contexts of learning, there is a place for planned instruction, but such instruction will support and not supplant the learning system of each learner, and will express itself in respect and trust for the many ways in which children acquire the tasks they wish to master (Holdaway 1979). Young children learn to listen, speak, write, read, and think by
having real opportunities to do these things in natural contexts. Literacy develops as children interact in real-life settings for real-life activities in order to “get things done.” Children develop literacy as they encounter many authentic or real literacy experiences.

Young children learn written language through active engagement with their world and the individuals they encounter. It is this social interaction with adults and peers in writing and reading contexts that provides them opportunities to manipulate and explore language especially print on their own. Young children benefit from modeling of literacy situations by more knowledgeable adults, especially their parents (Teale, 1986). When this does not occur, there is a significant problem. Young children who have difficulty with early written language are placed in situations they are unprepared to manage. Young children typically need at a minimum 1500 hours of “lapreading” to meet the needs they will encounter when they enter the formal education setting as a kindergartener (Manz 2001). Typically in today’s society, children entering most public school classrooms in kindergarten come to these settings with an average of 350 hours of “lapreading” (Manz 2001). What happens to young children who have difficulty with early written language? Helping these young children overcome these difficulties is the most glaring responsibility and challenge of the school and the community in which they are members. Educators must seek alternative ways to help these children achieve early literacy success.

The traditional school paradigm of teachers transmitting knowledge to students is no longer effective for today’s changing society (Branson, 1990). Schools have changed little over the past 100 years, but in the last decade the classroom has seen a shift to teachers as facilitators in the learning process. The shift has been aided by the use of technology and educational software that is child-centered and gives the student control over his or her learning (Salavert,
Technology in the classroom is changing the nature of literacy. The use of electronic text in reading and writing is not the same as the traditional reading and writing on paper (Reinking, 1992).

Recent developments in technology make it possible to integrate images, sounds, and text in multimedia computer environments that also provide tools for transforming these various symbol systems. Being able to ‘read’ and ‘write’ with a variety of media in an integrated workspace can help children ground their literacy and learning in familiar contexts (Daiute, 1992).

The reciprocal nature of reading and writing allows the young child to shift back and forth naturally between the two literacy processes. The support and scaffolding of the teacher through language and modeling provide the child with the support needed to extend his knowledge to increasingly higher levels of literacy.

Our children are part of an environment that contains a plethora of visual and aural stimuli. These images and sounds are meaningful and provide them with cultural, social, and emotional information in configurations that are quite accessible. As children move through school activities their work is often limited to the use of one medium—text. They are expected “to learn how to carry out the functions of images, sounds, conversations, and performances with written words (Daiute, 1992).” Many children are able to shift from early childhood reading and writing in the context of drawing to reading and writing that stands on its own quite effortlessly. Others continue to have difficulty using written language to express their ideas or to learn about other people’s ideas. Children whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from those of school seem to be the children who have the most trouble with this shift (Daiute, 1992). Focusing
and building on their strengths as well as their weaknesses allows children to naturally construct a solid foundation for literacy development.

Teaching in an elementary classroom is like looking at snowflakes. Each child brings to the classroom his or her own unique experiences, personality, values, and learned behaviors. While children possess basically the same biological characteristics, they come to us with a myriad of different attributes. No two are alike. Each one has developed at his or her own pace, reaching each stage of maturity at a different moment in time. Jean Piaget’s view of this early childhood maturation is by far the most thorough and most noted. Many of these characteristics have an effect on both the language and the academic development of children. Highlights of Piaget’s theory include the following ideas that impact emergent reading and writing capabilities (Charlesworth, 1987):

1. There is a biologically determined sequence of stages through which each person passes as he grows and learns, interaction with the environment is essential for learning. Through interaction with the environment the child constructs his own knowledge,

2. Meaningful learning results from conflict resolution (conflicts that come from the child’s actions, not from disagreements with adults),

3. Intelligence grows and changes as we adapt to new experiences,

4. The ways we adapt to new experiences never changes -- we are always assimilating and accommodating to achieve equilibrium,

5. There are qualitative differences in the ways children think and solve problems at different ages and stages,
6. At each stage the child has a unique way of thinking that affects the way he solves problems, and

7. As each new stage is reached the old ways of thinking are integrated into the new ways; the old ways are not lost.

According to Piaget (1955) two to seven-year-olds are in the preoperational stage of development. During this stage children begin to learn symbols for things. They begin to develop vocabulary and true language that is primarily egocentric. They also begin to develop concepts of good and bad, learn to draw, and develop an intense interest in the symbolization of objects through pretending and play. Ginsburg and Opper (1979) recommend a number of implications for teaching based on the application of Piagetian theory:

1. education should be child-centered,

2. learning occurs best when it comes from self-initiated activity,

3. there is a wide range of development within a group of children,

4. social interaction assists the child in modifying his egocentric point of view, and

5. the child’s learning is limited by the stage in which he happens to be.

These ideas incorporated into a reading and writing process classroom provide the greatest opportunity for emergent writers to succeed (Charlesworth 1987).

Children who are ready to learn the mechanics of the literacy processes have three critical understandings, according to Cunningham (1994): reading and writing provide a means to communicate information, reading and writing are important things that big people do and must be learned, and approval received from adults at attempts to read and write reflect a measure of success at achieving the goal. Many children arrive at school with these understandings in place, which provides teachers the critical foundation needed to nurture this process. For others who
lack this framework, teachers must take the knowledge that they do possess and build these literacy experiences carefully, deliberately, and systematically. Rather than focusing so intensely on children’s weaknesses, we can build on their strengths and explore their potential by allowing them to work with visual and aural media as sources for texts (Daiute, 1992).

Of primary importance in early childhood development is the acquisition of language. Researchers and educators are intrigued by the variety of experiences that influence language development. Educators agree that children learn language through social interaction and that a variety of language-related activities greatly influence their command of oral and written language. The mastery of reading, writing, and oral language is necessary to gain the ability to communicate which effectively forms the foundation for a successful education. Reading allows children to give meaning to the printed word, whereas oral and written language allows children to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Thus language provides the vehicle through which concepts and knowledge are acquired. The link between reading and writing processes has recently generated a large quantity of research (e.g., Allington, 2001; Casey, 1997; Clay, 1975; Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Dorn, French, & Jones 2001; Kamii, Manning, & Manning, 1991; Lyons, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; etc.). The result is that the two have come to be viewed as the flip side of the same coin—reciprocal in nature in such a manner that it is almost impossible to acquire one without the other. Writing well depends very much on reading good writing (Adams, 1986).

Effective writers engage in four major processes: (1) prewriting which involves oral discussion, brainstorming, and reflection, (2) composing which includes decision-making, organizing ideas, drafting, and re-reading, (3) revising which involves peer review, evaluation, clarifying, and refining ideas, and (4) editing which includes correcting grammar, spelling,
research, and word selection. The process approach to writing engages students in higher order mental tasks such as synthesizing, evaluating, justifying, classifying, and grouping.

“Writing is a powerful, efficient, natural way to learn language” (Avery, 1993, p. 129). Children can write long before they can read a single word. Many write before they enter school. Once they begin to write, this writing serves as a scaffold for their earliest reading. Children in first grade learn more about reading from the writing they do than they learn from the carefully orchestrated lessons often presented to achievement-ranked reading groups. The energy in classrooms exists with the children writing about their experiences. Avery (1993) suggests that:

Children are meaning makers. Listen to them; observe the world through their eyes, and then help them express what they wish to say. Children have a “fundamental urge to make meaning with the long-term view of what reading and writing are for--a lifetime of enjoying and learning to live in the world (p.118).”

Graves (1983) and his core of teachers discovered that time devoted to writing every day improved reading scores. Writing does make a difference. Avery discovered in her classroom that “...not only could first graders select topics, but they could also present coherent and detailed information about those topics on paper (p. 110).” Writing brings life to an otherwise boring landscape by providing a forum where every child can participate successfully. Writing provides an important tool for thinking and learning. Establishing a writing community in the classroom provides the stimulus for setting a climate that nurtures the development of good readers and writers.

According to Graves (1983) “writing is an important means of developing thinking and reading power (p. 18).” Avery reports that:
...before my eyes a writing program was developing in my classroom that was also a total language arts program. As children read and reread their own and their classmates’ writing, reading skills improved, word recognition strengthened, and comprehension skills became keen. Oral expression and listening skills developed as students presented, explained, clarified, and questioned their own and others’ pieces of writing. It had become important to communicate effectively; all of the elements that contribute to effective communication were being sharpened... (p. 38)

No longer should writing be taught in isolation, but rather it can and should be integrated across all areas of the curriculum.

Teachers must carefully and deliberately establish the norms and procedures of the classroom. Proven and effective strategies include: children reading and writing every day, children choosing their own topics, and teachers conferencing daily with individuals and small groups. These strategies are effective because they respond to the children at their points of strength and knowledge and provide support for individual achievement that is highly conducive to the high-risk activity of learning.

Teacher and students must become partners in the search for understanding and knowledge. Teachers must at all times be sensitive to the atmosphere of the classroom, particularly striving to establish a climate of trust and acceptance, one that rewards risk-taking. It is important for teachers to be flexible and to be truly interested in what the child has to say, to find out what the child knows, and to help each child discover what he or she knows! “Ownership, a goal of process teaching, develops when students have a high degree of involvement in their learning. It produces strong learners who are honest writers and aggressive
readers (Avery, 1993, p.165)!” It is an important goal that students become owners of their contributions to the reading and writing and develop enthusiasm, desire, and a *spark* for mastering the reading and writing processes.

Two highly significant ideas have surfaced from the research (Graves, 1983). “Writing is a highly idiosyncratic process that varies from day to day. Variance is the norm, not the exception. The second important idea is that good teaching encourages individual differences rather than promotes uniformity (p. 19).” Avery suggests that the guiding principle should be listening for the differences and gently encouraging and coaxing the individual voices of the young writers in our classrooms. Giacobbe’s (1994) suggestions for teaching include:

1. respond to the writer not the writing,
2. be careful with general praise and with praising too much,
3. build on what a writer has accomplished rather than on what they have not done, and
4. look for growth over time (p. 255).

Using these suggestions in the classroom increases confidence and improves self-concept, which are crucial aspects of a reading and writing program.

Giacobbe also spoke of three essentials for readers and writers of any age that include time, ownership, and response. Children become involved in peer conferences as they read, write and revise. Independence is fostered as they work together on their writing pieces. The reading and writing process classroom demands few basic preconceptions for operation. In fact, most teachers have found that teaching in a process reading and writing classroom demands a shift in their paradigms with the children now leading the way. It is this element of *choice* that creates autonomy and is critical to children’s investment in learning. Giving children choices within the
structured framework of the classroom communicates trust in their capacity to make responsible
decisions and become responsible literacy learners.

Each of us has within us a story to tell. Students will tell their story if given the freedom
to do so. Getting students started reading and writing is an easy thing to do. When teachers create
an environment that allows children to take risks, reading and writing become a natural
occurrence for any child. Atwell (1987) states that the main thing to do is to get everyone started
reading and writing on a topic of his or her choosing from the very beginning. She, like Graves,
feels that when teachers assign topics they create a welfare system, putting students on reader’s
and writers’ welfare (1983). The student who writes this week on an assigned topic is going to
show up the next week and the next requiring more topic handouts. It just makes good sense that
if teachers encourage students from the beginning to write and read about their own experiences,
the result is more authentic and motivational. When young children share their writing and the
audience wants to know more, it generates even more writing and is self-validating. Graves has
said that when children know that others will read their stories they will write, and they will
write with purpose and intent.

Emergent writers like to write and seldom lack topics or a willingness to share but are
often hampered by the mechanical and compositional concerns of the writing process. In early
classrooms, what traditionally had been thought of as writing was in actuality little more than
calligraphy rather than written communication. Children often find it difficult to transfer their
thoughts to paper because of a lack of fine motor coordination and the inability to compose a
sentence correctly. Compounding the problem is the task of revision. According to Balajthy
(1987), one of the principal obstacles to writing is the drudgery involved in rewriting. The
painful experience of rewriting by hand discourages students from making the changes needed to
improve their compositions. Students often think of classroom revision as punishment for not
catching “mistakes” the first time. As a result, students often develop a negative attitude toward
revision and writing in general.

The use of “writing friends” provides additional motivation and an audience for these
children. It also provided our children with control of purpose because they perceived an
intended audience. Children need to know they are writing for someone other than their teacher.
They are usually most motivate when they are given the freedom of choice to write about any
subject, which provides ownership of the compositions and encourages the children to take risks.
It is evident by the topics they chose and the level of vocabulary they use that the children feel
successful and empowered.

By facilitating and encouraging process writing, our students are able to construct their
own bridges to literacy. The children are able to focus their energies on the concepts and
acquisition of language without the encumbrances normally associated with writing. The
experiences with this developing literacy and current research point toward implications for
continued study. Children feel successful; they write to convey meaning to an audience; they
have increase their vocabulary; they have learn the basic rudiments of beginning writing; they
love to read and write, and they believe that they are readers and writers. If indeed success can be
measured by these factors, then these children have met with great success.

In today’s society, school is no longer the major source of information for children. They
are interacting with the entertainment industry, with television, videotapes, and other media all of
which provide the child with information as well as a common heritage—a job formally
performed by the print industry (White 1987 in Dixon-Krauss 1997). What educators need to
understand through research and study is how best to aid learning, what types of learning we
should facilitate, and how best to serve the needs of diverse learning populations (Clements 1999 in Learners 2002).

Scaffolding is closely related to effective instruction. An effective teacher is observant and attentive to the responses and actions of the child, adjusting her/his responses, guidance, and modeling to meet the needs of the child. The very nature of scaffolding demands that both tutor and child are actively engaged and attentive to the actions and responses of each other. Brophy & Good (1986) state that time on task has been shown to increase student motivation and learning and can be consistently related to increased student learning. When students attend and find activities varied and interesting, there is increased student motivation and learning. Effective teachers organize materials, experiences, and language to establish context for the lesson and to support the students understanding. Varying instructional materials, methods, techniques, reinforcements, prompts, modeling, and feedback has been demonstrated to effectively support student learning, understanding, and motivation. Effective teachers are cognizant of their own responsibility and ability to construct instructional experiences that maintain student engagement and active involvement in tasks. Effective teachers are adept at questioning, maintaining instruction that is within the grasp of the child, monitoring student progress while making necessary adjustments to support the child as needed, and providing feedback and reinforcement.

During effective instruction, especially instruction that demands that the teacher maintain an active role monitoring student progress in order to scaffold and support student learning, it is paramount that teachers understand the reciprocity of student/teacher relationship. As the teacher develops her/his skills at supporting and scaffolding student learning, it essentially places them in the position of becoming learners themselves. Attention to and engagement in the task at hand have been demonstrated to have a direct correlation to learning. Teachers perfect their craft as
they remain focused on developing learning experiences that support student learning and as they monitor student progress to determine whether there is a need to give feedback or model a task. Effective learning experiences that support and scaffold students are within teachers’ level of competency, so that they maintain the student’s interest and engage them at levels that extend their learning.

The ultimate goal of scaffolding is to support and assist children as they extend their own learning and gradually assume the ability to independently self-regulate their own learning. As children build upon their own knowledge, assume more and more independence, and self-regulate their own learning, their problem-solving behaviors change over time (Clay 1998). A teacher’s careful monitoring of student progress has been shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective learning experiences from ineffective ones (Avery, 1993; Allington, 2001; Clay, 1998; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998;). As children take on new learning and understandings, the ultimate educational goal is increasing their independence and responsibility for their own learning, which should ultimately result in changing behaviors. Over time, the change in the child’s learning behaviors should demonstrate an independence and self-regulation that no longer needs the constant attention of the teacher—this requires that the teacher learn how to quickly diminish her/his support allowing the child to begin to attain autonomy. The teacher is now the learner as they modify their support and modify their own practice to allow the child to become the independent problem solver.

Scaffolding is defined by Dorn and Stoffos (2001) as support provided by an expert who constantly adjusts and accommodates the learner’s acquired skills. They further include it as one of the four essential elements of traditional apprenticeship (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991, p. 40):
1. **Modeling.** The expert provides the learner with clear models for accomplishing different parts of the task.

2. **Coaching.** The expert uses language prompts and coaching techniques to keep the learner actively engaged in the task.

3. **Scaffolding.** The expert provides scaffolds that are constantly adjusted to accommodate the learner’s acquired skills.

4. **Fading.** As the learner becomes more competent, the expert relinquishes personal responsibility for performing the task.

The most significant aspect regarding scaffolding is the concept that it is at most temporary. Scaffolding is a temporary support that a teacher creates to help children extend current skills and knowledge to a higher level of competence (Rogoff, 1990; Wood, 1998). The scaffold should be designed to provide just the right amount of support to enable the child to achieve the goal of the instructional task. For the child, scaffolding closes the gap between task requirements and the skill level of the learner. A key tenet of scaffolding is the removal of the support as the child’s competence on the task increases, to be replaced by support at a higher level. Cazden (1988) states that an essential quality of a scaffold is that it be self-destructive. Thus as the child’s behavior changes, the level of support is modified. As the child becomes increasingly independent or self-regulated, his need for scaffolding decreases and is removed.

The metaphor, scaffold, comes from the scaffold that is used during the constructs of a building, but is later removed when it is no longer necessary. Typically, in the context of the child’s learning, it is meant to suggest the theory that a child actively constructions his own learning. It is the social environment or context that is the necessary part of the scaffold or support system allowing the child to move forward and continue to build new competencies.
(Wood & Middleton, 1975, p. 183; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 91; Wood, 1989, p. 282). The conversations and interactions associated with this interaction style have repeatedly been shown to foster general cognitive growth and to increase the child’s performance on a wide variety of tasks (Wood & Middleton, 1975; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1989; Pratt et al., 1988; Diaz, Neal, & Amaya-Williams, 1990; Diaz, Neal, & Vachio, 1991; Fleer, 1992; Pratt et al., 1992). It is the goal of the expert, by supporting the child, to move him toward increasingly higher levels of independence, thus strategically and significantly changing his behavior in learning situations. As the child becomes more independent and assumes more responsibility for his own learning typically the learning behaviors also change. Children come to the reading process at varying levels; their ability to control their own behavior and internalize new concepts will to a great extent control their growth and independence in reading and writing. Clay (1991) states that when children give their attention to particular aspects of their environments, their responses to those things undergo change as they process new information and concepts.

