

Effect of Modeled and Oral Repeated Reading on English Language Learners' Reading  
Performance

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

May 2004

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

This is to certify that I have examined this copy of a master's thesis by

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and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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GRADUATE SCHOOL

## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to:

S. Jay Samuels, Ed.D. for his expertise, instruction, and the opportunity to pursue big ideas.

Paul van den Broek, Ph.D. and David Rapp, Ph.D. for their expertise and help.

Theresa Palumbo for her dedication and hard work.

Yi Chen Wu for her patience, direction, and statistical know-how.

Kate Bohn, Michelle Tichy-Reese, Barbara Hawkins, Mary Jane White, Stacey Falkowski, John Maule, Cindy Johnson, Shirley Dustchel, Margaret Wolfson, and Jan Reed for their tremendous help in the form of time, energy, and experience with data collection, testing, coding, data entry. Thank you!

Teri Thill, Tom Powers, Brenda Peltier, Barb Braaten, Francie Domstrand, John Kendrick, Peggy George, Ms. Yang, Ms. Vang, Ms. Bobnick, Ms. Davis, Karen Ness, Cay Gjertson, Sue Vang, Steven Miller, Jackie Schwartz, Heidi Olson, and Leslie Ferster for allowing us into your schools and classrooms.

My parents, Sarah and Alan, and my sister, Leah. Thank you for your continuous support and love.

My friends Meg, Jen, and KariAnn. And my grandparents.

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Fluent Reader provides modeled and repeated oral reading instruction. To test the efficacy of this product, an experiment was conducted in two elementary schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Students in the experimental condition worked on Fluent Reader for ten weeks. Control condition students worked on Accelerated Reader, a widely used and successfully tested program for building motivation to read. Students were pre and post tested and the gain scores on a variety of tests were used as the units of statistical analysis. Data analysis on gain scores on tests that measured speed of reading, a variable considered a valid and reliable indicator of fluency, showed that English Language Learners using the Fluent Reader outperformed students in the control group.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

In order to become proficient at reading, beginning readers need to learn the basics. Often children start out by learning their ABC's, graduate to decoding words, and ultimately read a text independently and automatically. This end-goal of reading proficiency is referred to as fluency. Students who are less fluent may have difficulty understanding what they read (National Reading Panel, 2000). Often when we think of someone as a 'fluent' reader, we think of someone who has mastered all the intricacies of a language and can speak, read, or write that language with ease. Fluency is a level of language proficiency that all teachers desire for their students. The term 'fluency' is commonly used, yet many important questions about its definition remain. For example, deciding at what point a student has become fluent, how to measure this construct, and how we can teach students to become more fluent readers are questions that currently shape reading research and instruction. "Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency, both should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent" (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p.7). The goal of this paper is to describe fluency, its definition, fluency instruction methods that have been found to be effective, and to describe the effects of the Fluent Reader Program on reading performance of English Language Learners.

## **Fluency**

At first glance, fluency seems to be a fairly intuitive concept. However, there is disagreement among researchers as to what characterizes a fluent reader. Some questions include what skills constitute fluency, as well as how to distinguish fluent readers from non-fluent readers. Arriving at a definition of fluency that can be shared among teachers and researchers is important. Without a unified definition of fluency, we cannot be sure exactly what we are measuring in student performance, and we cannot successfully identify students who need help developing fluency. Furthermore, our research should inform our teaching just as our measurements should inform our evaluations of student performance. The topic of fluency is a hot topic for researchers and educators for the simple reason that there are many pieces of the fluency puzzle that are as yet amorphous and lacking in clear definition on which to base instructional judgments. Some generally accepted definitions of fluency include:

1. The ability to decode and comprehend a text simultaneously (Samuels, 2003).
2. Accurate, effortless, and rapid reading (Lipson & Bouffard Lang, 1991).
3. Accuracy of word recognition and reading speed (Samuels, 1979).
4. Reading with accuracy, speed, and comprehension (Samuels, 2003).

From Lipson & Bouffard Lang (1991) several definitions of non-fluent readers have been proposed:

1. Readers with average or above average word recognition skills but whose skills are not automatic (Dowhower, 1987; Samuels, 1979).

2. Readers "who have not yet mastered the component skills of print processing [and whose reading] is characterized by substitution errors, long pauses, frequent repetitions, and inappropriate phrasing" (Barr, Sadow, & Blachowicz, 1990, p.70).
3. Beginning readers (Reitsma, 1988).
4. Slow readers (Herman, 1985).
5. Slow, choppy readers who have mistaken beliefs about the nature of skilled reading (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1988).
6. Those who read word by word (instead of in phrase groups); whose reading does not preserve the syntax or meaning relations intended by the author (Aulls, 1978).

Furthermore, an individual can be fluent on certain materials or under certain circumstances and not fluent under other conditions, which makes defining this concept challenging. For example, as a reader masters decoding and becomes proficient on elementary-level texts, the reader may fail to demonstrate fluency when reading intermediate-level texts or when introduced to a foreign language. As individuals develop, their level of fluency will fluctuate, depending on their reading experience and the difficulty of the material. For the purposes of this study, fluency is defined as 'reading with accuracy, speed, and comprehension.' This definition was chosen for assessment purposes. Our dependent variables address reading accuracy, reading speed, and literal comprehension.

### **Measurement**

Another purpose of refining the definition of fluency is in the interest of developing a

reliable and valid measure for the construct of fluency. Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) is currently the accepted measure of fluency. This measure is highly correlated with many measures of academic achievement and has been a reliable indicator of reading speed measured in words per minute (wpm). CBM is one method used to determine student eligibility for special programs (Marston, Mirkin, & Deno, 1984, as cited in Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992). CBM can give a teacher a quick diagnosis of a student's reading speed by using materials readily available in the classroom. However, CBM doesn't measure students' comprehension of the materials just read – it is simply a measure of speed and accuracy. Since comprehension is an essential part of good reading, it is critical that a measure be constructed that incorporates comprehension along with speed and accuracy. If comprehension is not accounted for, it is unclear whether readers are simply performing quick word recognition at the expense of understanding. "In the words of Edmund Burke, "To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting" (Spangenberg-Urbschat, 1994, 26). An assessment tool that permits the measurement of simultaneous decoding and comprehension or the measurement of accuracy, speed, and comprehension in reading, while being quick and easy to administer, would be particularly useful for classrooms.

An assessment that provides some standard "so that teachers will know what is an 'average' or 'typical' performance to guide decision-making" (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992, 41) would also be particularly useful for teachers. Also, "no large-scale norms currently exist for oral reading fluency" (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992, 42). Norming problems

specific to fluency might include use of a scale too broad for making instructional decisions, unclear scoring procedures used with the original norm group, and lack of information about the students in the norm group. Developing norms for fluency that can give teachers a method of assessing student progress as well as comparing student fluency performance may be useful for directing instruction.

