Providing daily peer tutoring in the re-reading strategy enhances the comprehension of Year 1 and 2 readers at risk.

ABSTRACT

While recent changes to the way in which we teach Literacy have lifted our Literacy levels, many of our students are still struggling to achieve National benchmarks. Reading is an intricate process for which we require a variety of strategies, an understanding of language and text and an ability to determine which strategy to use at any given time.

The hypothesis of this study is that providing daily peer tutoring in the re-reading strategy enhances the comprehension of Year 1 and 2 readers at risk. In this research, the students were taught the strategy of re-reading by their classroom teacher within the classroom setting. The same strategy was also taught to a group of Year 5 and 6 students who, with clear guidance, provided daily-reading sessions to reinforced its use (along with other strategies).

This study considers the effect that this intervention had upon the reading skills of its participants against a control group and found that *overall*, comprehension and accuracy improved, while the rate of reading decreased.

As almost all classrooms have some time each day for individual reading this type of intervention could be integrated into this time allocation and would provide benefits for both the tutors and the younger students.

INTRODUCTION

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy – Teaching Reading (December 2005) identified on page 27 that the data from 2003 shows that approximately 8% of Year 3 students and approximately 11% of Year 5 and 7 students are not achieving National Benchmarks for Reading. While this is a vast improvement from the 1996 data, it still leaves us with the need to

provide appropriate support for those students who are not learning to read successfully.

I have been working in education for over twenty years now, and in that time have seen dramatic changes in the teaching of literacy. My early years of teaching were in the time of the whole language approach – where at one stage I was even strongly directed _not_ to teach phonics or phonemic knowledge in any way. I have taught literacy at a time when there were few guiding principles, and have also taught in times when there were many guidelines and very little room for individual teacher interpretation and discretion. I have experienced the fads and phases of our education system, and am relieved that the current research seems to support the belief that reading is a combination of a range of strategies.

The Multiple Levels of Text Processing Model – MLOTP (Munro, 2005) identifies that in order to read successfully we utilise a number of strategies (the how) within the context of text (the what) and that this is regulated through our self-management and control strategies (the when). This is all underpinned by our personal experiences both in life and in language. This model was my first experience at truly understanding the reading process – it made sense of what I do when I read!

Good readers rely on an ability to follow the structures of text, knowledge of the topic, vocabulary and motivation (Baker and Brown, 1984 – as cited in Mason, Meadan, Hedin and Corso, 2006). They also need to be thinking about what they are reading and monitoring their comprehension. They identify and then implement appropriate strategies from their personal "toolbag" of reading strategies in order to maintain their reading (Mason, Meadan, Hedin and Corso, 2006). Many struggling readers have limited strategies in their "toolbag". They frequently focus on the individual sounds within words, or skip them altogether.

These skills need to be explicitly taught to students. "There is evidence that students benefit from instruction in a small repertoire of reading

comprehension strategies (Brown, 2002; Pressley, 2002 – cited in Geary, 2006).

Feilding-Barnsley, Hay and Ashman (2005) discuss their "spin" on Luke and Freebody's (1999) theoretical model in three domain headings – decoding (code breaker), language (form and meaning) and metacognition (text user and analyst). While my research focuses on the re-reading strategy, I wanted to ensure that the use of other strategies and approaches from other domain headings was not only encouraged, but that the movement from one to the other (as needed) was discussed and supported.

I am also very aware that increasingly our teachers have a lot to balance. They do the best that they can in order to meet the needs of all of their students, but the ratio of teachers to students does not always allow them to provide the individual support that they may want for some students. My endeavour in this research was to determine if explicit teaching by the classroom teacher could be supported by daily reading sessions, which were taken by older peers, thus providing extra support for students with additional needs.

Kourea, Cartledge and Musti-Rao (2007), who studied the effects of class peer tutoring on sight- word acquisition, maintenance, reading fluency and comprehension, found that "total class peer tutoring can be a viable instruction tool for the inclusion of students with disabilities", with an improvement shown in both fluency and comprehension.

Reading aloud provided opportunities for immediate feedback according to the study of Veerkamp, Kamps and Cooper (2007). The students in their study made substantial gain in reading performance (two to four years over a one-year period), with particular improvement in reading fluency for targeted students. They also found that students who received peer tutoring with reinforcement (through the use of reward points) made greater gains than those without reinforcement.

I was also keen to incorporate current research on teaching and learning and incorporate this into my plan. The Collins Model designed by Collins, Brown & Newman (1989) discusses the need for teachers to Model, Coach and Scaffold and Fade and for students to be encouraged to Articulate, Reflect and Explore.

As such I developed an intervention program with Year 1 / 2 students, targeting the explicit teaching of the re-reading strategy while encouraging the use of other strategies. This program was run over a three-week period – with 12, fifteen- minute sessions. The re-reading strategy was taught within the context of The Collins Model by the classroom teacher and was supported by peer tutors.