Lyons (2003) states that because reading and writing are complex processes, children must acquire the ability to select from a repertoire of strategies the ones that are appropriate for a certain set of circumstances. For children whose repertoire of strategies is very limited or inflexible, a more knowledgeable person must carefully scaffold them until they are able to support their own processing when the expert is not available. The expert must establish a positive, interactive context to scaffold a child by demonstrating the task and making it easy and manageable. The effective teacher creates opportunities for the child to be successful the first time they interact. In order to facilitate the task, the teacher must set clear expectations, make the tasks simpler when needed to prevent frustration, and hold the child accountable for his behavior.
This context facilitates learning for the child because positive affective social interactions are initiated early in the task.

Studies of oral language acquisition have confirmed that children are active constructors of their own language competencies (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bruner, 1983; Camborne, 1988; Clay, 1998; Cooper, 1997). Cognitive studies (Pinker, 1994) have also demonstrated that children selectively attend to aspects of their environments seeing, searching, remembering, monitoring, correcting, validating, and problem solving, all activities that build cognitive competencies (Clay, 1991). Lyons (2003) views learning as a constructive individual process. Man constructs representations of his experience through language, symbols, music, art, and other elements of his world. From this perspective, learning is a self-regulatory, self-organizing, and internal restructuring process through which individuals confer meaning by representing their ideas and experiences with symbols specific to their culture and environment (Wertsch, 1991).

Researchers (e.g., Vygotskey, Clay and Cazden) have determined that there are three areas of knowledge that should be considered as significantly affecting the child's changes in behavior:

1. Research on child behavior demonstrates that the child is affected by what immediately follows what he has done, that is what is contingent on behavior (Vygotsky, 1986).
2. Research regarding the importance of contexts which tells that children select what they attend to, shape their own learning environments to some extent, and evoke responses from those environments in consistent ways (Clay, 1998; Clay & Cazden, 1993; Lyons, 2003).
Clay (1991) maintains that as the teacher interacts with a child who is in the process of learning, the teacher must consider the context and respond to what she/he believes the constructions being built up in the child’s mind might be. It is important that the teacher provide temporary scaffolds and support systems that will help the child function effectively and that will lead to the child taking over independent action before long (Clay & Cazden, 1993). Clay and Cazden (1993) in Clay (1998) state that recent research demonstrates that some styles of teaching may actually facilitate and support the development of children who are independent, constructive learners while other teaching styles either confuse the learners or impede progress towards independence.

Effective teachers must learn to be skillful observers of children’s observable behaviors. It is through the skillful and sensitive observation of the child’s behavior that the teacher adjusts her prompts, models, direction, etc. By strategic scaffolding of observable behaviors, the teacher is able to support children as they extend their present competencies to increasingly higher levels of learning—thus changing their behavior over time to become independent, self-regulated readers and writers. Teachers must become astute observers of reading and writing behaviors and skilled at adjusting prompts and responses that advance the child’s learning to the next level (Clay, 1998). Clay (1987) maintained that it was through this study of children that the teacher became more articulate and astute about child behaviors and what they actually mean. Observing reading and writing behaviors inform teachers and enable them to develop an intuitive understanding of cognitive processes and their teaching improves. The teacher must acquire a manner of gathering data during interactions with the child while orchestrating and keeping her interactions, prompts, modeling, or teaching in line with what the child is actually doing as well as considering where the next place the child might need to go. Through this skillful, effective
teaching the teacher and child effectively change their respective behaviors. As the child develops inner control, his behaviors will become increasingly self-regulated.

As the child begins to self-regulate and self-monitor his own reading or writing behaviors he will begin to notice his own mistakes and problem solve and or self correct these errors. As the child begins to self-regulate, it is critical that the teacher reinforces and praises these new behaviors. The ultimate aim of effective teaching and scaffolding is to assist the child toward independence. As the child becomes an independent reader and writer he will read and write more and as he does each of these and improves his own skills (Stanovich, 1986). The child should begin developing fluency as accuracy and well as reading and writing increasingly more difficult text. As the child develops and extends her/his cognitive levels, she/he improves his own skills and pulls himself to higher levels of reading and writing.

Effective scaffolding techniques will support the child and lead to self-regulation. The teacher must provide selective intervention that fades over time so that the child does not become dependent upon these interventions. Scaffolding must be a temporary support that demises as the child no longer need the support. The teacher’s must provide selective intervention that is a supportive tool for the learner enabling him to successfully accomplish a task not otherwise possible. The scaffold, if properly designed, will provide just the right amount of support to help the child achieve the goal of the instructional task. Dorn and Soffos (2001) assert that scaffolding closes the gap between task requirements and the skill level of the learner, and as the child’s competence on the task increases, the scaffold is removed and replaced by support a higher level until it is no longer needed at all. Researchers also stress that it is important to remember that scaffolding does not mean simplifying the task during the learning event. The task should remain
constant as the teacher adjusts her level of support according to the level of support needed by the child.

As the child’s behaviors change and he develops independence, he will begin to assume new responsibilities such as working out new parts of messages for himself. He will no longer require as much outside assistance to confirm whether his responses are right or wrong—he will know whether or not he needs to problem solve further. Furthermore, the activity of making all the cues and strategies fit and eliminating any misfits becomes rewarding to the child when he succeeds. The child will be able to work on more difficult texts with little support and few appeals for help. With increasing independence the child will maintain control of searching, checking, correcting activities rapidly, efficiently, and usually effortlessly during writing and oral reading. As the child develops problem-solving abilities, when they are observed or when he discusses his strategies, he will develop increasingly higher-level strategies such as analogies, personal rules, hypotheses, and tentative solutions that he awaits confirming. Independence in writing and reading is not achieved by learning independent isolated skills. It is achieved through much larger cognitive endeavors relating to thinking and developing understanding, and regulated by feedback and self-correction processes. The teacher will provide the structure, the time, and support in the context of the classroom, but the child begins to pursue a large amount of the activity, pushing the boundaries of his own capabilities as she/he begins to assume more material of increasing difficulty. The teacher will have to do less teaching of an independent reader and writer—in many ways the teacher becomes unnecessary (Clay, 1998; Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Dixon-Kraus. 1996). As soon as a common goal is established by the teacher and child, the teacher must begin to actively withdraw support to foster active takeover by the child so that
self-regulation begins. Active withdrawal is crucial in response to the active takeover of the task by the child.

The real test of learning according to Dorn and Soffus (2001) and Clay (2001) occurs when a student applies the knowledge, skills, and strategies gained from teacher-assisted lessons to independent work. If the child is unable to apply new learning to an independent task, the teacher must monitor her own teaching and scaffolding by asking these questions of her/his teaching (Dorn, French, & Jones 1998):

1. Did I present clear and focused demonstrations for teaching a new skill?
2. Did I step outside the student’s learning zone and move into an area of frustration? (p. 102)

In effective, well-balanced literacy programs, teachers design flexible and diverse opportunities for all children to work at both assisted and independent levels. Clay (1973) states that work should be at their level of competency while still maintaining some strategic work that would allow them to move toward higher levels of competency.

Dorn and Soffos (2001) and Dixon-Krauss (1995) maintain that, for the teacher who is developing scaffolding skills, her awareness of the importance of granting the children some responsibility implies that the manner in which adults give assistance is important for promoting children’s learning and mastery over their own behavior. Also of significant related importance to this concept, the adult’s degree of explicitness during the interaction has direct implications for the child’s developing self-regulation. When a tutor continually influences a child’s behavior by giving direct commands and/or immediate answers, learning and self-regulation by the child are reduced. However, when the adults or tutor regulate the child’s task behavior by asking questions that allow the child to participate in the discovery of solutions, learning, and self-
regulation the child’s learning is extended (Diaz, Neal, & Amaya-Williams, 1990; Roberts & Barnes, 1992; Gonzales, 1994; Gonzales, 1994). Conceptual questions fashioned by the tutor encourage independent thinking as well as use of higher-order verbal problem-solving strategies. Berk & Winsler (1995) maintain that the tutor can vary the level of encouragement by prompting the child to think about the activity. Sigel, McGillicuddy-Delisi, and Johnson, (1980) define three levels of adult assistance, or distancing strategies that vary the extent to which they foster effective problem solving:

1. Low-level distancing: Adult questions or statements that refer to objects or events present in the immediate environment (i.e., labeling or describing, as in “What color is this?”)
2. Medium-level distancing: Adult utterances that elaborate somewhat on the immediate environment between mentioning the relationship between two visibly present dimensions (i.e., comparing, categorizing, or relating, as in “Which one is bigger?” and “This green piece looks different from that one.”)
3. High-level distancing: Adult utterances that encourage children to formulate a hypothesis or elaborate an idea by going beyond what is given in the immediate environment (i.e., planning, inferring, or deducing, as in “What will happen if we put this one here?” and “Why do we need to put this one in next?” (p. 25)

The job of the adult in scaffolding becomes one of supporting the child’s autonomy by providing sensitive and contingent assistance, facilitating the child’s representational and strategic thinking, and prompting them to take over ever increasing responsibility for the task as their skill increases. Beck and Winsler (1995) describe the relationship in this manner, “scaffolding connotes a warm, pleasant collaboration between a teacher and a learner while the two are engaged in joint problem-solving activity (p. 26).” During this collaboration, the adult must give
no more support than is absolutely necessary in order to maintain the child’s strategic control over the task at hand.

Stone (1993) asserts that scaffolding is a very subtle phenomenon, one that involves a complex set of social and communicative dynamics. The complexity can be observed as researchers examine the quality of adult support, the interpersonal relationships between adult and child, the meanings expressed, and the value attached to the situation, the task, and its associated behaviors. Scaffolding also supports children as they learn how to direct their own learning, particularly as they are prompted to use private or self-directed speech to guide their actions.

In classrooms education must be thought of in a new way—not in terms of transmission of knowledge but in terms of “transaction and transformation” (Chang-Wells & Wells, 1993, p. 26). Language in classrooms, while maintaining the characteristics of discourse it carries in other contexts, assumes additional characteristics. In the classroom, words, in addition to being a means of communication, begin to serve as objects of study as they are used to talk about reading and writing as well as other subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies. Literacy takes a prominent role in effective classrooms that work to move children to self-regulation over a period of time. Berk and Winsler (1995) note that literate activities play a major role in the development of conscious awareness of mental functions and in bringing cognitive functions under the control of the child as he develops his “self-extending system” and independence as a learner. Berk and Winsler maintain that teachers transform classroom into environments that support literate activities that play a major role in supporting the development of conscious awareness of mental functions and moving these under the control of the child. As the child develops an awareness of the symbolic and communicative systems present in language, the
child begins to think, and the cognitive processes become an object of reflection and attention for the child. In these literacy based classrooms, the environment becomes a highly literate setting containing many different types of symbolic communication that can be manipulated, integrated with each other, and mastered by children. Like social interaction, reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning are not transmitted in isolation or in a confining, rigid, step-by-step manner. Literacy is understanding and communication of meaning in authentic social contexts. As such, the classroom becomes a community of learners or a social cultural system created by the members of the classroom, the children and the teachers, supported by the social context from the outside. The joint collaboration of the adults and children forms a culturally meaningful community of understanding.

At the heart of the scaffolding classroom is a unique relationship between the teacher and the child (Allington, 2001; Clay, 1991; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Lyons, 2003). These classrooms foster and support a kind of teacher-child discourse that develops active, self-confident learners with a clear grasp of the literate modes of expressions of their communities. The teachers in these classrooms engage in interactive teaching that foster active discourse with the students as they move toward control of their own learning. A major element of this unique relationship between the teacher and the child is the element of reciprocal teaching as a method of teaching. During reciprocal teaching the teacher forms a small group with several children and models four cognitive strategies in sequential order: questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting. As the children are able to assume the task of group leader, they assume the role and the discussion continues. The children develop an understanding of recurring themes in these various works and ultimately begin to understand that knowledge gained from one work may be applied to another and another (Berk and Winsler, 1995).
Utilization of scaffolding fosters another unique relationship between the teacher and child. As the teacher and the child dialogue and interact, the teacher observes the child and makes adjustments in her teaching to accommodate the child’s learning. As the teachers are mentally making their calculations and decisions, they are extending their level of knowledge and understanding of their pedagogy and ‘craft,’ thereby taking charge of their own learning and extending their own knowledge. In this situation the learning and teaching becomes a recursive relationship. It becomes a situation that allows the teacher and the child to switch roles during the interaction (Stewart, 2002).

Lyons (2003) states that teachers must be able to meet the individual learning needs of all children, no matter what their cultural backgrounds or literacy history. They must understand that children learn to read and write in many different ways and assemble different working neural systems as they work to become literate (Clay 1998, 2001). In order for the children in classrooms to become successful, teachers must provide social and emotional support while creating different learning environments to address children’s idiosyncratic needs. Teachers must provide the support, or scaffolding, needed by the child at the appropriate time and in the explicit manner, withdrawing this support as the child assumes responsibility for her/his own learning so that the child becomes an independent and self-regulated learner.
CHAPTER 3.

METHODOLOGY

Research is the systematic study or investigation of a particular subject. The findings of these studies are usually reported using either qualitative methodology or quantitative methodology or possible combining aspects of both methodologies. The *Literacy Dictionary* edited by Harris and Hodges (1995) defines qualitative research as “research that is conducted in naturalistic settings in order to make sense of, interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them.” The editors note that a variety of methodological approaches may be used in the collection of data, including case studies, interviews, observations, introspection, text analysis (including film). Patton (1990) states that qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents. The data obtained for qualitative analysis typically comes from fieldwork. Fieldwork has been described by Patton (1990) as occurring as the researcher spends time in the setting that is under study. Qualitative research has been used in the fields of anthropology and sociology for at least a century; however, it was not used in the social sciences until the late 1960’s. The setting to be observed might be a particular program, an organization, a community, or whatever situations of importance that can be studied, observed, or people interviewed. Typically the researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and or interactions. Sometimes the researcher might even engage personally with or in those activities or individuals as a “participant observer” (Spradley, 1980). During the collection of data the researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions—sometimes participating in all or part of those activities as a regular program member, client, or student. Throughout all of these observations, interviews, or document reviews the researcher collects extensive field notes.
Qualitative research is descriptive in nature. The researcher notices something of interest to him and begins to observe and seek out findings. Once the raw data or field notes have been collected, they must then be organized into a readable narrative description that contains major themes, categories, and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis.

In qualitative research, the findings, understandings, and insights that emerge from the data collected in the fieldwork and the subsequent analysis of these findings become the results or fruit of the inquiry. The validity and reliability of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher. The integrity and honesty of the researcher are important in the collection of raw data and its examination. Conducting a systematic and rigorous observation of an event involves far more than just being present and looking around and describing the event, it demands skillful observation and reflection of subjects and events. Much more than asking questions is involved in skillful interviewing. Analyzing the collected raw data requires considerably more than just reading to see what is there. Researchers must draw on knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work to generate useful and credible qualitative findings through observation, interviewing, and content analysis.

In qualitative research, the question of whether or not individuals are accomplishing what they want to accomplish frequently arises. Qualitative researchers gather information and then study the data systematically, attempting to generate findings (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Dillon, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980 & 1978; Yin, 2004). This type of research is called evaluation research (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 208). Evaluation is applied research or a type of “action science” (The purpose of applied research and evaluations is to inform action, enhance decision-making, and apply knowledge to solve human and societal
problems. Applied evaluative research is judged by its usefulness in making human actions and interventions more effective and by practicality to individuals attempting to make use of its data. Basic research is assessed by its contribution to theory and explanations of why things occur as they do (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

There are five features of qualitative research:

1. It has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
2. It is descriptive.
3. It is concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

The process of qualitative research reflects a sort of dialogue or interplay between researchers and their subjects as researchers do not approach their subject neurally (Bogden & Biklen, 2003).

The Literacy Dictionary, edited by Harris and Hodges (1995), defines quantitative research as research that measures and describes in numerical terms. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that initially educational research was dominated by research that emphasized measurement, operationalized definitions, variables, hypothesis testing, and statistics that followed the scientific method. Typically the situation, event, or intervention being studied is examined for evidence of indication of a trend. Often a variable is introduced and manipulated with an experimental group. Then those studying the situation attempt to apply systematic application of trends or formulas to determine whether or not there is significant evidence or implication of findings. The researchers will compare the results from the experimental group to
those found with the control group to determine whether or not there are significant differences in outcomes (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980 & 1978).

Qualitative methodology permits the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail. Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of very detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. While this increases understanding of the events or situations being studied; it prevents generalizability. In qualitative study the researcher is the instrument. In this methodology, validity pivots to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork. Guba and Lincoln (1981) in Patton (1990) refer to qualitative methodology as “naturalistic inquiry” in which the naturalistic inquirer is the instrument—and as this instrument, changes that result from fatigue, shifts in knowledge, and cooptation, as well as variations resulting from differences in training, skill, and experience among different “instruments” can easily occur. However, this loss in rigor is more than offset by the flexibility, insight, and ability to build on implicit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument. Very often the qualitative researcher will avoid going into a study with a hypotheses to test or specific questions to answer believing that finding the questions should be on of the products of data collection rather than assumed a priori.

The choice of data collection options and strategies for any particular applied research inquiry are usually determined by the answers to several questions (Patton 1990):

1. Who is the information for and who will use the findings?
2. What kinds of information are needed?
3. How is the information needed?
4. When is the information needed?
5. What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?

6. Given answers to the preceding questions, what methods are appropriate?

Research that describes process or what is actually observed during an event would lend itself to qualitative research. Research that begins at the bottom observing events and processes that are occurring to determine patterns or items that can be grouped lends itself to qualitative methodology. There is no pat formula, but rather a series of questions asked by the researcher to determine the methodology that will best suit the study. Qualitative methodology permits the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine scaffolding of ten students in reading and writing in the contexts of school, especially the supportive language and conversation provided the child by his or her teacher. This study was a case study in three first grade classrooms in Daisy Elementary, a public school in a major metropolitan area. Preliminary work began on this project with a pilot study in January, 2006. This project began as an inquiry into the means by which teachers/more knowledgeable adults scaffold the children in their classrooms as they move to increasingly higher levels of knowledge and independence in reading and writing. This study encompassed the entire second semester of the previous school year for a pilot study and the first semester of the following school year, and it was composed of ten first grade students. This study followed the progress of each of these pilot and case study students as an individual. Analysis of the raw data revealed questions that provided the findings for further comparison and analysis.
Focal questions

4. What impact does the use of scaffolding have on the academic performance of students especially in reading and writing?