### **Automaticity**

Automaticity is the degree to which a complex cognitive task has become learned to the point where very little effort or thought is required to perform the task. Once a complex cognitive task has been broken into its component parts and each part has been practiced repeatedly, the parts become automatic and require less cognitive effort on the part of the learner. To become automatic at reading, reading must be broken down into its component parts. For example, to break down a sentence into its component parts, one must first identify the features that make up certain letters. One must be able to distinguish a 'p' from a 'b' and differentiate among the many patterns of lines and curves that make up letters in order to adeptly decode a text. This process must become automatic if the reader is to progress from successfully identifying letters to identifying entire phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound that make up language. The English language is made up of 47 different phonemes, or 47 different sound units. Finally, one must be able to automatically associate each of the 47 phonemes with the appropriate letter or pair of letters that make each sound. Once a reader can automatically map the correct phoneme to the correct letter or letters, the reader can

concentrate cognitive energies on morphemes (the smallest meaningful units of language), and finally on words, vocabulary, and sentences. The key in this process is that as tasks become more automatic, they require less cognitive energy from the learner, and therefore the learner can devote more energy to the big picture and is less absorbed in the small tasks that make up the parts of the activity. "According to automaticity theory, a fluent reader decodes text automatically – that is, without attention – thus leaving attention free to be used for comprehension" (Samuels, 1979, 379). For a reader to be fluent, the reader must become automatic at decoding words in a text. If a reader spends the majority of cognitive energy on identifying individual letters and sounding out words, the reader has less cognitive energy left over for comprehending the effortful reading or for reading with accuracy or expression. Therefore, automaticity in reading is crucial for the development of fluency.

### **Repeated Reading**

Repeated reading is an instructional method used to develop automaticity in reading. The method of repeated reading is useful for enhancing reading fluency because it allows students to practice a text over and over until the text becomes more and more familiar and students can decode the text automatically, giving students more cognitive capacity for comprehension. In his classic article on the method of repeated readings, Samuels stated:

As reading speed increased, word recognition errors decreased. As the student continued to use this technique, the initial speed of reading each new selection was faster than initial speed on the previous selection. Also, the number of re-readings required to reach the criterion reading speed decreased as the students continued the technique. The fact that starting rates were faster with each new selection and fewer re-readings were necessary to reach goals indicates transfer of training and a general improvement in reading fluency (Samuels, 1979, 377).

This method of reading instruction does enhance fluency on a text-by-text basis. Research by O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea (1985) has shown that 4 repetitions of a text is usually sufficient for a reader to reach automaticity. Another contribution to the field of repeated reading was made by Carol Chomsky. Chomsky's contributions to repeated reading theory differ from Samuels' in that Chomsky had students listen to a tape recording of the text they were asked to read repeatedly, whereas in Samuels' approach students simply read a text repeatedly.

The procedure proved to be facilitating for slow and halting readers, increasing fluency rapidly and with apparent ease. Successive stories required fewer listenings to reach fluency...The work provided in addition a heightened sense of confidence and motivation. Within several months the children become far more willing and able to undertake reading new material on their own (Chomsky, 1978, as cited in Samuels, 1979, 377).

There are also questions of near and far transfer with repeated reading. A study by Fleisher, Jenkins, & Pany (1979) investigated the transfer of rapid decoding. The researchers took a text and had one group of children learn each individual word until they recognized the words automatically. They then presented the same children with the whole text to see if the children would be able to read the text fluently. The children could not read the intact text fluently, despite the fact that they had learned each of the words individually until they could recognize them automatically. The conclusion from

this research is that, despite their automatic recognition of individual words, repeated reading of individual words to automaticity did not transfer into the fluent reading of whole texts. In conclusion, repeated reading and especially repeated oral reading are effective methods for increasing fluency when done on a whole text basis.

## **English Language Learners and Fluency**

### ***Importance of Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners***

Students who are not exposed to English at home before entering school may require different strategies for acquiring reading fluency than students for whom English is their first language. Teaching this growing population of students to become fluent in English is challenging, but vital. Since the official language of the US is English, literacy instruction and good reading skills in English are crucial to the development of a healthy and educated populace. Full participation in American society requires certain basic English skills, and English is becoming the foremost language in global commerce. Language skills are not only for reading street signs, books, manuals, or voting, but "language learning and teaching is also about status, power, and voice" (Flores, as cited in Spangenberg-Urbschat, 1994, vi). Therefore it is essential to consider the specific needs of English Language Learners when discussing fluency instruction.

### ***Demographics of English Language Learners***

English Language Learners are becoming a larger proportion of students served by the

public schools. "According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual education and Language Minority Affairs, approximately 3.2 million children in public and private schools in the United States are classified as limited English proficient (LEP) (Elmore & Rothman, 1999 as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 499). "This is an increase from the 1991 estimate of 2.3 million and constitutes about 5.5 percent of the total K-12 population (Pellegrino, Jones, & Mitchell, 1999 as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 499). About 75% of these children speak Spanish as their native language, the rest mainly speak Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese, Cambodian, Korean, and Native American languages (Elmore & Rothman, 1999, as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 499). The statistics cited previously are for the United States as a whole; however, these languages are also predominantly represented in the Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools among English Language Learners, which are the students represented in this study. Many teachers feel unprepared to teach this unique population of students, and roughly 42% of all public school teachers have at least one English language learner in their classes (Olson & Goldstein, 1997, as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 500). Since this is a population with needs that are qualitatively different than those of native language speakers, it is essential that these children become fluent with English as soon as possible, before they are left behind by their native English-speaking peers. "Research indicates that it takes English-language learners between six and eight years to reach the oral skill level of their English-speaking peers" (Collier, 1987, as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 500). Since learning to read develops so rapidly in the early years of

language development, as early as kindergarten through 3rd grade, English language instruction for ELL children early in their academic career is essential. Although the educational system in the United States has always been faced with a variety of student language backgrounds, at no time has it been more crucial that these students' specific language learning needs be addressed. In today's information age our concept of literacy has broadened. Concepts other than reading and writing, such as critical thinking, logical reasoning, and technology use (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991 as cited in Spangenberg-Urbschat, 2004, 2) constitute essential literacy skills that English Language Learners and all students need to be taught. If ELL students are to become competitive in today's educational system and later in tomorrow's marketplace, literacy skill development is absolutely essential.

### ***Reading Challenges for English Language Learners***

ELL students come to school with a considerable amount of language learning under their belts, just as native English speaking students do. However, these two groups of students face different challenges. The first challenge ELL students face is the fact that "there is a surface-level mismatch between the child's language and the language of the school...the oral language students know and the written language they must learn will have differing degrees of overlap" (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 502). Some students will come to school without having experienced any concept of print, any notion of what a book is, what a book is for, what a book looks like, that English print is read from left to right, or that print represents meaning. The Hmong language, for example, was only

recently transcribed into a written form, and only recently developed its own dictionary, so teaching children from the Hmong culture concepts of reading and written language presents its own set of literacy challenges. On the other hand, some cultures have very different concepts of print, such as Arabic or Hebrew, that are read from right to left, which interferes with the learning of English print concepts. These concepts could potentially produce interference in language learning. Also, English-language learners sometimes come from cultures that do not value a great deal of verbal behavior from children, perceiving it to be rude, such as certain Native American cultures. Some languages have more overlap with English in their sounds and syntax than others -- Spanish is more similar to English than is Vietnamese, for example (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 504). Moreover, ELL students frequently cannot express what they actually do know, so this bias can hinder their academic growth.