5. What impact does the use of scaffolding in reading and writing have on student learning as measured by changes over time in student behavior and as evidenced by their assumed responsibility for their own learning and self-regulation? How do these learners come to view themselves as readers and writers?

6. How do the teaching styles, philosophies, and instructional strategies of the teachers influence the reading and writing acquisition of the children involved in these classrooms?

Exploratory methods were used in conducting this ethnographic case study. The study documented evidence of changes in student and teacher behavior as a result of the use of scaffolding in reading and writing. It also explored the impact of scaffolding on the reading and writing performance on these students. This one year study contained a different aspect as the district implemented newly mandated literacy procedures. During the first nine weeks of the fall semester these procedures allowed the study to examine the absence of scaffolding and compare that with the pilot study. The addition of scaffolding techniques in the second nine weeks of the fall semester provided the opportunity to note the findings in the reading and writing performance of these students. The study looked at the impact of this type of methodology on student performance in reading and writing.

Data collection was done by several individuals. This required that definite protocols be established in order to insure trustworthiness, reliability of collection of the raw data during this study, and to maintain confidentiality of participant identity.
Research Design

This study was an embedded ethnographic case study. It was a type four design because it contained multiple units of analysis within multiple case designs.

Sampling Techniques

Multiple sampling techniques were used to obtain data. Among these techniques are

1. Scores on standardized instruments (Observation Survey, Developmental Reading Assessment)
2. Grade Level Checklists
3. Observational data to note change in interactions within the classroom—anecdotal notes, videotapes, audiotapes, photographs
4. Writing Samples
5. Running Records
6. Response to Readings
7. Dialogue with teachers/students/parents

Data was collected from students (the primary unit of analysis), teachers, and parents. Individuals collecting information were given scripts to use in conducting the surveys. Every precaution was taken to insure that each piece of data was obtained in a reliable manner.

Data Collection

Both the teachers and the students were the focus of the observations — both formal and informal. Data collected was in the form of observation, notes, assessment information, attitudinal surveys, pre and post writing samples, running records, pre and post computer-based literacy assessments, transcripts, video tapes, audio tapes, photographs, writing pieces, and computer generated products. The teacher kept descriptive and reflective field notes. Descriptive
notes were also used in an attempt to present the actual classroom settings, events, activities, and conversations of the teacher and the students as well as the grade level teachers as they collaborated. The reflective notes conveyed an interpretation by the researcher of the events and their impact on the setting, the students, and the teacher.

During the school year observations were set up to follow the teacher as well as the students a minimum of three to four times a week. Field notes from these visits were compiled and analyzed. The teacher was observed as she modeled and interacted with students during literacy events. Conversations were taped and analyzed using critical friend’s protocol. Students were observed during several structures of literacy events—small group, whole group, and one on one. All field notes from all the observations and interviews were reviewed by the participant/observer, by the teacher, and by the third party to determine accuracy.

Triangulation of the sources was completed and included: 1) the field notes, 2) the information from the key informants, 3) the researcher’s reflections and summaries. School records, assessment data, and other significant data were reviewed for pertinent information. After all the information was reviewed, the researcher analyzed the data to discover commonalities and reoccurring patterns which answered the research questions.

**Data Analysis**

The focus of this segment of the study was to capture with accuracy and honesty the conversations, opinions, activities, and attitudes of the participants—students and teachers. All compiled data was surveyed, analyzed, compared, and categorized to search for commonalities. All field notes were reviewed, organized, and interpretations of themes and patterns that emerged and evolved were noted and documented. Any recurring themes contrary to or not previously addressed were documented for possible future consideration or study.
The researcher anticipated receiving answers to the questions of relationships between the classroom teachers, reading teacher, students, early literacy development, and scaffolding. It was postulated that the findings would be applicable and useful in the elementary classroom. The teacher researcher anticipated findings, which would give insights into the relationship between students and teachers and scaffolding in reading and writing in the contexts of school and ultimately student achievement.

**Case Study Timeline**

Initiation of the Study: August-September 2006

- Approval of Institutional Review Board for Human Use: August
- Proposal to Doctoral Dissertation Committee: September
- Approval of Dissertation Project: September
- Review and Consent from school district: September
- Review and Consent from school principal: September
- Consent of students’ parents: September
- Consent of students involved as participants: September

Exploratory Phase of Research: August-December 2006

Spradley’s (1980) ethnographic research cycle: August-December

  - Began by asking broad questions
  - Collected data
  - Compiled data using field notes, audiotapes, videotapes, and classroom artifact
  - Analyzed data
  - Investigated additional questions generated from data
  - Continued the cycle
Fall semester, first nine weeks used newly initiated district mandated literacy program

Formal Phase of Research: October-December 2006

Fall semester, second nine weeks added scaffolding techniques Following district mandated literacy program

Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) constant comparative method

Collected and analyzed the data simultaneously

Jotted down field notes daily

Fleshed out field notes nightly

Examined notes and tapes three times each week to reflect on patterns and meanings; recorded observations of insights

Coded emerging themes and sub themes as patterns emerged

Concluding Phase of Research: December 2006

Formal reanalysis and completion of draft Of all dissertation research

Extensive examination of data to ascertain patterns

Defense of research: March 13, 2007

Final approval of dissertation by committee
CHAPTER 4.

RESULTS

Presentation of Students

Over the course of this study the use of scaffolding has proven to be a most effective means of moving students from “at risk” of failure to independent, self-regulated learners. For the past ten years the school has been involved in a balanced literacy delivery of instruction. As teachers within Daisy Elementary developed their knowledge and skills, delivery of instruction strengthened and flourished within the lower elementary classrooms. Teachers attended special staff development classes and professional conferences to refine and develop their individual skills and best practices in teaching. This fall the School Improvement Scores improved 23.7 percent from the previous year’s scores. This was the largest improvement of school scores in the district with the exception of a charter school that restricts teacher pupil ratio to 16 to 1.

Students enrolled at Daisy Elementary demonstrated steady consistent growth and progress when supported and scaffolded in their literacy acquisition. Students followed in a pilot study exhibited literacy acquisition that demonstrated their ability to read and write on level or above level. Scores reported to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education indicated that eighty percent of the students in grades PreK through Third were reading and writing on or above grade level at the end of the school year based on pre and post reading and writing performance. Teachers scaffolded these students by using such techniques as specific prompts, guided reading and writing groups, direct and explicit teaching, mini lessons, small group instruction, and instruction driven by performance based assessment. Students were instructed at their own individual reading and writing level. Support was given to support each student until they could independently command the literacy behaviors necessary to be self sufficient and rely
solely upon their own reading and writing ability as they problem solved and demonstrated the independent use of reading and writing strategies.

The school district mandated a series of instructional programs that are at best the antithesis of scaffolding literacy instruction. Teachers were mandated to implement the Open Court program for phonics instruction and Harcourt Basal Series for reading instruction. Each grade level had a timed, uninterrupted reading block that was designated to begin at nine each morning. All instruction is delivered whole group during this block. Kindergarten teachers were mandated to teach the Open Court program for thirty minutes each day. First, Second, and Third grade teachers were mandated to teach the Open Court program for sixty minutes and Harcourt Basal Series for thirty minutes each day. Teachers began the semester by administering the Open Court assessments. These assessments were administered during instructional time, and aside from the letter identification task, did not provide critical knowledge regarding the student knowledge and performance levels. The district directed teachers to dispense with the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1997) that had been used to determine individual student reading levels for instruction. The Observational Survey (Clay, 2005) was also scraped. Instruction began with little information regarding individual student knowledge. However, since all teaching was delivered whole class, it does not seem necessary to know individual student levels of performance since instruction was delivered to all students using whole class delivery. During the reading block all teachers and students are mandated to remain in the classroom during instruction. An ancillary teacher or aide is placed in each classroom during this block. During the thirty minute Harcourt reading section of the block, all students read the same story and work through the same activities regardless of what level they are performing at intellectually.
At the twelfth week of school the teachers in First grade met and discussed their students’ progress in relation to the previous years’ classes. It was determined by the three grade level teachers that students were not moving forward and growing with the consistency that had been observed in previous years’ classes. Even the students who appeared to be performing at higher levels were not acquiring new literacy strategies as quickly or easily as those same type students had in the past. As a grade level, these teachers decided to institute guided reading with leveled texts outside the reading block and small group instruction in all other curriculum areas in order to meet the needs of all their students and to support these students as they acquired new literacy skills.

This case study examined the progress made by five students followed during my pilot study last spring and the progress made by five students this past fall. Comparing research notes from the pilot study with the notes from the case study revealed that students in the pilot study read at higher levels than students in the case study. The contrast of progress made during this fall during mandated parish literacy directives was in stark contrast to the progress made by students in first grade at Daisy Elementary last year. Using notes and data collected during the case study the researcher was able to note distinct differences and patterns. The contrast between the progress made by the six students at the beginning of the semester and after scaffolding was added was also marked. The ability to use assessments to guide instruction and tailoring instruction to meet the individual needs of these students provided each student with the proper support needed to begin to build reading and writing strategies.

Teacher discussions during both the pilot and case study indicated that all teachers valued student observations and assessments that focused on student performance. These observations and assessments revealed student behaviors and competencies as well as needed student
behaviors and competencies providing needed information for lessons and instruction. Teacher
discussions strongly supported assessment driven instruction. Students were provided
opportunities to practice and develop skills and strategies while being supported until they
became proficient.

Aspects of Scaffolding Studied

During the course of this study, three aspects of scaffolding were focused upon:

1. The use of leveled texts selected at students’ instructional reading level to deliver
   strategic reading instruction and accelerate student achievement.

2. The use of explicit, direct teacher language to support student acquisition of reading
   and writing strategies that promoted student achievement.

3. The use of writing instruction to support and expand student’s reading knowledge,
   skill, and strategies.

These aspects were observed and examined in an effort to determine the impact of scaffolding on
individual students reading and writing achievement during the course of this study.

Observations and findings were then used to determine with relation to this study the answers to
this study’s research questions:

1. What impact did the use of scaffolding have on the academic performance of students
   especially in reading and writing?

2. What impact did the use of scaffolding in reading and writing have on student
   learning as measured by changes over time in student behavior and as evidenced by
   their assumed responsibility for their own learning and self-regulation? How did these
   learners come to view themselves as readers and writers?
3. To what extent did the teaching styles, philosophies, and instructional strategies of the participating teachers influence the reading and writing acquisition of the children involved in these classrooms? How did the use of scaffolding in the learning environment to support the growth of students impact the learning and professional growth of the three teachers who were participants in the study?

Pilot Study Students

Prior to this fall, pilot students served and studied in the spring and summer of 2006 were in the lower fifth to tenth percentile of students at Daisy Elementary. These students were the lowest performing students in first grade as identified by their classroom teachers. Each of the students was either served by Reading Recovery® or Literacy Groups in addition to receiving regular classroom literacy instruction. Students who received Reading Recovery® services were the lowest performing students in their classrooms. Each of these students began the school year “at risk” of failure. The students were administered the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1997), The Observation Survey (Clay, 2005), and a writing sample was taken. These same assessments tools and samples were taken at the end of the school year as well. Every effort was made to assure that students selected for this pilot study were the lowest performing students in their individual classes.

Isabelle

Isabelle was a five year old first grader who was the lowest performing first grader in her classroom. Her literacy performance was such that she was one of four first graders who qualified for Reading Recovery® services. Isabelle had very little oral language when she entered school. She was able to identify many upper and lowercase letters very hesitantly and slowly. Even though she identified 50 out of 54 letters on the Letter Identification portion of the
assessment, she could not always consistently identify the same letter each time she was presented with random letters. She was not able to read any words on any of the word lists used for assessment. She was only able to write two words—her name and “i” very hesitantly and with much prompting. Isabelle was not always able to “remember” how to write letters. She wrote and read many words, such as “was” for “saw,” as reversals. She was very unsure as she worked at all these early literacy tasks. Isabelle interacted with books and texts as though she had had few experiences with “print.” She was able to locate the front of a book, the bottom of a picture, and located specific matching lowercase letters. Her text reading level was a Level B, which meant she was unable to detect the pattern in an early story and read repeated words in text. Isabelle was unable to recognize or distinguish a pattern in text. She was unaware that print contained the message. Isabelle only looked at the pictures as she leafed through books. One of the first tasks was to help her become aware of print or to attend to print. Her grasp as she held a pencil or marker indicated that she had not had many opportunities to use writing implements or many opportunities to write. Isabelle demonstrated that she did not understand how print or words worked.

### Isabelle’s Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Letter Identification</th>
<th>Oral Word Test</th>
<th>Concepts About Print</th>
<th>Writing Vocabulary</th>
<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Percentile Score on Text Reading</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Pre-study</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-study</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-study</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</table>

May Writing Vocabulary--82 words

Using scaffolding techniques allowed both the classroom teacher and the Reading Recovery® teacher the opportunity to support Isabelle as she acquired reading and writing.
strategies. Because her core knowledge was so meager, much support and instruction was needed initially. Both her classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery® teacher worked together to deliver strategic, explicit support and instruction. Her first writing was simple two and three word stories with a definite pattern. It was necessary to rapidly teach Isabelle how to associate sounds with letters as well as remembering letters with automaticity. Within the first weeks of instruction, Isabelle began to acquire one to one and directionality as she attended to print. Her oral and written vocabulary began to expand. In these first weeks of scaffolded intervention, Isabelle was very tentative as she read and wrote. She needed many reading and writing experiences to enable her to learn how words worked. Isabelle was unable to write letters with any automaticity. She wrote each letter very slowly and painstakingly. She had many reversals and often could not remember how to write many letters.

Initially, Isabelle did not have the concept of letters or words. This concept would be acquired as she worked through her Reading Recovery® lessons. Her acquisition of letters and letter sound knowledge was supported during writing lessons and during word work. Spacing between words was initially a problem for Isabelle. Her Reading Recovery teacher initially provided a tongue depressor for her to use as she wrote to help her develop spacing between the words she wrote. Her teacher also used post-it notes placed across her writing paper to both help her with spacing and a means of helping her remember the story she had created. Another tactic used to support her was to have her repeat her story several times after she had created it orally so that she had the story pattern in her head before she began to write it on the page. Isabelle practiced her newly acquired skills and concepts during her reading. During her reading and writing lessons her Reading Recovery® teacher and her classroom teacher used very explicit and specific instruction and prompts during lessons. As Isabelle began to acquire new learning, her
teachers withdrew any unnecessary support allowing her to become evermore increasingly independent as she read and wrote.

Isabelle had to learn to attend to both instruction and print. She also had to learn to hold meaning and remember what she had learned. This was one of the more difficult things for her to accomplish. Before this study began, she had not been held accountable in literacy tasks for what she demonstrated an understanding of during reading and writing lessons. It was imperative that Isabelle be taught a small core of words so that she could begin to read and read with meaning. She needed to learn to read and write some high frequency words quickly. This supported her so that she could read without having to decode all the words on a page. As Isabelle began to read with increasing competence her own confidence and independence gradually increased. Isabelle began to really look at print. She began to monitor her reading using her new letter sound skills demonstrating her ability to monitor with the first letter of words. Once she had integrated this new concept, lessons were used to demonstrate to her how to read through words and monitor visually what she had said against what was printed on the page. Using these new skills and concepts enabled Isabelle to monitor her own reading visually. As she became adept at this skill, her reading became much more accurate. Isabelle was now able to begin to learn to listen to what she said so that she could determine whether or not what she had read made sense and looked right.

It was interesting to observe that as Isabelle worked to become a reader and writer that she became less and less passive about the acts of reading and writing and increasingly more independent and assertive during reading and writing. She began to cease appealing to her teachers for help, and began to problem solve on her own until she had corrected the inaccurate reading or writing. She also began to enjoy and take pride in strategic praise for her accurate
problem solving. This also seemed to motivate and encourage her to attend to new teaching
needed to support her as she read and wrote at increasingly higher levels. But in order to become
a completely independent reader and writer Isabelle needed to know when what she had read did
not make sense. In order to become competent and independent, she needed to read and write
fluently and be provided with many, many opportunities to practice new skills and concepts. As
a Reading Recovery® student Isabelle was provided two reading lessons each day. These lessons
coupled with her classroom lessons provided her with strategic support and instruction that
prevented this student whose pre-assessments placed her as the lowest student in first grade to
gradually take on new skills, strategies, and concepts that would move her from being one of the
two lowest performing students at the bottom of her grade to a position near the top of her class
rankings.

She continued to make steady progress over the course of the semester and during her
program of instruction. By the end of December Isabelle was reading and writing on grade level.
Her reading was a bit stronger than her writing. After a full Reading Recovery® program (sixty
sessions), Isabelle successfully exited the program reading on a Level 12 at 93% accuracy, which
was on grade level. She was able to now hear and record 34 out of 37 sounds on the Hearing and
Recording Sounds task of the Observation Survey. She demonstrated the ability to independently
create and record her own messages in both her classroom and in her reading class.

Her classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery® teacher had collaborated during her
reading program, they continued to work together to support her continued literacy growth by
following her literacy needs. Throughout the year both the classroom teacher and her reading
teacher monitored her progress and provided instruction and support as needed to extend her skill
and proficiency. She continued to develop and increase her reading and writing strategies in her
classroom. Her writing vocabulary steadily increased. At the end of the year when post
assessments were administered, Isabelle’s Letter Identification scores were 54 out of 54; her Oral
Word Test scores were 19 our of 20; Concepts About Print scores were 22 out of 24; her Writing
Vocabulary 51; and her Text Reading level was Level 18 at 92%. She completed the year
reading and writing above level.

During the pilot study, Isabelle’s classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery®
carefully observed and monitored her continued progress to insure that she was both challenged
and successful as she interacted with text and writing tasks. It was important that too much
support not be given so that she could continue to function independently and continue to feel
confident. As she had developed confidence she became increasingly responsible for her reading
and writing. She began to demonstrate independent reading and writing behaviors she had never
used before. She sought opportunities to express her opinions regarding stories she was reading
with her peers, she volunteered to express her interpretation of storylines and plots, and she
confidently wrote about stories and created her own stories.

Isabelle continued to read increasingly higher levels of text. Her classroom teacher and
her Reading Recovery® teacher examined her portfolio periodically to compare her performance
assessments with the most recent assessments. Each time they did this the classroom teacher
continued to remark that it seemed almost impossible to believe that the child who had been the
lowest performing child in her classroom for so long was now performing in the top ten percent
of the class. Isabelle had integrated and begun to use the reading and writing strategies that
would allow her to become a reader and a writer. She was self monitoring, cross checking, and
self correcting her own reading and writing. To observe her internalize and develop the ability to
use the strategies that would allow her to learn other new concepts was quite remarkable.
Isabelle began second grade slightly above grade level and remained on solid footing as she worked through the acquisition of new reading and writing strategies. Her progress was monitored by her Reading Recovery® teacher. The second grade classroom teacher was new to the school, so she was unaware that Isabelle had been a Reading Recovery student. When beginning of the year assessments were administered, Isabelle’s scores placed her in the top five percent of her second grade class. Her classroom teacher expressed surprise that she had been a Reading Recovery® student or considered “at risk” of failure at the beginning of the previous year. She continued to make significant progress and remained in the high reading group during this year’s case study. She continues to work and progress successfully in all subject areas.

Irene

Irene was a five year old first grader who was the lowest performing first grader in her classroom. Her literacy performance was such that she was one of four first graders who qualified for Reading Recovery® services. Irene had very little oral language when she entered school. She was able to identify many upper and lowercase letters very hesitantly and slowly. She was unable to write these letters easily and often had to refer to the wall chart in order to write them at all. She was not able to read any words on any of the word lists used for assessment. She was only able to write three words—her name, a, and “i” very hesitantly and with much prompting. She attempted to write her last name, but she reversed the “i” and the “r” in her last name, so it was not considered a word she could write with ease. She was very unsure as she worked at all these early literacy tasks. During the assessment Irene demonstrated that she did not really grasp the concept of a letter or a word. She seemed to know that the pictures in books would give her information about the story, but did not seem to know that the print contained the message. Irene interacted with books and texts as though she had had few
experiences with “print.” She did not seem “comfortable” handling books. She sometimes did not notice that she was holding the book upside down or that she was beginning at the back of the book rather than the front of the book. She was able to locate the front of a book, the bottom of a picture, and located specific matching lowercase letters. Her text reading level was a Level B, which meant she was unable to detect the pattern in an early story and read repeated words in text. Irene was unable to recognize or distinguish a pattern in text. She was not consistently aware that print contained the message. Irene only looked at the pictures as she leafed through books. One of the first tasks was to help her consistently become aware of print or to attend to print. Her grasp as she held a pencil or marker indicated that she had not had many opportunities to use writing implements or many opportunities to write. When Irene wrote she did not have spaces between words. In her early lessons her Reading Recovery® teacher provided her with several means of support as she learned to space between the words in her story. After first composing her story orally, her teacher repeated it with Irene to help her retain the story mentally before she wrote it. Post-it notes were also used to help her remember her story and the spaces between the words as she wrote it. It was difficult at first for Irene to remember her story. This made it extremely difficult for her to write the story on paper. It took repeated modeling and repeating the story numerous times before Irene was able to hold her story in her head and write it on her writing paper. Being able to create a story mentally, say her story out loud, and then write the same story on her writing paper.
Irene’s Scores

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<th>Oral Word Test</th>
<th>Concepts About Print</th>
<th>Writing Vocabulary</th>
<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Percentile Score on Text Reading</th>
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May Writing Vocabulary—94 words

It was imperative that Irene develop some knowledge of letters and letter/sound association. She had been unable to record any letters in the Hearing and Recording Sounds portion of her beginning of the year assessments. Irene also needed to develop one to one correspondence as she read. When she did not readily acquire this skill as she read text, her Reading Recovery® wrote the words to several of her stories and her own stories on index cards and laid them on the floor and had her walk placing her foot next to each card as she read the word on the card. This use of kinesthetic movement supported her as she began to assimilate this needed early reading strategy. Irene was soon able to transfer this behavior (walking one to one) to finger movements in her texts. This was important because it was very difficult for Irene to attend to print. She needed the eye hand movement in her interaction with text to support her as she learned to really look at print. Once Irene had consistent one to one, attending to print, and directionality, she was began to make significant progress in her reading. Irene also needed to develop a meager core of high frequency words to support her as she read so that she did not have to decode each and every word as she read. This is a significant need for most young readers. Having a small core vocabulary aides and supports a young reader by allowing them to only have a few items to really work through as they visually search through print during text reading.
Irene had to learn to carefully visually search print. Her attention was not always finely attuned to the idiosyncrasies of letter details. This was a problem for her as she read text. This, coupled with her tendency to see and write many letters in reversal,impeded her successful reading and writing of text. Irene’s Reading Recovery® teacher provided support and modeling with first a salt tray as she practiced proper letter formation over and over until she was able to successfully read and write these letters. Supporting and providing the proper intervention that allowed Irene to overcome these reversals required significant time and work during this study. As Irene began to internalize the proper letter formation, she began to transfer this knowledge to her reading. As she internalized these concepts, she continued to gain confidence and began to accelerate both reading levels and fluency. During this time her parents had her eyes checked and the doctor prescribed glasses, which also assisted her as she read and wrote.

Scaffolding techniques allowed both the classroom teacher and the Reading Recovery® teacher the opportunity to support Irene as she acquired reading and writing strategies. Because her core knowledge was so meager, much support and instruction was needed initially. Both her classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery® teacher worked together to deliver strategic explicit support and instruction. Her first writing was simple two and three word stories with a definite pattern. Within the first weeks of instruction, Irene began to acquire one to one and directionality as she attended to print. Her oral and written vocabulary began to expand. She continued to make steady progress over the course of the semester and during her program of instruction.

During her Reading Recovery® program and during the pilot study, Irene was supported but this support was always gradually withdrawn as she began to take on new reading and writing behaviors to support her independence and taking responsibility for her reading and
writing. As Irene became increasingly more independent her confidence and self pride grew. This allowed her to become much more self-reliant as she read and wrote. This independence became increasingly more apparent as she began to volunteer to give her opinions and perspective during class discussions, choosing a new text to read, or writing her own stories or reaction to the stories she read.

Acquiring the skills and strategies necessary for Irene to become a successful reader and writer was not easy. It required numerous reteaching and practice. Initially Irene became very frustrated and discouraged, but as she became more adept and successful with her reading and writing strategies, she began to demonstrate her self-confidence and competence. As she became more successful, she acquired confidence. This confidence and the support of the teachers enabled Irene to gradually strengthen her reading competencies and strategies which supported her as she began to read ever increasing higher and more difficult levels of text. Her growth in vocabulary and acquisition of new writing strategies also provided insights into the way language worked in reading that further supported her reading growth.

By the end of December Irene was reading and writing on grade level. Her reading was a bit stronger than her writing. After a full Reading Recovery® program (sixty sessions), Irene successfully exited the program reading on a Level 11 at 92% accuracy which was on grade level. She was able to now hear and record 34 out of 37 sounds on the Hearing and Recording Sounds task of the Observation Survey. She demonstrated the ability to independently create and record her own messages in both her classroom and in her reading class.

Irene’s literacy progress following her Reading Recovery® program was followed during the pilot study. Since her classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery® teacher had collaborated during her reading program, they continued to work together to support her
continued literacy growth by following her literacy needs. Each teacher learned that keen
observation and support was needed to scaffold Irene as she became an independent reader and
writer. Early on the teachers observed that they often felt that Irene had achieved independence
and competency only to realize when she interacted with text or a writing task that she had not
quite achieved active independence. Each time the teachers simply stepped in and provided only
the necessary support needed withdrawing this support as quickly as possible to allow Irene to
take the responsibility for her own reading and writing strategies. Withdrawing this support when
she was able to negotiate her own reading and writing strategies is paramount to the student’s
ability to interact with ever increasingly more difficult text.

Throughout the year both the classroom teacher and her reading teacher monitored her
progress and provided instruction and support as needed to extend her skill and proficiency. She
continued to develop and increase her reading and writing strategies in her classroom. Her
writing vocabulary steadily increased. At the end of the year when post assessments were
administered, Irene’s Letter Identification scores were 54 out of 54; her Oral Word Test scores
were 19 our of 20; Concepts About Print scores were 21 out of 24; her Writing Vocabulary 48;
and her Text Reading level was level 20 at 92%. She completed the year reading and writing
above level.

Irene began second grade slightly above grade level and remained on solid footing as she
worked through the acquisition of new reading and writing strategies. Irene’s second grade
teacher was new to the school, so she had no awareness that Irene had been a Reading
Recovery® student in first grade. Following the beginning of the year assessments, Irene’s
assessment scores placed her in the upper ten percent of her class. Her teacher expressed her own
surprise and amazement that Irene had ever been considered a student who was “at risk” of
failure. Irene’s progress was followed during this study. She continued to make significant progress and remained in the high reading group during this year’s case study. Her ability to write has also continued to grow at the same rate as her reading ability.

David

David was a five year old first grader who began his first grade experience exhibiting numerous large gaps in his literacy knowledge. He was recommended by his classroom teacher for screening by the school’s reading teacher because of the difficulty he demonstrated as he encountered reading and writing tasks. While he was able to read a Level 2 text at 100%, the story in the assessment kit was predictable and contained a story pattern. This seemed to indicate that he could recognize a simple language pattern in a story. He was able to notice the patterns in assessment stories, so while he did not appear to read text below grade level, his text reading was not consistent and he demonstrated large discrepancies in his literacy knowledge. He was unable to read any words on the word list in the beginning of the year assessments. During the administration of the assessments, he exhibited a large number of confusions and many unknown letters in his letter identification. His ability to handle books demonstrated that he had had experiences with books, but he did not consistently attend to print nor did he have one to one matching as he “appeared to read text.” He demonstrated the ability to “pick up” a story pattern and did seem to sometimes have directionality and return sweep when he did attend to print. Upon closer observation, it was noted that David seemed to have a very strong auditory memory that enabled him to hear a story’s language pattern and rapidly pick it up and repeat the language pattern orally. David was only able to successfully write four words—his first and last names, me, and my. He was only able to hear and record twelve sounds when he was dictated a sentence. This deficit (letter/sound association) would hamper David when he encountered text
containing unknown words. David’s vocabulary deficits would not provide the necessary support needed to free him to decode unknown vocabulary. This deficit would hamper him as he attempted to successfully interact with text. David was one of four children selected for inclusion in the school’s Reading Recovery® program. His classroom teacher expressed her concerns that David’s literacy skills were so weak he might not make the progress needed to read or write on grade level.

### David’s Scores

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<th>Letter Identification</th>
<th>Oral Word Test</th>
<th>Concepts About Print</th>
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<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>93</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

May Writing Vocabulary—120 words

David’s initial progress in his reading program was somewhat slow. He appeared to have some nonproductive reading and writing behaviors that were ingrained and difficult to replace. David was accustomed to remembering the story line, so he did not really look at the text. Because he was so accustomed to remembering without looking, he did not learn to visually assimilate new vocabulary as he encountered them in text. As evidenced by keen observation of his interaction with text, David’s reading skills and strategies demonstrated many confusions and deficiencies. Much of his early program was spent in retraining and re-teaching early reading behaviors. David had to learn to attend to print and while learning letter sound associations in order to use them to decode and monitor print. He also had to acquire a core of sight words to support him as he read and build meaning in text. As he acquired this meager core of words it allowed him to concentrate on only a few items in the text he did not already know. His teachers
understood that it was imperative that his reading text be at his instructional level if he was to progress as quickly as possible to the next leveled text.

Using scaffolding techniques allowed both the classroom teacher and the Reading Recovery® teacher the opportunity to support David as he acquired reading and writing strategies. Because his core knowledge was inconsistent and contained large gaps, much support and instruction was needed initially. Both his classroom teacher and his Reading Recovery® teacher worked together to deliver strategic explicit support and instruction. Even though he had a large oral vocabulary, his first writing was simple two and three word stories with a definite pattern because he did not possess the confidence to attempt the stories he could compose. Within the first weeks of instruction, David began to acquire consistent one to one and directionality as he attended to print. His oral and written vocabulary began to expand. He continued to make steady progress over the course of the semester and during his program of instruction. By the end of December David was reading and writing above grade level.

After a full Reading Recovery® program (sixty sessions), David successfully exited the program reading on a Level 18 at 97% accuracy which was above grade level for that point in the year. This was the level text first graders need to read at the end of the school year. He was able to now hear and record 37 out of 37 sounds on the Hearing and Recording Sounds task of the Observation Survey. His ability to use his letter/sound association was observed as he continued over the course of his program and this study to expand his writing ability. The quality and quantity of his writing improved as his acquisition of language skills, strategies, and concepts expanded. He demonstrated the ability to independently create and record her own messages in both her classroom and in her reading class. His stories were both lengthy and contained well developed word patterns.
David’s literacy progress following his Reading Recovery® program was followed during the pilot study. Since his classroom teacher and his Reading Recovery® teacher had collaborated during her reading program, they continued to work together to support his continued literacy growth by following his literacy needs. Throughout the year both the classroom teacher and his reading teacher monitored his progress and provided instruction and support as needed to extend his skill and proficiency. David’s new competencies supported him and seemed to supply a new found confidence that helped him interact with increasingly more difficult text. This ability to engage with higher leveled text seemed to feed his desire to interact with new text and to create his stories. He continued to develop and increase his reading and writing strategies in his classroom. His writing vocabulary steadily increased.

David’s desire and willingness to read and write grew in direct proportion to his ability to interact with text and subjects in reading and writing. At the beginning of the school year, David was extremely shy and reluctant to read or write. He seemed unwilling to take the “risk” to interact with text or to attempt to write his own message. As he worked with his two teachers and began to acquire new literacy skills, strategies, and concepts, he began to exhibit a desire to make “attempts” and “approximations” without worry or concern as to whether they were “correct.” Soon he learned to self monitor his attempts and problem solve to “fix” them when they were not appropriate. As he was able to arrive at his own corrections his confidence in his ability began to grow as a reader and a writer. In his first attempts to problem solve his incorrect reading or writing, he almost seemed surprised as he checked his “correction” to find that he had actually “fixed” his reading or writing. His teachers always offered specific praise to reinforce his work. Soon David was able to begin to make his corrections underground or on the run almost before they were verbalized or written. This supported David’s comprehension especially
in reading. As David developed self-confidence he embraced literacy acts with a zest and confidence that revealed his growing love of reading and writing.

At the end of the year when post assessments were administered, David’s Letter Identification scores were 54 out of 54; his Oral Word Test scores were 20 our of 20; Concepts About Print scores were 22 out of 24; his Writing Vocabulary 61; and his Text Reading level was level 30 at 93%. He completed the year reading and writing well above level. His writing vocabulary in May was 120 words recorded in ten minutes.

David’s classroom teacher and his Reading Recovery® teacher both noted an observed development of enjoyment of both reading and writing as David gained new literacy competencies. David began to choose to interact with text or to write stories when he was given the opportunity to choose his own activity. When a reading or writing activity was assigned to him, he embraced it with increasing confidence as his ability grew. His teachers observed and monitored his progress offering support only when necessary. As David became more competent he was allowed to assume the responsibility for monitoring his own literacy work. His teachers only intervened when support was needed always withdrawing support as quickly as possible to maintain his independence.

David began second grade well above grade level and remained on solid footing as he worked through the acquisition of new reading and writing strategies. He continued to make significant progress and remained in the high reading group during this year’s case study. His present classroom teacher was surprised to learn that he had been considered “at risk” of failure during his first grade year. He continues to read with confidence and continues to increase his ability to read increasingly more difficult text. At the end of the second nine weeks he is reading a level 36 text which is well above grade level. His writing continues to improve and reflect his
reading growth. He is very independent and confident in his own abilities to build his own understandings and problem solves new solutions to problems. His interest survey for his classroom indicates that he has chosen reading as his favorite subject. He also states that it is the subject he feels most competent about. This is quite encouraging from a student who was so reluctant to read or write at the being of first grade.

Alice

Alice was a student who arrived at Daisy Elementary well after the first weeks of school. Her classroom teacher quickly identified her as a student who needed the services of the school’s Reading Recovery® teacher. Because Alice arrived several weeks after school had begun, all four Reading Recovery® slots had already been filled when she arrived. This meant that she would be placed in a Literacy Group until a slot opened up in Reading Recovery®. She had attended another district elementary school whose school performance scores were extremely low.

Alice’s initial beginning of the year assessments revealed a young student who seemed very bright and was extremely verbal. She did not seem to possess the skills or the knowledge to orchestrate working through an unknown word. Alice did not seem to possess a system for working through unknown words. She had to learn how to interact with unknown words during the act of reading and writing. Her ability to make up a story about the pictures in a book that was in actuality very plausible and did somewhat make sense was quite remarkable. It was however, very easy to observe that when Alice interacted with text that she was not really attending to print. Her approximations as she seemed to read were close, but there were significant mis-approximations that revealed that she was not really looking at the print. Another dead give away was her observed gaze away from the lines of text as she made up a story about
the picture. Alice would have to be taught to use what she knew to learn new items and concepts. She would also have to be taught to attend to print.

Alice’s Scores

<table>
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<th>Letter Identification</th>
<th>Oral Word Test</th>
<th>Concepts About Print</th>
<th>Writing Vocabulary</th>
<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
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May Writing Vocabulary—110 words

Alice was placed in a Literacy Group as soon as an opening occurred. The Literacy Group teacher immediately began mini-lessons with the small group demonstrating attending to print and one to one. It took some time to help Alice understand and notice that the meaning in the story lay in the print. Alice had a difficult time attending to the story, instruction, or the group discussion. After just a few lessons, it was easy to observe that in order to teach Alice it would be necessary to capture her attention. Alice loved to have conversations with her teacher, so her literacy group teacher used this to their advantage. Scaffolding is usually accomplished through conversation between the child and the individual providing the support. As the teacher was able to support Alice and help her focus on the lessons, Alice began to internalize the lessons. As her literacy strategies and skills improved so did her motivation to learn.