### ***Instructional Strategies for English Language Learners***

Building children's oral English skills to help them succeed in matching new sounds and words to print is essential (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 516). "Accomplished readers in their first language tend to use many of the same strategies that successful native English-language readers do – skimming, guessing in context, reading for the gist of a text – when they are reading in a second language" (Drucker, 2003, 22). "Research indicates that about 20 percent of the process of reading in a second language is predictable on the basis of the level of first-language literacy" (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Brisbois, 1995; Hulstijn, 1991, as cited in Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2004, 506). So if

English language learners have strong language skills in their first language they are more likely to develop strong English skills. However, it is often the case that English language learners come from homes where a language other than English is spoken and learning English may or may not be encouraged.

### ***Cultural Capital for English Language Learners***

Levels of background knowledge that come from exposure to a culture may differ among families who are not native to the U.S. The French anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu originated the idea of cultural capital, or "the advantages that people acquire as a part of their life experiences, their peer group contacts, and their family backgrounds" (Corson, 2001, 21). There are culture-specific thoughts, concepts, terminology and historical references that are often passed down through generations in families that share certain cultural characteristics. In addition to cultural capital, students also possess linguistic capital. "For Bourdieu, linguistic capital is more than the competence to produce grammatically well-formed expressions and forms of language. It also includes the ability to use appropriate norms for language use and to produce the right expressions at the right time for a particular 'linguistic market'" (Corson, 2001, 21). Since ELL students' families have cultural backgrounds that do not include elements of history, media, and idiomatic expressions that most Americans share, it is difficult for students with another heritage to derive meaning from distinctly American cultural concepts or expressions. Simply decoding the language is certainly a formidable task, but deriving meanings from words that do not exist or are used as a figure of speech unlike those used in other

cultures makes the task of comprehension for the ELL student doubly difficult.

### ***Academic and Conversational English for English Language Learners***

ELL students are often able to function well with conversational English (Basic Interpersonal and Communication Skills -- BICS), but academic English proficiency (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency -- CALP) is more difficult to develop. "In most cases it takes an English-language learner as long as five to seven years to perform as well academically as native English-speaking peers" (Collier & Thomas, 1999; Cummins, 1989, as cited in Drucker, 2003, 23). Since ELL students need much more exposure and repetition than native speakers do, repeated reading is especially helpful for this group of students.

### ***Vocabulary for ELL Students***

The limited vocabulary of ELL students is also a hindrance in their development of fluency. If the word "bacon" is a new word and also a new idea, then ELL students will not be able to comprehend this word since it is not part of their oral vocabulary or even their cultural capital. Presenting new vocabulary with graphics simultaneously will aid in supplying the missing link between foreign words and familiar objects or ideas. ELL students sometimes have trouble applying the vocabulary they have memorized in context.

According to Yeung (1999), 'Given a separate glossary, when readers encounter an unfamiliar word, they need to leave the text, turn to the vocabulary list, temporarily store its meaning, and then revert to the text and try to incorporate the meaning into the text'... when definitions are placed next to the challenging lexical items, unfamiliar words become more readily understood. He suggested that in this integrated format, students' attention is not split, and the cognitive load is lowered (Drucker, 2003, 27).

To support vocabulary development, narrow reading is a method that helps ELL students develop vocabulary on a particular topic. Newspaper stories, magazine articles, books, novels, and the Internet can be used on a topic of interest so that repeated exposure to related vocabulary is promoted. Harnessing the power of students' passionate interests can be powerful for developing reading skill. This approach developed by Schmitt & Carter (2000) is effective for building the lexicon of ELL students.

### **Computers**

Computers are excellent tools for enhancing students' reading fluency. Computers make repetition of texts, exposure to vocabulary, goal setting, and immediate feedback on an individual basis feasible for classroom teachers. Teachers have limited time to monitor students individually, but computers make it easy for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students are excited to use computers in their learning process. Usually students equate using computers with more real-world tasks. Plus, using computers acquaints students with computer usage in general, and allows them to become more comfortable with the computer itself as a learning tool. Computers provide much

greater amounts of fluency-oriented practice than is possible in most traditional programs (Torgesen, 1986). "Computers have the capacity to deliver motivating, carefully monitored, individualized, and speed-oriented practice in concentrations far beyond those available in traditional instructional formats" (Torgesen, 1986).

Using computers also makes it easier for teachers and students to track progress. Since computers can graph reading times almost immediately, students can see their progress as they improve, and this can be highly motivating. Graphing reading times in words per minute, the students can see their speed increase. "Without the graph, gains can at times go unnoticed. The graph provides visible proof of progress" (Samuels, 1979).

### **Prosody**

Prosody is the stress, pitch, and intonation in speech or, to some extent, in writing. Prosody is often referred to as expression in reading. When someone reads with expression, their voice fluctuates in pitch and tone to indicate the feelings or connotations associated with the words in the text. Readers take their cues from the punctuation in the text, such as commas, question marks, or exclamation points. These punctuation marks give the reader clues about the meaning that the author is trying to convey to his audience. In Peter Schreiber's work on prosody he writes about the construction of sentences into noun phrases (NP) and verb phrases (VP) (Schreiber, 1980). Simply rearranging the phrasing in a sentence made up of the same words can change the meaning of a sentence entirely.

There is currently a debate as to the relationship of prosody to comprehension and thus to fluency as well. In a study conducted by Davis, MacNeilage, Matyear, & Powell (2000), research suggests that, even before infants can read, they are babbling with prosody. This research would suggest that infants are picking up cues about how to use appropriate expression even though they may not be able to form a coherent sentence. In other words, infants comprehend the tone and expression of language perhaps before they can comprehend its individual words. This information has important implications for understanding how prosody can act as a cue for whether or not a reader is getting meaning from a text as they are reading. However, the relationship of prosody to comprehension is also problematic because a fluent reader can read a text with prosody and still not comprehend the text. For example, the poem Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll can be read aloud with proper expression, yet the reader may not be able to explain what it is they have read. Certain texts, such as poetry, are written with nonsense words or with ambiguous structure or phrasing so as to lend more room for interpretation to the text. It is unclear whether reading with expression helps the reader's comprehension and the reader's ability to simultaneously decode and comprehend text, or whether reading with expression is the result of a reader who has first comprehended the text and can now produce a more expressive rendering of the text. Put another way, does prosody facilitate comprehension, or is prosody an artifact of comprehension?

### **Fluent Reader Program**

The Fluent Reader program is a product that Renaissance Learning designed, based on

research on reading fluency, to enhance students' fluent reading skills. The program allows students to select passages of different readability levels, read them repeatedly, and score them by words per minute read. Students can monitor their progress by watching their scores improve on a graph. Students can also click on an unfamiliar word to get a definition of that word. Students have many passages to choose from on a variety of topics. The students can listen to a modeled oral reading of the passage of their choice at three paces – slow, somewhat fluent, and fluent, in order to hear the passage before an attempted reading. After students listen to the modeled readings, they can record themselves as they read aloud into their headset. The benefit of recording their own individual reading is the fact that they can replay their recording to hear problem areas and self-correct. The benefit of the modeled and student oral readings is that both the oral and visual modalities are used, enhancing the probability that students' fluency skills will improve.