It quickly became evident that Alice was very intelligent and rapidly acquired new skills, strategies, and concepts. Observation revealed that she had numerous confusions and misconceptions regarding language in both reading and writing. Her literacy group teacher developed explicit lessons that modeled and supported her as Alice worked with strategies and
concepts she needed to acquire in order to be successful with reading and writing. Using a conversation method of delivering support and instruction provided the means for both Alice and her literacy group to develop their ability to focus on the task at hand and internalize the strategies and concepts being taught.

Alice was picked up by Reading Recovery® in November when one of the Reading Recovery® students moved. Her entry data shows that in November she was reading a level 4 text at 90% accuracy. In November a student reading on level would be reading level 8 or 9 text at 94% accuracy. In the August, Alice’s had read a level A text at 100% accuracy. She had made progress, but not at the level or rate her verbal abilities seemed to indicate. Alice’s knowledge of letter-sound association also seemed to be very competent; however, Alice did not demonstrate an understanding of how to apply this knowledge in order to decode and encode in a productive manner. Alice’s attentional concerns continued to interfere with her ability to focus on lessons as well as her ability to recall concepts and strategies as she needed to apply them in reading and writing. Her Reading Recovery® teacher worked to employ tasks and activities that include activities that required her to use several modalities. Using multiple modalities and conversational delivery of explicit instruction seemed to support Alice as she internalizes the needed strategies and concepts to grow as a reader and a writer. She needed to learn to use what she knew in a systematic manner to learn new words. Learning to assimilate new high frequency and sight words would enable Alice to read more fluently while minimizing the decoding of new words.

In early Reading Recovery® lessons Alice was taught how to apply and use the concepts in place and once these strategies were in place she was taught additional concepts and supported as she learned to use them. Her classroom teacher and her Reading Recovery® teacher
collaborated to support her as she began to move into ever increasing levels of text reading. As Alice acquired new reading strategies during the course of her reading program she began to apply the new strategies in her reading and writing both in her classroom and in her reading program. Her motivation to learn increased and so did her self-confidence. Alice’s progress seemed to be very steady and it seemed that once she began to integrate the reading strategies she seemed to develop an accurate understanding of the acts of reading and writing. Her writing strategies continued to develop and appeared to lead her reading strategies and concepts.

At the end of her program (April) Alice was reading a Text Level 24 at 93% accuracy. First graders are considered to be reading on level at the end of the school year if they are reading Level 16 texts. Her writing vocabulary was over 120 words. Alice demonstrated strategic verbal ability all through her program. She was able to create varied stories with complex structure. She was not usually able to write her stories initially. Part of her support required that she be taught to listen carefully and learn to record the letters associated with the sounds she was hearing. As Alice began to internalize the needed literacy concepts that supported her ability to read and write at increasingly higher levels of competence, her success as she interacted with new text or new writing tasks seemed to engage her and move her forward motivating her to push herself as she read and wrote.

Alice’s enthusiasm for reading and writing only increased as her ability grew. She learned to embrace reading and writing as she learned to view herself as a reader and a writer. She began to self-monitor and problem solve on her own. At the beginning of her reading program she would always turn to her classroom teacher or her Reading Recovery®/Literacy Group teacher to determine or monitor whether or not her approximations or attempts were correct. This really affected her fluency and comprehension because of the pauses and breaks in
her reading. Alice needed fluent phrasing to maintain comprehension and understanding. Her teacher provided the needed prompts and instructions to support Alice’s continued literacy growth and progress, but realized that in order to facilitate the cessation of Alice’s continuous glances to monitor her reading she needed to avoid eye contact and appear to be occupied as Alice read. It took quite a bit of work and some time to eliminate this behavior. It was one of the behaviors that were both ingrained and ineffective. With a great deal of persistence and consistency, Alice’s Reading Recovery® teacher was eventually able to help Alice realize that stopping after almost every word to look at the teacher to determine whether or not she was correct was not productive. Her teacher began to explicitly teach Alice that she possessed knowledge and strategies that would allow her to check her own reading and determine whether of not she had used the proper reading strategies to decode and read the text. Another behavior that had to eliminated was Alice tendency to stop in the middle of her reading to begin a conversation about something, not always necessarily relevant to the reading, but never the less a topic that potentially interrupted her comprehension of the story in the text. Alice was both very intelligent and verbal. She had to be taught to focus and remain on track. It took patience and explicit teaching and prompting to redirect her and eliminate this behavior without eliminating her confidence and enthusiasm. This was perhaps the most difficult ineffective behavior to eliminate. As Alice began to acquire new strategies and competencies she also began to understand through explicit teaching that she did indeed possess the ability to monitor and be in charge of her own reading. As she came to understand how she could check her own reading and writing, she also began to understand her own competencies. These new found understandings and competencies supported her independence and self reliance. Alice came to view herself as an independent reader and writer.
At the beginning of this school term, Alice who is now in second grade was able to read a level 30 text at 94% accuracy on the beginning of the assessments. Her teacher is new to the school and was very surprised to discover that Alice had been an “at risk” reader. Alice is reading above level and has maintained all A’s on her term grades. Her reading and writing levels have remained above grade level. Alice is not only a reader and writer in her own estimation, but in the eyes of her second grade teacher.

Bryce

Bryce was a first grader who seemed from initial testing to be on grade level. Because he seemed to be on level it was thought that he would continue to make progress in his classroom, so he was not recommended for reading intervention in August. During grade level meetings and teacher discussions regarding students, in September Bryce’s classroom teacher and the Reading Recovery® teacher reviewed his running records and writing samples. From studying the student work, they determined that Bryce was not making the progress they had initially felt he would make in reading and writing. The decided that they would reexamine his assessment in the next few weeks to determine what actions they should take and if any intervention would be necessary other than classroom support. The classroom teacher and the Reading Recovery® teacher did formulate a classroom plan that his teacher would use to support him until they could meet again to examine his latest work. Over the course of the next few weeks his classroom teacher worked with Bryce in small group providing scaffolding for the strategic support he needed.

In October, his classroom teacher requested that he be assessed and considered for Reading Recovery® or for Literacy Groups because he was not continuing to make the progress his ability had indicated in early August and in September. Just as significant as being below
level at the beginning of the school year would be the child who is on level and seemingly a
bright child but who did not make the continuous progress necessary to increase their reading
and writing competencies as the weeks went by during the school year. When Bryce was
assessed in October, he knew many items and concepts, but he only read a Level 5 text at 90%
accuracy which was several levels below grade level. He demonstrated knowledge of many items
and concepts, but he did not demonstrate knowledge or ability to use reading or writing strategies
on unknown words or concepts during reading and writing. Often he did not visually attend to
print as he read. As his teacher observed Bryce interacting with text, his teacher noted that he
seldom kept his eyes on the print continuously. He seemed to rapidly visually scan just enough
text to get the “jest” of the story line. He was such a bright student that typically he was able to
tell (the key word is tell) a very plausible story. He also demonstrated very inconsistent use of
reading and writing strategies. Bryce demonstrated very strong verbal ability and a large writing
vocabulary during his Oral Word Test and Writing Vocabulary assessment sections. He did not
consistently apply this knowledge in his early Reading Recovery® lessons or in his activities and
lessons in his classroom. Bryce would often begin to make up meaning text as he read orally
rather than use the strategies he was learning to problem solve unknown words. When held
accountable for using newly learned strategies and concepts during oral reading, Bryce quite
capable of demonstrating the ability to problem solve on the run. He seemed to be a student that
needed extensive practice in order to feel secure as he employed newly learned reading and
Dialogue between the classroom teacher and his reading teacher allowed these teachers to
collaborate to support new learning and hold Bryce accountable for concepts and strategies he
demonstrated proficiency and competency with in lessons and activities. New concepts and
strategies were introduced, modeled, and opportunities to practice and interface with new information were provided Bryce.

**Bryce’s Scores**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Percentile Score on Text Reading</th>
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<td>22</td>
<td>82</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

May Writing Vocabulary—171 words

Bryce grasped new concepts and strategies quickly, but did not consistently apply these skills and abilities to new situations and texts. His two teachers worked together to systematically provide opportunities for practice and application of needed strategies while supporting him and holding him accountable for using new learned strategies appropriately. Bryce had many ineffective reading behaviors and confusions that he had internalized in prior literacy experiences. It took repeated lessons, instruction, and time to support Bryce so that he could relearn and internalize new effective reading and writing strategies. It took several weeks to support Bryce’s acquisition of new reading and writing strategies. Bryce needed numerous opportunities to manipulate language and internalize the language concepts needed to successfully interact with text and literacy events. Bryce had to be retrained to strategically examine text as well as to use meaning and structural cue sources as he interacted with text during the reading act. It typically takes longer for a student to unlearn ineffective reading and writing behaviors than it does internalize these same behaviors. Bryce’s teachers repeatedly support him as he interacted with text and as he composed his stories.
Bryce’s tendency to glance quickly at text on the run and assume that he knew what the story line had been successful for quite some time in his kindergarten reading groups and in the early weeks of first grade as he interacted with text in reading. As Bryce had used these ineffective strategies he had also used visual information from the pictures in the stories to obtain just enough information to make his interaction with the text somewhat accurate. It became apparent to his teachers that he had to learn how to use these strategies effectively if he was to become a strategic reader. Bryce had to first learn to really look at text. He also had to notice when what he read did not look right. He also had to notice when what he read did not make sense or sound structurally correct in addition to not looking right. Bryce was quite content to have his reading be somewhat accurate. If his reading was similar to the text in the story, he was satisfied. Bryce needed to become dissatisfied when his reading did not accurately reflect the print in the story. Bryce had to be taught how to check his reading. He also needed to begin to notice when his reading and writing did not look visually correct, did not make sense, or did not sound right when read. This meant that Bryce had to really learn how to look at this reading and writing. This was a difficult task for him. Bryce was satisfied with his first attempts. His teachers had to help him learn to be dissatisfied when his reading and writing did not make sense, look right, or sound right.

Bryce’s teachers had to provide opportunities for him to read and write that would require him to slow down and really learn how to look at print. They had to model and support him as he learned to look through print to visually search for details so that he could accurately decode the text in the story. They had to hold him accountable for using the strategies he had internalized and while continuing to teach him the next strategies he needed to learn in order to help him move to the next level in reading. Bryce also had to learn to trust himself to manage his reading.
He had to arrive at the realization that he could actually use the cueing systems to orchestrate his own reading and writing. Bryce had to learn to approach literacy act with an awareness that supported him as he was self-checking, cross-checking, and self-correcting strategically on the run during reading and writing. Because Bryce was so adept at pulling just enough of the storyline from key words in the text and the story illustrations, it was necessary to begin to give him text that was a bit beyond his reading reach to force him to slow down and really begin to look at the text.

Bryce had a very good visual memory which supported him as he wrote. He was able to spell and write a significant number of words for a first grader at that point in the year. Ironically this did not act as the support one would have thought for him to exercise his creative bent as he wrote stories. Bryce seemed to lack the confidence in his ability needed to use what he knew to attempt to write new unknown words. Because of this lack of confidence, Bryce restricted himself as he wrote to the words he already knew. It took a great deal of modeling and teaching to provide the support necessary to allow Bryce to begin to reach beyond his comfort zone and take the risks that would allow him to attempt words and stories he did not readily know. When this break through finally came, Bryce seemed to be almost seemed to be moved to become more creative as he wrote by the ability to write new ideas and words using the skills, strategies and concepts he had learned to use to support his writing ability. This new ability to use his literacy strategies to extend his range of knowledge was somewhat of a “breakthrough” for Bryce. Up until that point in his lessons his reading abilities had been limited by his ability to extend his literacy knowledge through the writing portion of his lessons. As his writing concepts and strategies began to grow, they supported further growth in reading. His reading growth seemed to increase and growth as a much more rapid rate as his writing ability grew.
At the end of Bryce’s reading program, he was consistently using strategies and concepts
and had expanded his writing vocabulary from 55 words in October to 171 words in April. His
(text reading had moved from a Level 5 at 90% in October to a Level 16 at 93% in April. His
reading and writing had become quite independent. He no longer had to be prompted to use
appropriate reading and writing strategies. Bryce was a confident reader and writer. Bryce began
second grade slightly above level in reading and writing. His reading and writing continued to
grow and expand. He remained in the top reading group in his class. His reading and writing are
still self-regulated and controlled by Bryce. His Accelerated Reading Scores place him at third
grade level, and his scores actually placed him in contention for a reading award at his grade
level honors program. Bryce’s successes in reading and writing continued to motivate him and
courage him to attempt new concepts, strategies, and challenges. His success in reading and
writing has served to support him and encouraged him to extend his reach thus providing the
stimulation and motivation to extend his reading and writing abilities. Bryce has maintained and
extended his control of reading and writing. He continued to maintain a self-extending system of
literacy which supported his extension of reading and writing while continuing to read and write
at ever increasing higher levels. He enjoys reading and writing and participates in both activities
with enthusiasm and anticipation.

Adjustments on Research Study Based on District Mandates

Following the previous semester’s pilot study, district mandates were set in place
requiring a three tiered delivery of all phonics, reading, and language arts in all kindergarten thru
third grade classrooms using two programs, Open Court and Harcourt Brace reading and
language arts. Instruction was delivered to all students in whole class presentation using the same
texts. Teachers were mandated to delivery instruction from these programs with fidelity. This
provided an opportunity to examine and compare student progress as instruction was delivered when students were scaffolded and when they were not provided support. Some pre-assessments were administered, but student reading and writing levels were not determined. Instruction began with the first lesson in each book and progressed sequentially through the next.

Because the following students were to be used in this case study, a writing sample was taken and text reading level was determined by assessing each study using leveled benchmark text during the morning class time before instruction began in August. The students selected for inclusion within this case study were chosen by classroom teachers based on teacher observations and student interaction with learning activities during the course of the first weeks of school. Students were randomly selected for inclusion in the case study. When one of the first grade classroom teachers resigned days before school, the Reading Recovery® teacher was placed in this classroom when no certified teacher could be found to fill this position. This was to be a temporary situation, but turned into a long term placement. Students in the case study come from this classroom. Students included in this case study are all first time first graders who while they are the lowest performing students within the class all are regular education students. Each of these students presented varying levels of difficulty in grasping new reading and writing concepts during district mandated instruction.

From the first days of the school semester, the three classroom teachers had maintained dialogue and conversation during both official planning times and grade level book/journal talk so that they were able to problem solve when concerned about an individual student’s progress. These teachers were also members of several inter district professional study groups, so they had also maintained professional conversations with teachers throughout the school district. After nine weeks of instruction, grade level teachers met to develop a plan for insuring that the
students in their classrooms made the progress needed to become on level readers and writers. Each of the teachers expressed the concern that not one student in their class seemed to be achieving the progress made by students in past sessions based upon a comparison of charted data. The teachers devised a plan to meet with students in small groups following the mandated language arts block for guided reading and writing. These teachers determined that if they did not provide an intervention and support for their students, an inordinately large number of these first grade students would not be reading and writing on grade level at the end of the school year. The following students were randomly selected by the researcher. These students while performing in the bottom five to ten percent of their class each demonstrate varying levels of academic ability. Their exposure to literacy experiences outside of school is also varied.

**Case Study Students**

**Tyler**

Tyler was a very young student who came to Daisy as a result of a natural disaster. He was a five year old whose sixth birthday occurred shortly after the first weeks of school. Tyler was the lowest performing regular education student in the case study classroom. He was unable to read any words on the Oral Word Test Task or the three words in a level A book. He was able to write his first name, but was unable to write any other words. He was able to write a series of letters for dictated words; however, there was no evidence of letter sound association for any of the words he wrote. Tyler had difficulty holding a pencil properly. When presented with pencil and paper tasks he was seldom able to successfully complete the task. His attempts to write sometimes produced a few random letters, a picture or two, and sometimes scribble. When Tyler interacted with text he did not seem to notice the print. His attention was totally focused on the pictures. Tyler did not seem to possess a large vocabulary to support him as he spoke with his
teacher or his classmates. Telephone conversations with family members and conferences with his mother revealed that she was legally deaf. This information provided insight that might possibly help explain why his language development could not be at normal levels due to lack of language stimulation at an early age. Research and personal experience has shown that young children who have a deaf care provider often exhibit significant language delays. His classroom teacher contacted the school’s speech therapist to determine whether or not this might have contributed to his low performance scores in the beginning of the year assessments and his poor performance in the classroom on literacy events. The speech therapist administered several assessments that determined that Tyler did have a language delay and some articulation problems. This qualified him for speech therapy services.

### Tyler’s Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Letter Identification</th>
<th>Oral Word Test</th>
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<th>Writing Vocabulary</th>
<th>Hearing and Recording Sounds</th>
<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Percentile Score on Text Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Pre-study (August)</td>
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<td>5</td>
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During the first weeks of school, Tyler often seemed lost during the hour long reading phonics portion of the reading block. He did not seem to understand the relationship between letters and sounds. On the Concepts About Print assessment task, he was unable to successfully locate either a letter or a word demonstrating that he did not truly understand these concepts. He did not demonstrate an understanding that print contained the meaning nor did he demonstrate that he had one to one during text reading. On the Text Reading Task, Tyler was unable to demonstrate knowledge of one to one. He was unable to read a word repeated three times in the
level A text. He did not attend to print, choosing to look at the pictures the entire time. During the Oral Word assessment, Tyler did not demonstrate that he had a core of meager words to support him as he interacted with text. The beginning of the year assessments revealed that Tyler possessed numerous gaps and confusions in his literacy knowledge. The assessments also indicated a need to provided support for Tyler as he acquired the needed skills, strategies, and concepts that would support him as he became a reader and a writer. Tyler was a very quiet, shy young child. He seemed to be exactly the student who would most benefit from small group and individual instruction. District mandates did not provide or allow for these accommodations this school year. Whole group instruction was mandated in all curriculum areas. The grade level reading/writing interventionist was no longer an option either as district funds for this position had been taken away.