### **Summary**

Since definitions of fluency drive its measurement as well as its instruction, a unified definition is essential for progress in this field of study. Fluency is made up of many subparts, such as speed, accuracy, comprehension, and prosody. Determining which subparts are essential to fluency will shape the way the term is used by researchers and educators. Developing an operational definition for this construct is easy when speed of reading is used as a fluency measure, but this becomes somewhat more difficult when prosody and comprehension are included as part of the definition. Since this concept is

complex, defining fluency and then developing a measure that taps all of its parts is essential for conducting solid research as well as for informing teachers and providing them with dependable information on which to base instructional decisions. Based on the literature reviewed in this paper, we have seen that repeated reading, automaticity, prosody, measurement tools such as Curriculum Based Measurement, and computer-based instructional programs are being designed to address these questions. Making sure the field is unified is paramount to further successful research and instruction in fluency.

Using a true experimental design, the purpose of this study was to test the effect of the Fluent Reader program with elementary students. For the purposes of this paper, the program's effectiveness with elementary English Language Learners in particular is examined. The effectiveness of the Fluent Reader program with this population was of interest for three reasons. Firstly, the practice of reading texts repeatedly provided by Fluent Reader might provide ELL students with the repeated exposure and practice they might need to increase their familiarity with language structure and format, addressing their particular instructional need. Secondly, the exposure to vocabulary that the Fluent Reader program provides might give ELL students added opportunities for increasing their knowledge of English vocabulary by allowing them to click on an unknown word and learn the definition of the word. Since the missing information is easily provided, this might be an added advantage for ELL students. Thirdly, hypotheses from ELL teachers that their students might benefit from the program led to the investigation of this question.

## Methods

### *Overview of the Research*

The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of the Fluent Reader program with elementary students using an experimental design. At the elementary school level, the teachers were asked to select twelve students in their class who were lowest in reading achievement. Of these twelve students, six were randomly assigned to the Fluent Reader program and six were randomly assigned to a control group that received instruction via the Accelerated Reader program. All students were pre and post-tested on a variety of measures such as Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), STAR Test, and a test that combined CBM and comprehension test questions. The study lasted ten weeks.

### *Materials*

*Reading Test Passage for Curriculum Based Measurement.* Curriculum based measurement is a technique that provides reliable and valid measures of reading ability in a short time period. The technique involves having an individual student read for one minute and the dependent variable is measured by number of words read correctly per minute. Six passages were selected from the *Standard Reading Passages*, created by Stanley Deno and colleagues (1987). Two passages at each grade level -- third, fifth, and sixth grades were selected for use as the CBM dependent measure. One passage at each grade level was designated as A, and the other as B. Set A passages were followed by five multiple choice comprehension questions. Set B passages were not followed by

comprehension questions. The six passages were each approximately 235 words long. (See attached appendices).

*Quizzes.* Three quizzes were created, one for each Set A passage. Each quiz consisted of five multiple choice comprehension questions that focused on the main points in each passage. These questions were literal comprehension questions taken directly from the text. (See attached appendices).

*Assessor Score Sheets.* The examiner had a score sheet that had the same text the student was reading from, but at the end of each line the cumulative number of words was listed. Student oral reading errors were marked on the score sheet as the student read. For students reading from Set A passages, at the end of one minute the examiner marked the word the student was on, but the student was allowed to read for an additional one and a half minutes (total reading time was a maximum of two and a half minutes), which was usually long enough for the student to finish reading the passage. Total reading time was recorded. When the student read from Set B passages, only one minute of oral reading time was allowed. Speed of reading was used as one of the dependent variables. Comprehension questions were used on Set A passages as another dependent variable. (See attached appendices).

*Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR).* Each student took the Renaissance Learning® STAR Reading test. The STAR test is an assessment tool created by Renaissance Learning that is administered on the computer. The examination takes only a few minutes and after the student completes the test it gives a "Readability Level" for each student, which was used in several ways. First, it determined the readability level at

which the students could select books from the library for the control groups using the Accelerated Reader. For students using the Fluent Reader program, it determined the initial level of passages they would use for repeated reading. The STAR test was validated using a representative sample of 60,000 students and the results on the test correlate well with other standardized tests.

*Fluent Reader (FR).* The Renaissance Learning® Fluent Reader program has the following components: 1. modeled reading where the students listen to a fluent reader read the practice passage with good expression 2. repeated oral reading 3. self-monitoring in which students record their own reading and assess these recordings noting where their reading needs improvement, monitoring their own daily progress, and establishing their own goal for oral reading rate for the passage they are practicing. This computer software program is designed to assist teachers to track and improve students' reading fluency.

*Accelerated Reader.* The Renaissance Learning® program tests the students' comprehension on books at various readability levels. With this program the student reads books independently that are at the assigned level given by the STAR Reading test. When the student is finished reading the book, the student takes a computer administered comprehension quiz. Feedback is almost immediate and the student gets points based on the readability level of the book, the length of the book, and the score received on the test.

### ***Participants***

Participants for this study were elementary students in the Minneapolis and

St. Paul public schools. At the elementary school level, 72 students participated. Of the 72 students, 36 were third graders (18 experimental and 18 control) 36 were fourth graders (18 experimental and 18 control), and 24 were sixth graders (12 experimental and 12 control). Of the 72 elementary students, 29 were English Language Learners (14 experimental and 15 control). As noted above, the teachers were asked to select the twelve worst readers in their classes. Then these students were randomly assigned either to the Fluent Reader experimental program or to the control condition. In the elementary school the control condition was the Accelerated Reader program.

### ***Procedure***

#### *Pre-Test Phase*

First, all students were pre-tested on all CBM level passages. For Set A passages, students read the whole passage orally with a maximum allowed reading time of 2 1/2 minutes. The examiner marked off after one minute the last word that the student was on so that word per minute rate could be determined. Word recognition errors were also noted. In addition, the student was given a multiple-choice comprehension test that was read orally to the student. For the set B passages, the regular procedure for curriculum-based measurement was used. A word per minute score was given minus errors in word recognition. Lastly, we collected data from the STAR test.

#### *Treatment Phase*

The treatment phase of the study lasted 10 weeks, beginning in March 2003 and ending May 2003. At the elementary schools, the experimental students used the

Accelerated Reader program for 30 minutes and the Fluent Reader program for 20 minutes, and the control groups used the Accelerated Reader program for 30 minutes and traditional reading instruction for 20 minutes. Fidelity to treatment was addressed by teacher monitoring to be sure that students were on task during reading instruction.

#### *Post-Test Phase*

We used the same measurements that were used for the pretest to collect our posttest data. Gain scores based on growth from pretest to posttest were analyzed to determine differences in reading achievement between groups.

### **Results**

This research examined several questions: (a) Does the Fluent Reader program improve students' reading achievement? (b) Does the Fluent Reader program improve students' reading fluency as measured by tests that one could consider to be indicators of fluency (CBM)? (c) Is Fluent Reader effective with ELL students? To address these questions we analyzed the differences between experimental and control groups. The unit of analysis was the gain score in correct words read per minute from pretest to posttest for speed of reading on the CBM tests.