During the whole group instruction provided by the reading block, Tyler freely participated and responded when he able to contribute; however, he often just sat with a very confused expression in his eyes. Tyler’s ability to apply any new letter sound knowledge he was acquiring to his writing was extremely slow. When he wrote it was extremely labored and the letters he wrote seldom reflect the sounds or words he said they represented. Tyler wrote many letters as reversals. At the end of the first nine week grading period, Tyler did not attend to print consistently, demonstrated evidence of one to one matching during reading, directional movement or return sweep. He was able to memorize the text pattern in very simple stories, but he was not able to consistently match what he said to the text on a specific page. When he attempted to read, he typically was not looking at the words at all. Tyler seemed to be making no progress at all. Using the method of reading instruction mandated by the district directives did not seem to be meeting the needs of this young reader. In order to support Tyler and assist his
acquisition of early reading and writing skills, strategies, and concepts it was imperative that he be presented with leveled text that allowed him to interact with the concepts he was developing at a reading level that would free him from the need to process too many strategic tasks at one time and would allow him to acquire needed strategies systematically. Tyler seemed to have many large gaps in his literacy knowledge as well as many confusions about how language and words worked. His classroom teacher determined that he would benefit significantly from small group instruction.

The classroom teacher began to include Tyler in a small group of students who were also performing at or near his level of proficiency. This reading group was presented with leveled predictable text that contained no more than two to three words per page. They also had several mini lessons during the reading session. The students needed to develop an awareness of letter/sound and its relation to print. Tyler knew many letters, and he also knew many sounds. He did not seem to understand the relationship between letters, the sounds they make, and their relationship with the reading act. Tyler began to actually attend to print and develop some directionality. Return sweep was not yet consistent, but with two weeks he was developing consistency with these early reading behaviors. He also needed to develop a meager core of words that he could read and write to support him as he learned to read ever increase higher levels of text. As Tyler interacted with text in small group he began to demonstrate a new awareness of letter/sound knowledge. Within days he began to consistently read several sight words both in text and in isolation. He was also able to discuss and retell the storyline from his level readers.

Tyler’s writing also began to develop. While his stories were simple pattern sentences of three or four words, he began to use many words that resembled the words he stated before he
began to write his message. He also began to notice how words began and seemed monitor his reading with first letter. His ability to monitor with one to one was still not as consistent as it needed to be for his reading to become stable. As Tyler began to take on new reading behaviors his confidence in his own ability in small group began to grow manifesting itself in his eagerness to participate and read. Tyler’s ability to write while increasing strategically was still significantly below level. Tyler was not able to independently complete most class writing assignments or simple written check-up and assessments without significant one on one support. His classroom teacher placed his desk near her work area so that she could readily supervise and provide assistance when needed, but move away when necessary so that he could continue to become increasingly more independent.

Two weeks after Tyler began small group reading instruction, he began to consistently use one to one and demonstrated the ability to cross-check his reading to make sure that what he had read made sense, looked right, and sounded right. His own self realization that he was using these reading behaviors brought him a significant amount of pride. As Tyler began to develop a self-awareness that he was becoming a reader and a writer, he seemed to become self-motivated by his new reading and writing abilities. He began to notice that the books he was reading were becoming more difficult, but he was experiencing new found success as he interacted with print. He and his classroom teacher examined his writing samples in his journal. His teacher pointed out the differences in his writing samples. The smile on his face as he began to notice the advances in his writing being point out to him reflected his growing pride and confidence.

In order to expand Tyler’s ability to write, his teacher felt that he needed support and instruction especially to allow him to focus and begin to hear the sounds in words. His teacher began to first have him clap the parts of words. When he had internalized this ability and was
able to consistently clap the parts of multi-syllable words, he was ready to begin to push the sounds in words. His teacher began by teaching him to use Elkonian boxes and discs to push first words with two sounds and next words with three sounds. As Tyler began to use this strategy in writing, he also began to use the strategy in his reading. This strategy supported him as he began to visually scan text with more care and allowed him to read through words with much more accuracy and ease. As he began to use newly learned skills and strategies his reading levels began to expand. These early successes seemed to almost propel Tyler forward in to higher reading levels. His writing also seemed to grow. His sentence length, quantity, and complexity of sentence pattern were also growing.

At the end of five weeks of small group instruction Tyler was reading a Level 5 text at 93% accuracy. This was still below level at that point in the year, but was much better than his progress during the first nine weeks of school. On level at this point in the year is a Level 10 or 12. His writing vocabulary also was increasing by two to three words per week. At end of November, time his family withdrew him from school saying that they were moving back to their hometown. Unfortunately, his classmates related to their teacher in early December that the family had not yet moved out of their apartment because they saw Tyler and his brother each day playing in the parking lot of the complex. Prior to his dropping from the schools rolls, he had read a Level six text in reading group. At that point in time he reading a level 6 text at 95% accuracy and had begun to be able to write very simple patterned sentences of five to six words. His teacher had hoped that by the mid point in the year he would read a level 8 or 9. It seemed that with the successes he was having in his reading and writing, that he might have achieved this goal. While this was not on level, it was quite an accomplishment in approximately five weeks.
Jerrica

Jerrica was a five year old first grader whose sixth birthday occurred two months into the school year. Her beginning of the year assessments revealed that she was a nonreader with few writing skills. Jerrica was able to write many letters, but she did not always form them correctly and she had many reversals. When she wrote, Jerrica did not have spaces between her letters. Her writing was simply long strings of letters. She did not consistently attend to print and typically created her own storyline using the pictures in the books. She did pick up on the story pattern and could repeat the story line with some accuracy, but she did not look at the lines of text in the book at all. She was able to write her first name and the first letter of her last name, but they were written as together as though they were one word. Jerrica was unable to read any of the words on any of the word lists. Her ability to handle and look at books demonstrated her familiarity with books. Jerrica possessed a large oral vocabulary, and was able to engage in conversations with both her teacher and her peers. Her oral literacy abilities did not seem in line with her reading and writing efforts. Jerrica preferred to perform most of her literacy tasks orally.

At the beginning of the school term, Jerrica was unable to read a Level A book with any success. At the end of the first nine weeks, she was still unable to read a Level 2 text with any consistency. She needed to be explicitly taught in small group. Her confusions regarding how words worked frustrated her in whole group instruction during reading block.

At the end of the first nine weeks her classroom teacher observed that Jerrica had acquired few strategies and concepts needed to support her as she worked to become a reader and a writer. She did not seem to be internalizing concepts and skills at a rate that would allow her to evolve into a competent reader and writer. The mandated methods of reading instruction dictated
by the district during the reading block did seem to be supporting Jessica as she worked to become a reader and writer.

Jerrica joined a small group that began by reading leveled predictable text with two to three words per page or ones with simple patterned text. She had to be held accountable of using the letter/sound associations she knew, and she needed to acquire a meager core of words that she knew with some automaticity that would free her to focus on decoding only few words as she read. This would also allow her to internalize new concepts and story meaning as she read.

Jerrica’s preferred method of communication was verbal. She did not seem to enjoy the writing act. She seldom completed any writing tasks. When she did complete creative writing tasks they were usually very brief sentences of three to five words that may or may not be legible. Her spacing between words and letters was not consistent.

Jerrica’s Scores

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At the end of three weeks of small group instruction, Jerrica was confidently reading level 4 text at 94% accuracy, and she was able to write a simple patterned sentence with some spacing between words when supported by her classroom teacher. Once again, her auditory and oral abilities in reading seemed to respond much more rapidly than her ability to construct a message and record it in writing. When she attempted written tasks her efforts were usually very inconsistent. Some of her writing was legible and contained a simple message while many of her
written stories contained only bits and pieces that were legible. Her spacing was usually inconsistent and often the spacing between her letters was such that it was almost impossible to see word boundaries.

Because of the difficulty Jerrica was experiencing as she wrote, her classroom teacher determined that she needed to strategically work with Jerrica to support her as she developed the ability to see her word boundaries. As Jerrica learned to compose a story and retain the message in her mind until she could get it on paper, her classroom teacher worked to support her as she got her message down on paper. Jerrica’s classroom teacher began by having her repeat her message several times out loud after she had created the story. Her teacher then supported her as she wrote her story on paper. When Jerrica came to a word she was unsure of or did not seem to know how to begin to record it, her teacher would have her clap the parts of the word and listen to the sounds she heard. Jerrica had not been using the strategies she knew to support her as she attempted to write her stories. As she internalized this concept, her teacher began to draw Elkonian sound boxes had her push the syllables in the words she was having trouble writing. This forced Jerrica to slow her speaking and thinking to a rate that allowed her to really listen to sounds and internalize sounds in sequence. She began to hear sounds in order, which allowed her to begin to write her stories with expanding vocabulary and structure. Once Jerrica demonstrated the ability to push and hear syllables in the words she was writing with consistency, her teacher began to draw letter boxes for her. This allowed Jerrica to begin to integrate her visual memory with her auditory memory. Using multiple modalities provided additional support for Jerrica as she began to learn how to monitor her own reading and writing.

Jerrica continued to have a problem with reversals. She not only reversed individual letters such as “b” for “d” and “p” for “q” as she wrote them, she often wrote letters within words
out of sequence or reversed such as “earht” for “earth.” Her teacher began to use salt trays and sand paper letters to support her as she learned to attend to this detail in her writing. Jerrica still has days or moments when she unconsciously writes letters backwards or when she writes the letters out of sequence or reversed, but oddly enough she seldom reads letters as reversals, such as a “b” for a “d.” This is a bit unusual as many children who write reversals typically read them as well. Her teacher still pulls the salt tray out when she demonstrates this reversal of letters. She did begin to write reversals much less often than she did earlier in the semester, and her teacher does hold her accountable for noticing when she reads or writes a portion of a word incorrectly. It seemed that Jerrica did not seem to notice her incorrect approximations as often in her writing as she did in her reading. Once her classroom teacher observed this, she began to work with Jerrica to help her learn to look at her writing and print much more carefully. One of the way of doing this was to get her to really slow down her verbalizations using Elkonian sound boxes and push the sounds and finally to use letter boxes to help her write her word choices more carefully.

Jerrica’s stories were always well developed and had a distinct, clearly defined message. It seemed that because she was so intent upon getting the message down on paper that she often did not attend to the finer details in her haste to record her story/message. Her classroom teacher felt that Jessica needed to get better at “looking” at her own writing and print. When Jessica became hurried or rushed, her letters seemed top spread apart and the spaces between words became smaller. Her teacher supported her by demonstrating how to use a tongue depressor between her words as she wrote. Another support to assist her in remembering her story and visually cue her to see the space between words, her teacher would place a post-it note down on her writing paper for each of the words in her story. As she wrote the story on the page, the post-it was lifted. This technique actually supported Jerrica in two different ways. It also served to
help Jerrica remember her actual story as well as helping her to see the visual spaces between the words.

As Jerrica began to receive reading and writing instruction that provided her with the scaffolding and support she seemed to need, her acquisition of literacy strategies actually began to become internalized. Jerrica begin to demonstrate a developing understanding of new and increasingly more complex literacy concepts as she interacted with text in small group lessons and writing as she wrote and dialogued with her teacher and peers. For the first nine weeks of school, Jerrica seem suspended or stuck at somewhere between a Level A and a Level 1 text. Her writing, while containing many visibly recognizable letters, did not seem to be really moving to the next level when a rubric was applied. She could barely even manage to copy print or words.

As the case study progressed, her classroom teacher supported her in small group reading and writing so that she could learn to manipulate the reading and writing strategies she needed to internalize in order to become an independent reader and writer with a self-extending literacy system. As Jerrica interacted with new text and new writing tasks, she began to apply these concepts to other literacy activities outside of small group. Jerrica’s ability to interact with text and the reading act seemed to develop at a more rapid pace than her ability to write and build meaning in writing.

At the end of the second nine weeks Jerrica was reading Level 7 text at 93% accuracy and writing increasingly more complex sentences. She increased her writing vocabulary to 30 words. Within two weeks she independently read a Level 10 text at 94% accuracy and proudly presented her latest story to her teacher for inclusion in the latest published class book. Jerrica seems to be on her way to becoming an independent reader who is beginning to use her literacy strategies in both reading and writing. She was able to independently write 48 words in her latest
ten minute word write. Providing the needed support for this first grader seemed to be the
necessary scaffolding that would allow her to interact with language and print learning to
manipulate them so that she was able to internalize strategies that would provide the independent
system a reader and writer need when engaging in the reading and writing act.

**Darrius**

Darrius is a very confident verbal six year old who began the school year below level in
reading and writing. While Darrius was very verbal when he was with his peers, in whole group
and with adults he was quite shy and quiet. Darrius’ observed verbal and intellectual ability did
not seem to match his classroom work in reading and writing activities. He read a Level 1 book
at 90% accuracy during beginning of the year assessments. His writing samples indicated that he
was not on level in writing either. He wrote strings of letters with irregular spacing. He
sometimes demonstrated return sweep as he wrote, but quite often wrote all over the page,
seldom writing anything that had letter or sounds that correlated with what he said his was
story’s message. Very often his writing resembled a list. When he drew a picture to go with a
story, his oral reading of his written story was typically about the picture even if it was difficult
to read his message. In reading block he was unable to demonstrate that he had one to one
correspondence, attending to print, or return sweep. Darrius was often able to answer oral
questions about the content of the story which seemed to indicate that he understood what he was
hearing, but he demonstrated a great deal of difficulty in interacting with text and oral reading of
a piece of text. Darrius seemed to lack effective strategies to orchestrate literacy tasks in both
reading and writing. During the whole group reading block he began to use his auditory memory
skills and became quite adapt at memorizing the whole story being introduced in the decodable
text and in the basal. This demonstrated a very import literacy strength for Darrius—his ability to
remember a storyline. For young children, having visual and auditory memory is a very important asset for acquisition of reading and writing skills and concepts.

### Darrius’ Scores

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<th>Text Reading</th>
<th>Percentile Score on Text Reading</th>
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Darrius needed to learn that print contained the meaning in his stories. He needed to learn to actually look at the print if he was ever to “crack the code”—the alphabetic code of reading and writing. During the first few weeks of school, Darrius began to acquire several significant strategies such as internalizing the phonemic principle of letter sound association. He needed to learn to use the letter/sound knowledge he demonstrated in phonics lessons to help him decode words as he read. Darrius knew a few words, but when he came to words he did not know, he would look at the teacher and wait to be told the word. He needed to be taught how to use these concepts to read through new words systematically. He also needed to acquire a meager core of sight words that would support his reading. This ability would free him up so that he did not have to decode every word as he read. It would also support him as he held the meaning of the story during reading.

During whole group phonics instruction it was difficult to monitor each student’s progress. It was also difficult to determine which students were truly engaged and attending to instruction. Darrius had a difficult time remaining on task and attending to a ninety minute phonics lesson that was conducted whole group. He did begin to make some associations, but his
progress was slow and arduous. The phonics lessons, while taught to the whole class, were basically isolated skills presented in isolation rather than imbedded within a basal story or a leveled text. This method of instructional delivery was typically not only difficult for most lower grade students to grasp but made it difficult for most of them to remain focused on the task during the delivery of instruction.

Darrius was not making the progress at the end of the first nine weeks. He was still only reading a level 3 book at 93% accuracy. Typically, students in first grade at Daisy Elementary at the end of the first nine weeks of school should have been reading a level 6 or 7 book at 94% accuracy to be considered on level in reading. His classroom teacher felt that Darrius needed to be in a small group so that he could have opportunities to interact with reading and writing at text levels that would support him as he used the concepts he knew. Teacher observation, modeling, and explicit teaching would support him. It seemed difficult for him to attend consistently to the lesson during whole class phonics and reading block. With these observations in place, his classroom teacher studied Darrius’ work and her antidotal notes to determine how her instruction should be designed to provide the most support possible for him at that time. She placed him in a guided reading group with four other students who were reading on or near the same reading level. She began to select books and design small group lessons that would challenge these students while presenting just enough challenges to force them to extend themselves to the next higher level of reading and writing.

Darrius’ teacher selected several different sets of appropriately leveled texts for Darrius’ reading group. Lessons focused on introduction and modeling of strategic early reading behaviors such as attending to print, one to one, left to right directionality, and return sweep. His classroom teacher prefaced each book introduction with strategic information that the students
would need to support their successful interaction with the text. Each lesson contained mini-lessons that introduced new sight words and high frequency words. Lessons concluded with a writing segment that introduced elements that each of the students needed to focus on in their reading. Introducing a literacy strategy such as monitoring with the first letter of the word in the writing supported Darrius and his peers as they internalized new reading strategies that would extend their reading.

At the end of the third week of small group instruction, Darrius was reading a level 6 book at 94% accuracy. He was demonstrating the early reading behaviors of one to one, directionality, and return sweep with consistency. He was beginning to monitor his reading with the first letter of the word. He no longer sat and waited to be told what a word was. He had developed the ability to begin to read systematically through the words in text. He was developing a sense of independence that supported him as he problem solved on the run during the act of reading. Darrius continued to add words to his reading and writing vocabulary. Having a meager core of sight and high frequency words supported him by freeing him from the process of having to decode or “work” on each and every word as he read. This also supported Darrius by assisting him as he constructed the storyline and the message of the story as he read. At the end of the six weeks Darrius was reading a Level 7 book at 93% accuracy. His sentences were expanding and he was beginning to use more complex sentence structure and vocabulary. He still had instances that demonstrated that he was struggling with a new concept or needed further practice in working through a concept or strategy, but his reading and writing were beginning to move in line with his intellectual abilities.

Darrius was still not monitoring his own reading and writing. He did not seem to consistently notice when what he read or wrote did not look right, sound right, or make sense.
Darrius needed to learn to really visually search the text as he read or wrote. He also needed to learn to listen to what he said and to read what he was writing so that he could learn to monitor his own reading and writing. It was important that his teacher create activities and situations that would provide both Darrius and the other members of his reading group with the opportunities needed to both practice this strategies and concepts, but to also have the opportunities that would allow them to internalize these strategies and concepts so that he would begin to independently use these strategies in both his reading and his writing. It seemed that in Darrius’ situation he had to first really learn to closely focus on the text and his writing. So often when he was reading and writing he appeared to be only giving the text a cursory glance as he read through the lines or the piece of writing. His teacher determined that he needed to be moved up in text level to help him slow down in his reading and really look at the lines of text as he was processing them. In his writing he had internalized the concept/strategy of using sound boxes to help him write new words so his teacher moved him into letter boxes to help him learn to look at how words appeared visually and internalize this as he wrote. As Darrius worked though lessons he began to independently “notice” when his approximations were not correct. After about seven reading and writing lessons he was much more consistent and independently began to stop, reread, and problem solve to fix his reading or writing. This was an important break through for him. Having the ability to problem solve and correct his own attempts provided him with the confidence he seemed to need to move toward an independent self extending system in reading and in writing.