#### *Elementary School*

#### *English Language Learners (ELL)*

The unit of analysis that was used in this study was the gain score from pre to post

test on the different dependent variable measures. The mean gain score for the students who used Fluent Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 20.21 ( $SD=12.66$ ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level passage A. The mean gain score for the control group that used Accelerated Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 8.27 ( $SD =8.08$ ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level passage A. This was a significant difference on the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) ( $F=9.311$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $\eta^2 = .26$ ). The mean gain score for the students who were on Fluent Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 20.07 ( $SD=16.66$ ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level passage B. The mean gain score for the control group that used Accelerated Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 6.67 ( $SD=10.54$ ) on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level passage B. This was a significant difference on the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) ( $F=6.81$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $\eta^2 = .20$ ). The mean gain score for the students who were on Fluent Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 17.93 ( $SD=11.15$ ) on 5th grade level passage A. The mean gain score for the control group that used Accelerated Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 6.00 ( $SD=8.95$ ) on 5th grade level passage A. This was a significant difference on the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) ( $F=10.17$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $\eta^2 = .27$ ). The mean gain score for the students who used Fluent Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 19.86 ( $SD=15.58$ ) on 6th grade level passage A. The mean gain score for the control group that used Accelerated Reader as measured with the CBM in correct words per minute reading was 8.53 ( $SD=10.97$ ) on 6th grade level passage A. This was a significant difference on the

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) ( $F=5.18$ ,  $p<.05$ , and  $\eta^2 = .16$ ).

## Discussion

The definition of fluency includes the following characteristics: accuracy and reading speed. In fact, one of the most commonly used methods used in the United States today, for determining if a student is fluent, is to use Curriculum Based Measurement. Curriculum Based Measurement examines the speed with which a student is able to orally read a passage. On a number of the Curriculum Based Measurement reading passages used in this study, the students who used Fluent Reader had higher gain scores in word per minute rate than the students using the Accelerated Reader.

At the elementary level, the effect of the Fluent Reader program on English Language Learners reading performance was examined. From our results, English Language Learners became more fluent using Fluent Reader than using traditional reading instruction. English Language Learners in the experimental group had significantly higher gain scores on words read per minute than students in the control group, suggesting that reading rate performance improved with the treatment. Gains in fluency as measured by correct words read per minute on both passages of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level (A&B), 5<sup>th</sup> grade level A, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade level A suggest that students may have met their zone of proximal development in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level passages, and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade

level passages may have been too hard. Another possible explanation for this finding is the fact that students were prompted to read the passage in order to respond to comprehension questions following the A passages, and this may have influenced their reading speed. This might be because ELL students benefit in particular from the repeated reading element of the program. The fact that Fluent Reader provides an opportunity to read texts repeatedly may allow English Language Learners to gain more exposure to the language, its structure, and to familiarize themselves with vocabulary. Also, the fact that students were able to listen to a modeled oral reading of the chosen passage allows students to learn from the example they are provided and apply the same characteristics of the spoken language they hear to their rendition of the text. This raises an interesting question. In this study, we did not examine the improvement of students' vocabulary. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether English Language Learners' vocabulary improves as a result of using the Fluent Reader program. Another fascinating question to examine would be the relationship of the students' reading rate to their comprehension of texts. These questions have important educational implications for reading instruction for English Language Learners in the public schools.

Given our control group instructional method of Accelerated Reader, the small effect sizes of our significant results are to be expected. Accelerated Reader has been found to be an effective instructional tool, so comparing these two programs makes finding significant differences less likely. In further studies, comparing Fluent Reader strictly to traditional instruction may yield more information. However, since these readers were the poorest readers from each classroom, seeing gains in reading

achievement due to the program is particularly interesting. Another consideration for future studies might be to control for the first language of the ELL students involved in the study. There might be an effect for certain languages over others, which was not specifically addressed by this study.

Based on the results of this study, the Fluent Reader program is an effective method of reading fluency instruction for readers at the elementary level. The Fluent Reader program has been effective in increasing the number of words students read per minute, as well as decreasing total reading time. The Fluent Reader program has also been particularly effective with English Language Learners, which is important for the fluency needs of diverse students in elementary classrooms. Future studies will continue to gather data on the long-term benefits of the Fluent Reader program.

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Table 1

Gain Scores on CBM for WPM (Word Per Minute) Rate for English Language Learners

Passage Reading Level	Experimental (FR)		Control (AR)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Grade 3a*	20.21	12.66	8.27	8.08
Grade 3b*	20.07	16.66	6.67	10.54
Grade 5a*	17.93	11.15	6.00	8.95
Grade 5b	10.79	11.46	3.67	10.74
Grade 6a*	19.86	15.58	8.53	10.97
Grade 6b	16.86	16.62	10.47	13.02
N	14		15	

Note: Fluent Reader (FR) are the experimental, Accelerated Reader (AR) are the control

Table 2

MANOVA for WPM (Word Per Minute) Rate for English Language Learners

---

Passage Reading Level	df	Mean Squared	F	$\eta^2$	p
Grade 3a	1	1033.68	9.311	.256	.005*
Grade 3b	1	1301.19	6.806	.201	.015*
Grade 5a	1	1030.38	10.17	.274	.004*
Grade 5b		366.999	2.981	.099	.096
Grade 6a		928.572	5.181	.161	.031*
Grade 6b		295.725	1.339	.047	.257

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\*p &lt; .05

## Administration of Reading Passages

The Assessor will listen to each student read six stories. “Student passage” 3A will be read first and immediately followed by “student questions” 3A (the five question multiple choice quiz). Then, 5A and 6A will be completed in this manner. Upon completion of the last multiple choice quiz, the student will be asked to read student passages 3B, 5B and 6B. These last three readings will be to obtain a word per minute rate, for 60 seconds. There are no quizzes for the last three readings. The stories are labeled “student passage”, and the questions are labeled “student questions”. For each story the student reads, the assessor will follow-along on a scoring sheet that is labeled “assessor passage”.

1. Make sure you are **using the correct passages**. Put the student’s school, teacher, grade and name on each of the assessor passages and student questions pages. You will need two pencils and a watch that displays seconds.
2. **Find a quiet, comfortable place** where you can listen to the student read without interruption. If you are in a rush or your student is eager to engage in another activity, the test will not be accurate.
3. **Hand the student the “student passage”** of the story you are using. You will notice it does not include the numbers along the right side of the story as does the “assessor passage”.
4. The **student is to read aloud** as he or she would normally. Speeding through the passage results in making errors.
5. As you follow along, **record the errors** by discretely marking an “X” through each incorrect word. “X”s are marked through words that are skipped or mispronounced. Ignore extra words spoken by the student.
6. **If the student hesitates more than 3 seconds** on a word, mark an “X” and ask the student to continue, **do not provide the word**.