As Darrius built new strategies and concepts in reading and writing, he became more independent and confident. He also began to internalize an new awareness and understanding of how words work and how reading and writing were organized and developed. At the end of the case study Darrius was able to read a Level 12 text at 94% accuracy. He was reading and writing
on level for that point in the school year in first grade. He now seemed to actually enjoy his new ability to reading and to write. He has begun to take Accelerated Reader Tests and checks out a new book at least twice a week in the school library. As he has improved his ability to read and write, he has also demonstrated his new abilities to interact with print in his other subject areas. Darrius is an independent, confident reader and writer.

**Tasha**

Tasha was a six year old first grader who came to Daisy as the result of a regional natural disaster. At the beginning of the semester she was able to read a Level 1 book at 96% accuracy. She was able to read three words on the Oral Word List, and she was able to write four words on the Writing Vocabulary assessment even though she attempted to write sixteen words. She was not able to combine any of these words successfully in a message of her own, nor did she demonstrate the ability to read many of these words successfully as she encountered them in text. She seemed to know many items, but she did not seem to have a strategy for using any of these items effectively to successfully read or write. She was very verbal and was able to respond orally to many prompts and volunteered information in discussions during class lessons. She would, however, quite often begin to respond or volunteer an opinion and seemingly become lost in her own message and be unable to complete her sentence. She also demonstrated an inability to consistently attend to the reading lesson during the reading block. At the end of the nine weeks Tasha was only able to read a Level 2 book at 93% accuracy. When she wrote, she demonstrated an ability to place some of the words among strings of randomly place letters. As she worked to complete writing tasks and various assignments, Tasha almost seemed to become “lost” in the assignments or tasks. Her teacher also noticed that the entire time Tasha was at work at her desk she was either reading to herself, talking to herself or her neighbors, or singing or humming to
herself. She usually either complete or ran out of time on tasks long after her classmates had completed and handed their tasks in to the teacher.

Tasha’s Scores

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During the first nine weeks of school Tasha readily participated in the whole group reading block. She did acquire some items during daily instruction. During the thirty minute basal portion of the reading block, Tasha was able to successfully use many of these items when asked to provide an answer questions, but she was not always able to orchestrate these items as she interacted with text. When she read text and when she wrote stories, she typically either knew the word or she did not have any strategies for getting to that word except appealing to her teacher for assistance during the reading or writing act. When the reader does not seem to have strategies for decoding words and is forced to appeal to someone for almost every other word during reading, comprehension is at best very poor. When Tasha attempted to retell either the stories read or the stories she was writing, she could remember parts of the storyline, but not the complete, sequential storyline. She often appeared frustrated by this inability to retell the story. Her classroom teacher determined that unless strategic action took place Tasha would not become the active, independent reader and writer needed to become to be a successful first grader reader and writer.
At the end of the first nine weeks Tasha had not pulled to gather the elements needed to begin the application of strategic reading and writing behaviors that typically supports young readers and writers as they begin to understand the way language works in print. When Tasha was observed in whole group basal reading instruction, she was always bent over reading out loud under her breath. She seemed to be in that same little world she was in when she was working at her desk. It was almost as if she was really attempting to focus and concentrate on a task and attempting to figure out some element or strategy for herself. When Tasha was called upon to share her reflections or thoughts with the group, she was often unable to share them clearly or successfully with the group. She was able to recall some elements of the story, but was often observed to be attempting to find the proper words to share in a meaningful manner. The expression on her face usually reflected her self-doubt and seemed to say, “I am really not sure whether or not my answer is correct.” Tasha’s oral reading was very broken and full of pauses as she attempted to decode or problem solve the printed text. Because her oral reading was not fluent, her comprehension of the text was affected. She needed to be able to read with fluent phrasing. Her teacher determined that putting Tasha into appropriately leveled text would support Tasha as she became more fluent and also allow her to learn to read with the proper phrasing. Her natural language was predominately nonstandard dialectical structure and pronunciations. This seemed to really interfere with her internalization of the storyline and the comprehension of the author’s message. Tasha almost seemed to really not believe she was able to read, write, or recall with the degree of accuracy needed in group discussions. Tasha’s classroom teacher determined that she needed to be taught early reading behaviors as well as reading and writing strategies that would allow her to cross-check and self-regulate her reading. Many young readers do not realize that once they internalize these reading and writing strategies,
the strategies provide them with a means to “check” their reading and writing. They also must then learn to problem solve these approximations so that they may then re-negotiate their attempts as they work to be self-regulated readers and writers.

Tasha’s classroom teacher determined that Tasha possessed many of the early strategies she needed, but did not seem to be using these strategies effectively. Her teacher also determined that if Tasha was to become an independent reader and writer she would need to be placed in a small guided reading group so that strategies and concepts could be taught and modeled in a setting that would also provide the teacher the opportunity to support and observe Tasha and the other members of her small group as they attempted to use these needed strategies and concepts. The small group provided the necessary setting for the teacher to come in and support these students when needed, but withdraw the support as quickly as necessary as the students began to internalize and use these strategies independently. It also allowed the teacher the opportunity to observe these students as the employed these strategies and concepts and quickly provide feedback or adjustments when the students inaccurately applied strategies before they were internalized by the students.

Tasha was pulled into a small group for reading with four other students who were also reading on similar reading levels. She was able to focus and attend to the lesson with much greater ease in this small group setting. She began to add words to her reading and writing vocabulary. She began to demonstrate a beginning awareness of how she could use her letter/sound knowledge to support her developing ability to decode words in reading and encode them in writing. During the second nine weeks Tasha steadily increased her reading ability by consistently beginning to use new concepts and strategies that were modeled during small group instruction. She began to write increasingly more complex sentences with an expanding
vocabulary. Her responses in group discussion demonstrated her ability to hold the meaning of
the stories as well as express her thoughts and opinions about the story line.

As Tasha participated in small group reading and writing instruction, she quickly began
to employ early reading and writing strategies supported by her letter/sound association
knowledge, her developing one to one, directionality, and her increasing reading and writing
vocabulary. As she learned to look through words in reading and really listen to what she said as
she read, Tasha began to cross-check and self-monitor her own reading. As she realized that she
was beginning to gain independent control over her own reading and writing, Tasha began to
gain more confidence in her ability to control her reading and writing. As her confidence grew
she began to seek opportunities to read new text and to write stories. Her reading became more
expressive and fluent and she began to steadily read increasingly more difficult text. Tasha’s
writing also began to improve. Her writing vocabulary began to increase and the sentence
structure also became more complex. It seemed that as Tasha was able to write increasingly more
complex sentences, her ability to hold the storyline in both her writing and her reading became
stronger.

As Tasha’s reading and writing ability grew, she began to readily participate in class and
small group discussions about stories and curriculum topics. She did not seem to have any
hesitation or problems completing her sentences and she was able to remember what had
happened in the story. Tasha became very adapt at laying down post-it notes for each word in her
story and peeling off a note each time she wrote the word. As soon as she no longer needed the
notes to help her remember her stories, she ceased to use them. Tasha’s writing level lagged
somewhat behind her reading growth. She continued to need the support of her teacher to help
her really slow her language down and enunciate her story’s word so that she could really hear
the sounds she was making and record the letters in order.

At the end of the second nine weeks Tasha was reading a Level 10 text at 94% percent
accuracy. She was adding new reading and writing vocabulary at a rate of three to four words per
week. The supports provided by the small group instruction, leveled texts, and strategic teaching
and modeling supported her and allowed her to acquire new reading strategies and behaviors.
Tasha seemed to have begun to readily enjoy reading and writing as her ability grew. The self-
confidence she gained seemed to act as an additional support for the acquisition of new and
higher level reading and writing strategies and concepts.

Sally

Sally was a five year old first grader who entered first grade with some items of
letter/sound association, but did not seem to demonstrate an awareness or understanding of how
to use this knowledge. She was able to write many letters. While she was not able to read any
words on the Oral Word Test, she was able to able to write her first and last name on the Writing
Assessment. She was unable to write any other words that were recognizable as words. As her
classroom teacher worked with her on the August assessments, she did not seem to have the
confidence needed to “be a risk taker” on any of the beginning of the year assessments or
classroom activities. Later in classroom interactions, Sally revealed that she was a very bright,
intelligent five year old who appeared to possess many qualities necessary to become a reader
and a writer. When she engaged in dialogue with her classroom teacher, she was demonstrated
very well developed verbal abilities. This confirmed for her teacher that she possessed the
potential ability to be an independent reader and writer, but it posed another question for her
teacher, “Why were her oral verbal abilities and her print/reading abilities in closer alignment.
She was not able to read a Level A text successfully. Which meant she was not able to pick up the story pattern in a simple Level A story which is to read “no, no, no.” She did demonstrate an understanding that print contained the meaning in stories. She also demonstrated that she had directionality and return sweep.

During mandated reading block, Sally did not initially seem to be able to interact with the text presented in the basal or the decodable books. She did not consistently attend to print in these books. Sally did not possess the meager core of sight words that she needed to support her as she began to interact with text and her own writing. Her teacher began to include her in a guided reading group with other children reading at or about her level of reading. During guided reading, her teacher worked to teacher Sally and her peers so that they would have an additional support system for their text reading and writing. Sally’s early reading was very hesitant and broken. She either knew a word or did not know it and seemed to spend most of her time visually appealing to her teacher for assistance on unknown words. This break in reading hindered her comprehension of the storyline. Sally’s classroom teacher felt that it was important to teacher her some strategies that would assist her in decoding using some of the word knowledge she already possessed as well as some of the new concepts she was acquiring.

After three weeks of lessons, she was able to read a Level 2 book. She was able to demonstrate that she fully grasped the concept of visually scanning print for details and monitoring her reading consistently with first letter. She was also demonstrating her ability to transfer these strategies to her writing. She was beginning to add new words to her reading and writing vocabulary. Using leveled predictable texts also allowed her to gradually add new strategies and concepts to her repertory as it also allowed her to practice developing skills and
strategies. She began to write ever increasingly more complex sentences with newly acquired vocabulary. She began to write creative stories about her pictures.

Sally’s Scores

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Sally quickly began to attend to print consistently and develop one to one. As she began to really look at words, it seemed that she began to notice similarities in many words (word families). This supported her as she began to use this new knowledge to support her as she interacted with text and began to use them in her writing. This also supported her as she worked to increase her reading strategies and move into higher text levels. Sally’s initial first writing sample had included a few simple words she had recently learned such as “I” and “a.” As she began to notice the similar “word parts” in many words she began to transfer these new strategies into her writing. As she acquired new reading and writing strategies her reading and writing abilities began to increase in tandem. Sally began to demonstrate growing confidence in her ability to read and write. She began to volunteer to read much more readily. When she had writing tasks, she volunteered to share them with her teacher and her peers. Initially her stories were simple sentence patterns such as “I like” and “I can” patterns, but as she learned new strategies and concepts, her writing ability increased as scored by the grade level rubric. Sally’s writing began to grow in quality and quantity. As she learned new writing strategies, the sentence patterns also began to become more complex. Her classroom teacher modeled many
different types of writing for the reading groups. The main principle always modeled and prompted by the teacher was reading for meaning. Stories always had to make sense, just as reading always had to make sense. As Sally’s reading behaviors began to improve as she began to use all the cuing sources—visual, structural, and meaning, her writing also began to improve. As her stories began to improve in quality and quantity, Sally began to see herself as a writer. Her stories began to have sentences that varied in pattern. Her stories also began to extend to three or four stories.

Sally’s writing skills quickly began to support her reading. Once the early reading behaviors were firmly in place, her classroom teacher began to support her as she worked to add additional strategies and concepts that would scaffold Sally as she worked to add additional competencies that would allow her to read and write at increasingly higher levels of text. Sally quickly began to take on new strategies that supported her early reading and writing acquisition. She quickly began to move into more difficult text levels. Sally was a very shy first grader, so watching her as she gained confidence in her own reading and writing abilities was a gratifying experience for her classroom teacher. Her first two days in the classroom were very traumatic for Sally. She had spent them at her desk crying inconsolably. Her journey As she began to realize that her reading skills were increasing and she was able to reading increasingly more difficult text, her self-confidence and self-esteem seemed to blossom. Her pride in her reading and writing became evident as she would look up after reading a passage and beam as she realized that she had read the piece independently and problem solved with no assistance.

As the case study began in the first weeks of the second nine weeks, Sally began to move through the levels of text reading during small group instruction. During the first nine weeks during whole group basal reading instruction, Sally had remained at a level 2 text reading for
about six weeks. Her oral reading was extremely hesitant and broken. As Sally began to participate in small group reading instruction, her oral reading quickly became more fluid and fluent. She rapidly began to internalize strategies and concepts that supported her as she increased her reading skills. Sally began to visually search all the way through the words and notice when what she had read did not look right and then problem solve to fix it. As she developed the skills to support her as she problem solved and corrected her incorrect approximations, her confidence her own abilities grew. This ability to use this strategy in reading began to carry over in her writing. Sally quickly moved from sound boxes in writing unknown words to letter boxes as she wrote her stories.

Sally did not always carefully monitor for meaning during her reading or writing. Her classroom teacher felt that she needed to learn to really listen closely to what she read and use this to help her problem solve. She was relying too heavily on visual cueing sources. As Sally began to really listen to her own reading, her fluency and phrasing also began to develop. This ability supported her as she began to listen to what she read or wrote to make sure that it made sense and sounded right. Sally continued to use inventive spelling in her writing during this period, but as she began to read with more accuracy, she began to “know” or “remember” how some words looked so she was able to write them quickly as she thought about how they looked. Sally began to develop the ability to write reading responses to some of the stories she had read. She was also able to write about what had happened at the beginning, middle, and the end of the story with better accuracy for detail.

Four weeks into the case study, Sally’s record of reading showed her to be reading a level 5 text at 97% accuracy. When her classroom teacher examined her writing sample, she determined that Sally was now writing slightly above level when the grade level rubric was
applied to her piece of writing. When given a choice during work stations, Sally usually chose either the reading, writing, or publishing center. Sally was beginning to become an independent reading and writer who was developing a self-extending system. Her self-confidence continued to grow. She seemed to realize that she was on her way to becoming a reader and a writer.

Sally’s classroom teacher continued to plan strategic lessons that would scaffold Sally’s reading and writing growth. Her teacher just a rapidly faded this support as soon as Sally demonstrated her ability to maintain control over these tasks during reading and writing. At the end of the case study Sally was reading a Level 14 book at 96% accuracy. Her writing vocabulary had grown from 2 words to 50 words. She was much more confident in her ability to handle her reading and writing. She had the confidence needed to take the “risks” necessary to apply the new skills and strategies she was learning in ever increasingly difficult situations and activities. She took great pride in her ability to read and write well. Sally’s reading and writing seemed to be well above the level most first graders were reading and writing at that point in the year. Sally responded well to the strategic teaching provided by her classroom teacher. Developing her reading and writing skills provided the impetus for her to also develop confidence in her ability to independently orchestrate her literacy strategies without help from anyone.

**Summary**

Each of the children chosen for both the pilot and case study were selected because they exhibited characteristics that indicated they would benefit from strategic interventional scaffolding. They were all regular education students. Each of them exhibited behaviors that put them at risk of not succeeding at becoming readers and writers. Each of them had verbal abilities that indicated they were all children who should be performing either on or above level in
reading and writing, but each of them was performing below level in reading and writing. Each of them was not responding to the literacy instruction being delivered in their classroom. The classroom teacher determined that each of them at that point in the school year was “at risk of failure” if some sort of intervention was not applied for each of these students.

Each of the children who were a part of the pilot study and the case study responded to the intervention provided by the study. During the pilot and the case study the progress of each student as an individual was followed and analyzed. Of the students followed in this study, nine were able to read either on or above level at the end of the study. Only one child did not reach this level of independence. He did make progress, but was removed from school to return to his hometown before the end of the case study. The interventions provided by this study have been shown to benefit all students. But as with any group of students, not all students arrive at the same point at the same rate or in the same timeframe.
CHAPTER 5.

SUMMARY

During this research study descriptive notes were taken and compared to determine what if any specific reoccurring themes were present in the data. Several themes emerged from the data as notes were compared and studied. First, how did the use of leveled predictable text scaffold the new learning of strategic concepts in reading and writing tasks? Second, how did teacher observation support the use of strategic, explicit teacher language and conversation that scaffolded the new learning of concepts in reading and writing tasks? Third, how did the teacher language used to call the student’s attention to tasks they are performing successfully scaffold the student and support him or her as they move into higher levels of text? Fourth, how did the teacher language used to call the student’s attention to tasks they are neglecting as they read or write scaffold the student and support him or her as they learn to attend to these concepts and strategies and learn to use them effectively to read more difficult text? Fifth, how was student’s writing used to scaffold the acquisition of new phonemic concepts that would support the student’s ability to acquire new strategies that would allow him or her to read increasingly more difficult text? These themes emerged and seem to indicate that each had significant implications for increasing student achievement in reading and writing which in turn would support student achievement in all curriculum areas.

Initially, this case study was made a bit more interesting and complicated to conduct due to the district mandate that set district guidelines for the teaching of reading across the district. Teachers were mandated to follow district directives and guidelines for instruction. These guidelines required that each teacher in first through third grade use the Open Court Phonics Program and the Harcourt Basal Reading Program to deliver reading instruction with fidelity. In
first grade classrooms across the district all phonics instruction was delivered by the teacher whole class for sixty minutes each morning. This was followed by thirty minutes of reading instruction which was also delivered whole class using the same basal text. At the end of the first nine weeks grading period, it seemed that none of the students were consistently making significant progress. The teachers were each required to use a script in the teacher’s manual in the Open Court program. In the basal program, all students read the same story of the week regardless of what level each individual student was reading on at this time. The first grade teachers whose students were a part of the pilot and case study were quick to meet and determine that they had to take action. Students that were a part of the case study had made minimal if any progress since the beginning of school. These students had to be supported and guided in order for them to become readers and writers. The teachers each determined that the teaching strategies they had used in the pilot study had enabled their students who were a part of the pilot study to become independent readers and writers more rapidly than the teaching strategies they were using in these new district mandated programs. Scaffolding strategies used in the pilot study were selected and offered to all first grade students. Case study participants were those students whose profiles were selected for documentation. Observed progress and student achievement result for all first grade students was similar while some levels of progress was significant and others though showing progress were at a much slower rate.