7. **For first three passages:**

- a) **at the end of 60 seconds** mark the last whole word attempted by the student by marking a slash (/) at the end of that word.
- b) **If the student does not finish the passage in two and one-half minutes**, stop the student at this time, **mark the spot by circling the last word read**.
- c) **Write down the total time** it took the student to read the whole passage, 2 ½ minutes or less.
- d) **Have student take quiz after each reading**, prior to reading the next passage. **Read questions and answers to students**. Have student circle answer choices. Student cannot look back at passage.

8. **For last three passages:**

- a) **at the end of 60 seconds** mark the last whole word attempted by the student by marking a slash (/) at the end of that word.

All done, put the two packets in folder – (3 pages of student questions, and 6)

## Assessor Script of Student Directions

For the first three stories:

"I would like you to read three stories for me. As you read, I will be making some notes. After each of the first three stories, I will read you some questions. You can circle your answers on your answer sheets. You will not be able to look back at the story, so try to remember what you've read. Try each word. If you come to a word that you do not know, you may skip it and go to the next word. Speeding through the passage results in making errors. Please start here (point to the title on the Student's Copy) and read the story aloud until I tell you to stop. You may start when I say "Begin". Do you have any questions?"

For the last three stories:

"I would like you to read three more stories for me, this time without questions. Try each word. If you come to a word that you do not know, you may skip it and go to the next word. Speeding through the passage results in making errors. Please start here (point to the title on the Student's Copy) and read the story aloud until I tell you to stop. You may start when I say "Begin". Do you have any questions?"

Example:

The Visitor	2
Tap, tap, tap. I was reading a book.	10
But I kept hearing this noise at the	18
window. Tap, tap. I began reading	24
again. Clunk, scrape, tap. I looked	30
out of the window. It was dark out.	38
I couldn't see anything. I looked	44
back at my book. It was hard to find	53
my place. I found it/ and began to	61
read. I heard the noise again.	67

School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                      Posttest circle one

	word count	# of errors
Bobby Goes Fishing	3	___
Bobby and Grandpa got up early to go fishing. Bobby was tired	15	___
and thought maybe he'd rather sleep. As soon as he smelled the bacon that	29	___
Grandpa was cooking in the skillet, Bobby was up and out of bed. Grandpa	43	___
cracked a few eggs over the hot skillet, flipped some pancakes and before	56	___
Bobby knew it, they had a feast for breakfast.	65	___
While eating breakfast, Bobby asked Grandpa what kind of fish they	76	___
would catch. "Well, Bobby," said Grandpa, "if we're lucky, we might catch a	89	___
rainbow trout."	91	___
"Wow, do they get really big?" asked Bobby.	99	___
"Some do," Grandpa replied, "but mostly, they're just hard to catch	110	___
because they're so smart." Grandpa then went on to tell Bobby how they	123	___
would try to fish along the river. He told Bobby there were rules he	137	___
had to remember. "First, you have to be very quiet. Second, you have to be	152	___
patient. And, third, you have to be lucky!"	160	___
Bobby said, "I feel lucky today!"	166	___
"Well, let's get going then," said Grandpa. "Remember to wear your	177	___
fishing hat. Not only will it keep the sun out of your eyes, but it might bring	194	___
us luck."	196	___
Soon they were in Grandpa's old, red pickup truck and on their way to	210	___
the river. Bobby knew that today he was going to be lucky.	222	___

Total Reading Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Bobby Goes Fishing

Bobby and Grandpa got up early to go fishing. Bobby was tired and thought maybe he'd rather sleep. As soon as he smelled the bacon that Grandpa was cooking in the skillet, Bobby was up and out of bed. Grandpa cracked a few eggs over the hot skillet, flipped some pancakes and before Bobby knew it, they had a feast for breakfast.

While eating breakfast, Bobby asked Grandpa what kind of fish they would catch. "Well, Bobby," said Grandpa, "if we're lucky, we might catch a rainbow trout."

"Wow, do they get really big?" asked Bobby.

"Some do," Grandpa replied, "but mostly, they're just hard to catch because they're so smart." Grandpa then went on to tell Bobby how they would try to fish along the river. He told Bobby there were rules he had to remember. "First, you have to be very quiet. Second, you have to be patient. And, third, you have to be lucky!"

Bobby said, "I feel lucky today!"

"Well, let's get going then," said Grandpa. "Remember to wear your fishing hat. Not only will it keep the sun out of your eyes, but it might bring us luck."

Soon they were in Grandpa's old, red pickup truck and on their way to the river. Bobby knew that today he was going to be lucky.

## Bobby Goes Fishing Questions

1. Who made breakfast?
  - a. Grandma
  - \* b. Grandpa
  - c. Bobby
  - d. Mom
  
2. What got Bobby out of bed?
  - a. Grandpa called his name
  - \* b. the smell of bacon cooking
  - c. the bright morning sunlight
  - d. the alarm clock
  
3. Why were the fish hard to catch?
  - \* a. they're so smart
  - b. they're not hungry
  - c. there aren't very many of them
  - d. they're using the wrong kind of bait
  
4. What was one of the rules Bobby had to remember?
  - a. stay alert
  - b. stay close by
  - c. wear long pants
  - \* d. be patient
  
5. What did Grandpa think might bring Bobby luck?
  - a. rabbit's foot
  - b. four leaf clover
  - \* c. fishing hat
  - d. fishing rod

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                  Posttest                  circle one

### Bobby Goes Fishing Questions

1. Who made breakfast?
  - a. Grandma
  - b. Grandpa
  - c. Bobby
  - d. Mom
  
2. What got Bobby out of bed?
  - a. Grandpa called his name
  - b. the smell of bacon cooking
  - c. the bright morning sunlight
  - d. the alarm clock
  
3. Why were the fish hard to catch?
  - a. they're so smart
  - b. they're not hungry
  - c. there aren't very many of them
  - d. they're using the wrong kind of bait
  
4. What was one of the rules Bobby had to remember?
  - a. stay alert
  - b. stay close by
  - c. wear long pants
  - d. be patient
  
5. What did Grandpa think might bring Bobby luck?
  - a. rabbit's foot
  - b. four leaf clover
  - c. fishing hat
  - d. fishing rod

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest

Posttest circle one

word count # of errors

Summer Guests 2 \_\_\_\_

One summer we had guests in our shed. The only problem	13	____
was that we didn't know who they were. All we could see of them	27	____
were signs or clues. We could see two very large holes dug under	40	____
the shed. We could see some animal footprints around the holes.	51	____
When we were very quiet, we could hear some rustling noises	62	____
inside, but we never saw them. Who were our summer guests?	73	____
I decided it was time to find out who these guests were. I had	87	____
a plan. I got a chair and a few snacks. I placed my chair behind a	103	____
bush. I moved it a little so I could see the hole. Then I sat down for	120	____
a long wait. I sat very quietly, and it didn't take long. A tiny fur	135	____
face peeked out of the hole. Then, two more furry faces peeked	147	____
out. Oops! A furry creature got pushed out of the hole by its	160	____
brother. It started to walk around. Out came another and another.	171	____
They started to play with each other. It looked like they were	183	____
having lots of fun. But what were they? The dark brown fur	195	____
seemed to cover their shapes. Another creature came. But it was a	207	____
lot bigger. A large mother Hedgehog waddled out. Now I knew	218	____
who our summer guests were!	223	____

Assessor Passage – 3B    Fluent Reader – Spring 2003

## Summer Guests

One summer we had guests in our shed. The only problem was that we didn't know who they were. All we could see of them were signs or clues. We could see two very large holes dug under the shed. We could see some animal footprints around the holes. When we were very quiet, we could hear some rustling noises inside, but we never saw them. Who were our summer guests?

I decided it was time to find out who these guests were. I had a plan. I got a chair and a few snacks. I placed my chair behind a bush. I moved it a little so I could see the hole. Then I sat down for a long wait. I sat very quietly, and it didn't take long. A tiny fur face peeked out of the hole. Then, two more furry faces peeked out. Oops! A furry creature got pushed out of the hole by its brother. It started to walk around. Out came another and another. They started to play with each other. It looked like they were having lots of fun. But what were they? The dark brown fur seemed to cover their shapes. Another creature came. But it was a lot bigger. A large mother Hedgehog waddled out. Now I knew who our summer guests were!

## Summer Guests Questions

1. Where did the summer guests live?
  - a. in a tree
  - b. by the wood pile
  - c. in the garden
  - \* d. under the shed
  
2. What clues could be seen near the holes?
  - a. dirt
  - b. wood chips
  - \* c. animal footprints
  - d. fur
  
3. How did the child find out who the guests were?
  - \* a. sat very quietly
  - b. got up early to see
  - c. set a trap
  - d. asked his brother
  
4. What did the child first see?
  - a. mother
  - \* b. furry face
  - c. brown nose
  - d. mouse
  
5. Who pushed the furry creature out of the hole?
  - a. father
  - b. mother
  - a. sister
  - \* d. brother

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                  Posttest                  circle one

### Summer Guests Questions

1. Where did the summer guests live?
  - a. in a tree
  - b. by the wood pile
  - c. in the garden
  - d. under the shed
  
2. What clues could be seen near the holes?
  - a. dirt
  - b. wood chips
  - c. animal footprints
  - d. fur
  
3. How did the child find out who the guests were?
  - a. sat very quietly
  - b. got up early to see
  - c. set a trap
  - d. asked his brother
  
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  - b. furry face
  - c. brown nose
  - d. mouse
  
5. Who pushed the furry creature out of the hole?
  - a. father
  - b. mother
  - b. sister
  - d. brother

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                      Posttest circle one

	word count	# of errors
Class Party	2	___
The sixth grade class at Forest Glenn Elementary school had	12	___
been an especially close group. Most of the students had been	23	___
classmates for six years. They wanted to celebrate graduation together	33	___
before they moved on to different junior high schools.	42	___
Mr. Jacobs, their teacher, suggested that the idea be discussed in	53	___
a formal class meeting. So Alicia Martin, the class president, called the	65	___
meeting to order. "It has been suggested that we sponsor a class party	78	___
for graduation," Alicia began. "We need to talk about your ideas and	90	___
arrive at a decision. Some of the issues we must address include: the	103	___
time and date of the party, the location, food and beverages,	114	___
chaperones, and the cost per student. The floor is now open for	126	___
discussion."	127	___
Susan stood up next to her desk. "I think we should use the last	141	___
day of school to go to the beach for a picnic. We could swim, play	156	___
volleyball and have races. It wouldn't be very expensive."	165	___
Todd volunteered his ideas next. "I agree with Susan," said	175	___
Todd. "If we go to the beach we won't have to spend much money	189	___
decorating a party room. Besides, the weather is so nice, who wants to	202	___
stay inside? I'd rather be outside swimming and playing softball."	212	___
"But the beach is quite a few miles away," said Jenny. "It sounds	225	___
like a good idea, but who's going to drive all of us there? We need to	241	___
figure that out first."	245	___

Total Reading Time \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor Passage – 5A Fluent Reader – Spring 2003

## Class Party

The sixth grade class at Forest Glenn Elementary school had been an especially close group. Most of the students had been classmates for six years. They wanted to celebrate graduation together before they moved on to different junior high schools.

Mr. Jacobs, their teacher, suggested that the idea be discussed in a formal class meeting. So Alicia Martin, the class president, called the meeting to order. “It has been suggested that we sponsor a class party for graduation,” Alicia began. “We need to talk about your ideas and arrive at a decision. Some of the issues we must address include: the time and date of the party, the location, food and beverages, chaperones, and the cost per student. The floor is now open for discussion.”

Susan stood up next to her desk. “I think we should use the last day of school to go to the beach for a picnic. We could swim, play volleyball and have races. It wouldn’t be very expensive.”

Todd volunteered his ideas next. “I agree with Susan,” said Todd. “If we go to the beach we won’t have to spend much money decorating a party room. Besides, the weather is so nice, who wants to stay inside? I’d rather be outside swimming and playing softball.”

“But the beach is quite a few miles away,” said Jenny. “It sounds like a good idea, but who’s going to drive all of us there? We need to figure that out first.”

## Class Party Questions

1. What was the name of the elementary school?
  - a. Wild Wood
  - \* b. Forest Glenn
  - c. Clear Water
  - d. Lily Lake
  
2. Why did the class want to have a party?
  - a. one of the students was having a birthday
  - b. Christmas was near
  - \* c. they were going to graduate soon
  - d. they had won a school achievement award
  
3. How was the decision made to have a party?
  - a. classroom parents decided
  - b. teacher decided
  - \* c. formal class meeting
  - d. classroom vote
  
4. What is the name of the class president?
  - a. Jake
  - b. Susan
  - c. Todd
  - \* d. Alicia
  
5. Where did Susan suggest to have the party?
  - a. at the park
  - \* b. at the beach
  - c. at the playground
  - d. in the gym

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                  Posttest                  circle one

### Class Party Questions

1. What was the name of the elementary school?
  - a. Wild Wood
  - b. Forest Glenn
  - c. Clear Water
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2. Why did the class want to have a party?
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5. Where did Susan suggest to have the party?
  - a. at the park
  - b. at the beach
  - c. at the playground
  - d. in the gym

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest

Posttest circle one

	word count	# of errors
The Band	2	___
“I’m answering your ad in the school paper. I play electric guitar and I want to play in your group!” explained Michelle. Brian had never considered that a girl might apply and wasn’t sure if he wanted Michelle in the group. “What can you play?” asked Brian.	13 25 38 49	___ ___ ___ ___
“Here, listen to this,” retorted Michelle, who began unpacking her guitar. She plugged the guitar into Brian’s amplifier and began playing. The guys in the band were impressed. “Hey, you’re really good!” shouted Nicky. “Where did you learn to play like that?”	58 69 80 91	___ ___ ___ ___
“My sister’s in a band,” explained Michelle. “She’s pretty good and spends a lot of time with me. Well, can I play with you guys?”	101 116	___ ___
“We’d better talk it over,” snapped Brian, still unsure about having Michelle in the group. The guys huddled in the corner. “What do you think?” Brian asked.	126 138 143	___ ___ ___
“She’s great, let’s invite her in,” said Nicky.	151	___
“But she’s a girl,” complained Brian.	157	___
“So what,” replied Nicky, “She plays terrific electric guitar, and better yet, she wants to be in the group with us.”	167 178	___ ___
And so the boys voted. Michelle won 3 to 0, and the group had a new member for their band. Now the band was ready to perform, and Michelle had the perfect idea for where they should hold their first show, the school talent show. The talent show was only three weeks away, so the band had to work fast.	193 206 218 230 238	___ ___ ___ ___ ___

## The Band

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“My sister’s in a band,” explained Michelle. “She’s pretty good and spend a lot of time with me. Well, can I play with you guys?”