The classroom teacher and her colleagues quickly determined that following the mandated reading block they would begin to meet with small reading groups in order to meet the needs of all of their students. During grade level dialogue, these teachers expressed concern that this lack of student progress was typical of student achievement across the district. Each of these grade level teachers is a member of several teacher support groups and learning communities
across the district. During monthly meetings each of the grade level teachers indicated that colleague dialogue at each of the support groups they participated in had indicated that these were some of the same results other teachers across the district were observing in their own classrooms. Teachers in other classrooms across the district were dialoguing and voicing these same findings in their classrooms. Students in the case study were chosen so that the effects of scaffolding on student’s reading and writing growth and achievement could be followed and described. The five students followed in the case study had made minimal literacy growth during the first nine weeks of the district mandated program. Students in the pilot study were from all three first grade classrooms at Daisy Elementary. Students in the Case Study were from one of the three first grade classrooms. All students in the study were first time first grade students who were regular education students.

Aspects of Scaffolding Studied

During the course of this study, three aspects of scaffolding were focused upon:

4. The use of leveled texts selected at students’ instructional reading level to deliver strategic reading instruction and accelerate student achievement.

5. The use of explicit, direct teacher language to support student acquisition of reading and writing strategies that promoted student achievement.

6. The use of writing instruction to support and expand student’s reading knowledge, skill, and strategies.

Student response to the scaffolding of reading and writing strategies in the pilot study indicated that these three elements were the most significant areas and would immediately be implement in the case study classroom to support the students and affect student achievement. The significant
effect of scaffolded literacy instruction on the reading and writing achievement of these students was examined by seeking common themes during the case study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The case study teacher determined that her student’s needs would best be met by teaching that would support all the students as they worked to acquire the necessary literacy skills that would allow them to read and write independently. Small groups were begun with no more than five students in each group. Students were grouped by their reading levels. This seemed to make an immediate difference in both the students’ ability to interact with text as well as their confidence in interacting with the text. Students were able to practice those strategies they knew and those strategies they were attempting to add to their competencies. This use of leveled text scaffolded the students and they were able to move through the levels to ever increasingly more complex text. This seemed to be as applicable to those students who were reading Level 2 texts or Level 6 or 7 texts or any level in between. Placing the student in the appropriate leveled text supported the student until they were ready to move into the next consecutive level text. Students demonstrated an ability to interact with appropriately leveled text much more rapidly than they had been able to interact with a text that was either too difficult or too easy for them. It also seemed to support the internalization of new concepts and strategies. Students had the opportunity to practice using learned strategies with multiple texts at their reading level. A new text is introduced daily that allows them to practice these same strategies as well as new learning that might be introduced.

Students were closely observed as they worked through the text in order to provide more strategic and accurate support and intervention in these small groups. Observing individual reading behaviors had been difficult during whole group instruction with twenty-one to twenty-
five students to observe whether the students were seated at their individual desks or gathered in a circle. Observing student reading behavior was imperative as it helped to note reading behaviors that were in place as well as those reading behaviors that were not being used or used with consistency. This allowed these teachers to prompt the student and support them as they learned to use necessary reading strategies. Meeting with their students in small group also allowed the student and teacher to have conversations about the specific stories being read. It also allows teachers to question students regarding their choices and attempts and to offer specific scaffolding techniques and prompts, as well as strategic, explicit teaching and modeling of reading and writing strategies.

Instruction was delivered during the district mandated reading block followed a script in a teacher’s manual. Teachers were mandated to follow this manual with “fidelity.” Using this script eliminated teacher student dialogue or conversation related to concepts and topics, because most of the dialogue generate one word responses or phrases in response to questions, somewhat like oral workbooks. A pacing guide was also mandated. This determined the amount of material that must be covered daily. Other questions or instructions required moving letter cards or writing dictated words or coping words and phrases into their phonics workbooks. Sustaining student attention during these lessons was difficult.

Sustaining young students’ attention during a sixty minute whole group phonics lesson is difficult at best for even those students whose attention span is capable of sustaining long periods of attention to a topic. Whole group instruction typically has a narrow range of inclusion. It usually does not meet the needs of the majority of students in a classroom unless they are a homogeneously grouped set. A typical small group reading or writing lesson lasted typically for 20 to 25 minutes. The five students in this group are usually reading within two reading levels of
each other. Other students in the classroom were usually working on tasks related to a book that was used in small group or during class meeting. The small group setting was beneficial to both student and teacher. It facilitated the observation of student reading and writing behavior which allowed teachers to make strategic decisions regarding modeling and verbal teaching supports that would scaffold new student behavior.

A daily performance assessment of one student’s oral reading of text was taken daily. This assessment allowed the teacher to document reading competencies and needed reading strategies. Teaching decisions were led by student performance. This provided additional support and facilitated student movement through leveled texts at a more strategic pace regardless of student reading level. Students reading at higher levels were supported just as strategically as students reading at lower levels. Mini lessons allowed teachers to dialogue with students often providing insights into student thinking and understanding which permitted teachers to make adjustments in their teaching that further supported their students.

It was observed that using the reciprocal nature of reading and writing concepts allowed the teacher to call a student’s attention to certain phonemic concepts that the student might be neglecting in reading or writing. Often when these concepts were being neglected in reading, a mini lesson in writer’s workshop would support new learning or practice that enabled the student to attend to this concept in their reading. It was observed that as the student’s writing began to come under the student’s control; their reading abilities typically began to demonstrate gains and new understandings of the way words work. Most of the students in this case study come from a very verbal society; however, many of them do not have nor do they come from homes that would give them a great deal of exposure to or with print. These students needed exposure and interaction with a large number of reading and writing experiences. As the students had
experiences with text that were within their reach they were able to develop new strategies and concepts that support them as moved into increasingly higher text.

**Interpretation of Findings**

The themes were used to answer the following focal questions:

**Focal questions**

7. What impact does the use of scaffolding have on the academic performance of students especially in reading and writing?

The use of scaffolding during reading and writing instruction to support student’s acquisition of literacy concepts during this case study impacted the students by fostering the internalization of new concepts and strategies which in turn improved each of the pilot and case study student’s academic performance in reading and writing.

8. What impact does the use of scaffolding in reading and writing have on student learning as measured by changes over time in student behavior and as evidenced by their assumed responsibility for their own learning and self-regulation? How do these learners come to view themselves as readers and writers?

The use of scaffolding in reading and writing instruction supported student learning of new strategies and concepts which lead to students who became more independent learners who initiated their own reading and writing problem solving. These students came to internalize their own self image as a reader and writer. Each became more confident and independent. They began to self monitor and self regulate their own reading and writing.
9. How do the teaching styles, philosophies, and instructional strategies of the teachers influence the reading and writing acquisition of the children involved in these classrooms?

Teachers who see themselves as facilitators and supporters of students as they are acquiring new literacy skills become models for students as the students become independent readers and writers. Typically these teachers enable their students to become independent, problem solving learners who learn to orchestrate their own literacy acquisition at ever increasing levels of confidence.

Following the study of the themes that arose from the case study notes, it would seem to be evident that students in lower elementary grades or early emergent literacy learners would clearly benefit from reading and writing instruction that included the following strategic elements:

1. Leveled predictable texts
2. Small group guided reading and writing instruction
4. Integration of reading and writing lessons to support student acquisition of reading and writing strategies.
5. Teacher/Student dialogues and conversations that support language acquisition and development of student understanding regarding the way language works.

Conclusions

The reoccurring themes observed in this study revealed that the implications for instruction and student learning are significant. Students who are learning to reading and write
benefit greatly from instruction that scaffolds their present competencies and allows them to acquire and learn to manipulate new literacy concepts in a social context that is free of risks. Often it would seem young emergent readers and writers experience difficulty as they work to become competent readers and writers. This case study seems support the premise that perhaps altering the method of instructional delivery and providing scaffolding for these young readers and writers might be a possible solution for their teachers. Another implication provided by this case study is that teacher/student dialogue and conversations are integrally important in supporting students as they work to become literate problem solvers who are competent and independent learners.

Providing appropriately leveled text for each student to interact with as they acquire new skills, strategies, and concepts supports students as they are allowed to attempt and practice these new problem solving abilities allows students to move through reading levels with greater ease. Students learn to manipulate language that is within their grasp with ease and confidence. As students interact with text and tasks that are within their present levels of capability they have opportunities to extend their writing ability as they simultaneously increase and extend their reading ability. Furnishing the needed support as students acquire new skills, concepts, and knowledge frees the student to focus on the integration of that new skill, concept, or knowledge as they interact with the text or ideas. As students acquire new literacy learning it is often crucial that the skillful teacher assists them as their attention is drawn to the precise detail that they have neglected. Through this focusing on concepts and ideas students learn to attend to strategic details and gradually become adept at reading and writing skillfully as they move to then next level of literacy development.
With appropriate support students can and do begin to reading and write with competency as they increase their knowledge base. Scaffolding allows the student to gradually acquire the skills and competencies they need to become an independent reader and writer. Students move seamlessly through increasingly higher levels of reading and writing to become skillful and competent learners.
REFERENCES


Snow, C. E., Burns, S. M., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young*


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Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Judith Burch

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 07/09/2003.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov

http://cme.cancer.gov/cgi-bin/cms/cts-cert5.pl 7/9/03
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM INSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT

Unless they are qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption, all Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, Ali research/projects using human, animal, or human as subjects, or samples or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

Instructions: Complete this form.
Exemption Applicant: If it appears that your study qualifies for exemption send:

(A) Two copies of this completed form,
(B) a brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts A & B),
(C) copies of all instruments to be used. If this proposal is part of a grant proposal include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material,
(D) the consent form that you will use in the study.

If exemption seems likely, submit it. If not, submit regular IRB application. Help is available from Dr. Robert Mathews, 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu or any screening committee member.

Principal Investigator _______ Judith Rollins Burch _______ Student? Y/N

Ph: ( ) E-mail JuBurch@msc.com Dept/Unit ECRI

If Student, name supervising professor Dr. Margaret Stewart Ph: 578-4690
Mailing Address 14221 Firewood Dr., Jeanerette, LA 70544-8172
Project Title “Scaffolding Reading and Writing in the Context of School”

Agency expected to fund project _____ Not Fund

Subject pool (e.g. Psychology Students) Elementary students
Circle any “vulnerable populations” to be used: (children <12, the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changed I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted.

PI Signature Judith Rollins Burch Date 7/2/03 (no per signatures)

Reviewing Committee Action: Exempted ______ Not Exempted ______ Category/Paragraph

Reviewer _______ Signature _______ Date 7/18/2003
Appendix C

Judy Burch, Doctoral Candidate
Department of EDCI

Dear Ms. Burch:

Your request to conduct research in the [redacted] School System entitled, “Scaffolding Reading and Writing in the Contexts of School” has been approved. You will need to obtain the principal’s permission to conduct the study. You have attached a copy of the subject consent form, parent permission letter, and student assent form. Because you are asking students to allow you to use their work and include them in photographs, although it is without their real name, you will need to keep copies of all permission, consent, and assent forms on file for any individuals who participate in your study. Thank you for sending us a copy of the approved IRB from your university to include with our files. We would like to have a copy of your study when it is completed.

Thank you for your interest in [redacted] schools.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Baird,
Administrative Director,
Academic Accountability and Staff Development

Cc: James Machen
August 3, 2006

Parent of [Redacted]

Dear Parent:

I am attaching two permission forms, which will allow me to work with your child during this school term. I am certified Kindergarten through 8th grade in Elementary Education. I am a trained Reading Recovery/Literacy Group teacher for first grade. I am also a doctoral graduate student at [Redacted] and pursuing National Board Certification for teaching. I am in the process of conducting a study of the many ways teachers support their students as they learn to read and write. The actual focus of the study is on the teacher's interaction with your child during instruction. I would appreciate it if you would complete the attached forms and return them to me tomorrow. Your child will receive a treat for returning his/her forms regardless of your decision to allow or not allow him/her to participate. My study will in no way interfere with your child’s learning in fact; it should only improve his or her learning experiences.

I would like to thank you in advance for allowing me to work with your child and your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Judith R. Burch
Reading Specialist
Appendix E

STUDENT RELEASE FORM
(to be completed either by the parents/legal guardians of minor students involved in this project, or by students
who are more than 18 years of age that are involved in this project)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a participant this school year in an assessment to certify experienced teachers as outstanding
practitioners in teaching. My participation in this assessment, which is being conducted by the National
Board for Professional Teaching Standards, is voluntary. The primary purposes of this assessment are to
enhance student learning and encourage excellence in teaching.

This project requires that short videotapes of lessons taught in your child's class be submitted. Although the
videotapes involve both the teacher and various students, the primary focus is on the teacher's instruction,
not on the students in the class. In the course of taping, your child may appear on the videotape. Also, at
times during the year, I may be asked to submit samples of student work as evidence of teaching practice,
and that work may include some of your child's work.

No student's last name will appear on any materials that are submitted. NBPTS, at its sole discretion,
may use and distribute my videotape(s), my comments and my classroom materials for assessment,
professional development and research purposes, and any other purpose NBPTS deems appropriate to
further the mission of the organization. The form below will be used to document your permission for
these activities.

Sincerely,

Judith R. Burch

(permission slip)

Student Name: ___________________________ School/Teacher: ___________________________

Your Address: ___________________________

I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named above. I have received and read your letter
regarding a teacher assessment being conducted by the National Board for Professional Teaching
Standards (NBPTS), and agree to the following:

(Please check the appropriate box below.)

☐ I DO give permission to you to include my child's image on videotape as he or she participates
in a class conducted at __________________________ by __________________________ and/or to
reproduce materials that my child may produce as part of classroom activities. No last names
will appear on any materials submitted by the teacher.

☐ I DO NOT give permission to videotape my child or to reproduce materials that my child may
produce as part of classroom activities.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

I am the student named above and am more than 18 years of age. I have read and understand the
project description given above. I understand that my performance is not being evaluated by this
project and that my last name will not appear on any materials that may be submitted.

☐ I DO give permission to you to include my image on videotape as I participate in this class and/or
to reproduce materials that I may produce as part of classroom activities.

☐ I DO NOT give permission to videotape me or to reproduce materials that I may produce as part
of classroom activities.

Signature of Student: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Date of Birth: __________/________/________

MM DD YY
Appendix F

Consent Form

Title of Research Study:  “Scaffolding Reading and Writing in the Contexts of School”

Project Director: Judith Rollins Burch
Dr. Earl Cheek, Faculty Supervisor

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of the study is to investigate the use of and impact of scaffolding in reading and writing in two first-grade classrooms as well as the classroom used for Reading Recovery®/Literacy Groups by the teacher researcher. Scaffolding in reading and writing will be discussed as seen through the eyes of the teacher researcher, the students, the classroom teachers, and the literature.

Procedures for the Research: I will be conducting the research at my Elementary School during the 2005-2006 school year. I will obtain permission for participation from the principal, teachers, parents, and students. I will be looking at the use and impact of scaffolding in reading and writing in these classrooms. I will begin observing reading and writing in these classrooms, taking field notes, interviewing students and teachers, video taping, photographing, completing dialogue journals with student s, and collecting data based on work with students. I will have in-class conversations with the teachers and students about reading and writing development, the importance they place on reading and writing, how the students and teacher choose books and writing topics, and the reading and writing strategies used by the students and supported and scaffolded by the teacher. I will conduct constant comparative analysis of the data as it is being collected. I will write up the study, analyzing coding categories and drawing conclusions based upon this analysis.

Potential Risks: I foresee no potential risks to the subjects. All scheduled activities will be a part of the normal school day and will be part of good instructional practice.

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits to students are increased emphasis on and awareness of reading and writing throughout the school day, which may result in a greater enjoyment of reading and writing and more attention to the process, strategies, and conventions of reading and writing. Hopefully, as student s are more conscious of the many aspects of reading and writing and the ways they can develop their own reading and writing skills, they may show improvement in that area.

Alternative Procedures: Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without consequence. Whether or not your child participates in the study will not affect his/her grade or involvement in class-related activities.

Protection of Confidentiality: All students, the teachers, and the school will be given pseudonyms to protect their identity and privacy.

Signature:

I have been fully informed of the above-described procedure with its possible benefits and risks and give my permission for the participation of my child in the study.

Child’s Name __________________________ Parent’s Signature __________________________ Parent’s Name (Print) __________________________ Date __________

If you give permission for your child to participate in the study, he/she will be asked to sign below.
I want to be in the reading and writing study with Mrs. Burch. She has explained it to me.

Child’s Signature __________________________ Investigator’s Signature __________________________ Date __________

Faculty Supervisor’s Signature __________________________ Date __________
VITA

Judith Rollins Burch was born in McComb, Mississippi, on December 16, 1948, to Robert Lanier Rollins, Jr., D.V.M., and Marion Jeanette Norman Rollins. She graduated from Franklinton High School in 1966 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in English and minoring in history, in 1971, from Southeastern Louisiana University. While working as an English teacher at Franklinton High School, she returned to her alma mater and began courses pursuing her master’s degree in education. Mrs. Burch earned a Master of Education in Reading in 1976.

In 1989 she began course work at Louisiana State University to obtain certification in elementary education. She earned her Educational Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University in 1996. Mrs. Burch has 28 years of classroom teaching experience at grade levels pre-k through twelfth grade. She has seventeen years of teaching experience with first graders. In 1992 she became a trained Reading Recovery® teacher. From 1996 until 2006 she served as her school’s Literacy Specialist providing reading and writing lessons to “at risk” kindergarten and first grade students. Mrs. Burch is at present a first grade classroom teacher.

Since 1992 Mrs. Burch has presented workshops on literacy at the local, state, and regional levels. She is a member of IRA (International Reading Association), CARC (Capitol Area Reading Council), NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), RRCNA (Reading Recovery Council of North America), Phi Delta Kappa, Delta Kappa Gamma, Phi Mu Fraternity, and Broadmoor United Methodist Church. Mrs. Burch has held office on several professional organization boards and serves on numerous committees in these organizations. At present she is pursuing National Board Certification in Literacy Specialist area. She and her husband, William
Murphy Burch, have three children, Steven Rollins Stafford, Katherine Whitney Burch, and William Matthew Burch. Mrs. Burch lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with her family.