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And so the boys voted. Michelle won 3 to 0, and the group had a new member for their band. Now the band was ready to perform, and Michelle had the perfect idea for where they should hold their first show, the school talent show. The talent show was only three weeks away, so the band had to work fast.

## The Band Questions

1. How did Michelle find out about the group?
  - \* a. school paper
  - b. bulletin board
  - c. local paper
  - d. best friend
  
2. What did Michelle plug her guitar into?
  - a. recorder
  - \* b. amplifier
  - c. speaker
  - d. stereo
  
3. How did Michelle learn to play?
  - a. brother
  - b. father
  - c. neighbor
  - \* d. sister
  
4. Why does Nicky want to let Michelle in the band?
  - a. she never criticized their playing
  - \* b. she wants to be in the group
  - c. she is smart
  - d. she is nice
  
5. How did they decide to let Michelle join the band?
  - a. Nicky decided
  - b. coin toss
  - \* c. the boys voted
  - d. the band leader decided

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest

Posttest

circle one

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School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest

Posttest circle one

	word count	# of errors
Camping	1	___
Joey and James were camping out alone for the first time. Joey	13	___
was happy about their choice of the campground. The park had plenty	25	___
of woods, hills, a lake and a trout stream. Joey planned to go fishing	39	___
the next day. James, however, was looking forward to swimming in	50	___
the lake. He was hoping to try out his new snorkel, mask and fins.	64	___
That night they cooked a meal over the campfire. James was in	76	___
charge of the hotdogs and baked potatoes. Meanwhile, Joey made apple	87	___
crisp for dessert. Both boys thought they were doing a pretty good job	100	___
until James burned the hotdogs. Joey laughed so hard he knocked the	112	___
apple crisp into the fire. Oh well, they thought, maybe breakfast	123	___
would be better.	126	___
Soon it was time to sleep. It was getting late and the night air	140	___
was cool. After putting the fire out, both boys climbed into their tent	153	___
and zipped up their sleeping bags. It won't be hard to fall asleep,	166	___
thought Joey, as his brother began to snore. However, a few minutes	178	___
later a loud, crackling noise woke both boys. "What was that?"	189	___
exclaimed James. "I don't know," said Joey cautiously, "but we'd	199	___
better look." Joey found his flashlight and quickly climbed out of the	211	___
tent. His brother was close behind.	217	___
Outside the tent they continued to hear the strange noise. It	228	___
sounded like it came from the water. Joey turned to his brother and	241	___
said, "I think it's coming this way."	248	___

Total Reading Time \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor Passage – 6A

Fluent Reader – Spring 2003

## Camping

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That night they cooked a meal over the campfire. James was in charge of the hotdogs and baked potatoes. Meanwhile, Joey made apple crisp for dessert. Both boys thought they were doing a pretty good job until James burned the hotdogs. Joey laughed so hard he knocked the apple crisp into the fire. Oh well, they thought, maybe breakfast would be better.

Soon it was time to sleep. It was getting late and the night air was cool. After putting the fire out, both boys climbed into their tent and zipped up their sleeping bags. It won't be hard to fall asleep, thought Joey, as his brother began to snore. However, a few minutes later a loud, crackling noise woke both boys. "What was that?" exclaimed James. "I don't know," said Joey cautiously, "but we'd better look." Joey found his flashlight and quickly climbed out of the tent. His brother was close behind.

Outside the tent they continued to hear the strange noise. It sounded like it came from the water. Joey turned to his brother and said, "I think it's coming this way."

## Camping Questions

1. What did the park have plenty of?
  - a. forests, rivers, ponds and hills
  - \* b. woods, hills, a lake and a trout stream
  - c. trees, hills, a lake and ponds
  - d. orchards, trout stream, a lake and hills
  
2. What made Joey laugh?
  - \* a. burned hotdogs
  - b. burned marshmallows
  - c. burned apple crisp
  - d. burned baked potatoes
  
3. What did the boys do after putting the fire out?
  - a. they went searching for fire wood
  - b. they set up their tent
  - \* c. they climbed into their tent
  - d. they told ghost stories
  
4. What did the boys hear?
  - a. a loud, crunching noise
  - b. a loud, cackling noise
  - c. a loud, crinkling noise
  - \* d. a loud, crackling noise
  
5. Where did the sound come from?
  - a. the wind
  - b. the woods
  - \* c. the water
  - d. the wild

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                  Posttest                  circle one

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School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pretest                      Posttest circle one

	word count	# of errors
The Haunted House	3	___
“How do you know this house is haunted?” asked Angie.	13	___
“There’s no such thing as a haunted house, Jessica assured her. “Then what just made that noise?” Jessica peered into the corner where they had both heard a clicking noise. “It looks like an old grandfather clock. It must still be running.” “It looks to me like this place has been abandoned for years!” Angie commented.	25 37 49 64 69	___ ___ ___ ___ ___
Suddenly, Angie felt alone in the room. A chill went up her spine. “Jessica!” she called, “remember you promised we’d stay together.” There was no answer. “Jessica, the five minutes are up. I’m leaving!” Still, there was no response. She could hardly leave now without Jessica. What if she were in danger. Angie walked cautiously toward the back of the house.	81 90 102 113 124 130	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
“Hey Angie,” she heard, “look at this.” There was Jessica coming out from behind a built-in shelf on the wall. “It’s a secret passage-way. I only followed it part of the way and then I thought I’d better come back for you. Let’s see where it goes.” Angie had lost some of her fear and was enticed by the idea of a secret passage-way. Both of the girls entered the passage-way that led down several steps. It was cool, damp and hard to see. However, both could see a glimmer of light ahead. As Jessica led the way down the tunnel, they both heard a growling noise. “Oh, no,” thought Angie, “now what?”	140 153 167 180 194 205 219 232 243	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

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## The Haunted House Questions

1. What was Angie's comment about the house?
  - a. looks like it's time to go in
  - b. looks like a witch lives there
  - \* c. looks like it's been abandoned for years
  - d. looks like it needs to be repaired
  
2. What happened when Angie felt alone in the room?
  - \* a. a chill went up her spine
  - b. a wind howled
  - c. ghosts seemed to appear
  - d. the door squeaked
  
3. Which way did Angie walk?
  - a. up to the attic
  - b. down to the basement
  - c. toward the neighbors
  - \* d. toward the back of the house
  
4. How far did they follow the passage-way?
  - a. to the very end
  - b. to the third corner
  - \* c. part of the way
  - d. until they saw the light
  
5. How far did the passage-way lead down?
  - a. to the bottom
  - \* b. several steps
  - c. twelve steps
  - d. until the broken step

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

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Pretest                  Posttest                  circle one

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