HYPOTHESIS:

Providing daily peer tutoring in the re-reading strategy enhances the comprehension of Year 1 and 2 readers at risk.

METHOD:

This study involved two groups – one following he OXO design (Group A) and another following the OOO design (Group B). In both groups, reading accuracy, rate and comprehension were measured through the Neale Reading Analysis – Third Edition (1999). An analysis of Prose Reading (Munro, n.d.) was also undertaken on one student from Group A (Intervention Group) to determine the strategies that were being utilised. Tutor observations of their use of targeted reading strategies and a record of the student's own analysis of reading performance and use of strategies was also collected. The self-efficacy scale as used within ERIK (Catholic Education Office and Melbourne University, 2007) was also used.

The students (identified by their classroom teacher as being in need of some additional reading support, based on classroom testing results) were five Year

1 /2 students in an intervention group (Group A) and five in a control group (Group B). Their age, entry reading ability (based on the results of Class Literacy Assessments) and other details are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Name	Teaching/ Control Group	Age in Months	ESL	Earlier Intervention	EMA	LNSLN	YEAR	Text Level	CAP	BURT
GROUP A - INTERVENTION										
A1	Yes	94	No	Yes	Yes	No	2	10	19	18
A2	Yes	84	No	No	No	No	2	19	17	33
A3	Yes	93	No	No	Yes	No	2	21	--	42
A4	Yes	93	No	Yes	No	Yes - SLD	2	13	17	33
A5	Yes	78	No	No	Yes	No	1	5	20	16
GROUP B- CONTROL										
B1	No	90	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	10	18	28
B2	No	97	No	No	Yes	No	2	18	--	19
B3	No	83	No	No	Yes	No	2	21	--	31
B4	No	94	No	Yes	Yes	No	2	13	21	23
RR	No	72	No	*	Yes	Yes - ID	1	5	12	12
		* Commenced Reading Recovery during the Intervention								

This research project was set up within the context of peer tutoring. Year 5/6 students (determined by their classroom teacher as being competent readers and responsible students) were partnered or buddied with those students from the Year 1 / 2 classroom – Group A. The purpose for establishing such a partnership was two –fold. Students in this school setting often struggle to have a session of daily reading within their home environment. As such, this structure would provide daily reading support and practice. Also, it enabled the tutors to be guided, quite specifically, to reinforce a strategy that was being taught within the classroom setting.

The teacher in the Year 1 / 2 classroom introduced the strategy of re-reading to the class and referred to it within the classroom context over the following weeks. A poster (with prompts) was displayed in the room for classroom reference (Appendix 1).

This session involved:

- The introduction of re-reading as a reading strategy to use if you have tried some other strategies (such as sounding out, looking at the pictures) and you are still stuck on a word
- If you are still stuck on a word, then have another quick look at it and then reread to help you have another try. Sometimes re-reading helps you to remember what the sentence is about and this helps you to have a better guess.
- Demonstration of the re-reading strategy through a shared reading experience
- The introduction of the poster

The tutors were also explicitly taught the strategy and given a smaller version of the poster – presented as a bookmark (Appendix 2). They were also given a script and a log book in which to record observations, notes etc. This script changed as the sessions progressed to provide opportunities for coaching, scaffolding and fading, Collins, Brown & Newman (1989). See Appendix 3.

The daily reading sessions involved:

Sessions 1 - 5
Students experienced scaffolding to use the title, book cover etc to predict the theme of the book. The tutors encouraged, modelled and supported the use of a small range of reading strategies including sounding, utilising the pictures and re-reading. The tutors assisted the students to identify a starting point for their re-reading. The tutors asked and then supported the students to identify and articulate the way they feel about their reading, the reading strategies that they utilised within the session and to reflect on the text. A sticker was given to the student to reward good reading.

Sessions 6 - 10

The aim of these sessions was to help the student to begin to use the strategies on his or her own. The tutors were asked to still provide support as needed, but to try to encourage the students to think about the things that they were doing last week and to do them independently.

Students experienced the reduction of scaffolding to use the title, book cover etc to predict the theme of the book. The tutors encouraged and supported the use of reading strategies. The tutors asked the students to identify a starting point for their re-reading. The tutors asked the students to identify and articulate the way they feel about their reading, the reading strategies that they utilised within the session and to reflect on the text. A sticker was given to the student to reward good reading.

Sessions 10 – 12

The tutors were instructed that the aim was for the student to use the strategies on their own and that they should only offer support if the students were unable to do so. The tutors were asked to try to guide them in this and use as few prompts as were necessary. Once again the tutors asked the students to reflect on their use of strategies and the content of the text. A sticker was given to the student to reward good reading.

The tutors went to the Year 1 /2 classroom at the same time each day (at approximately 10.45 am – just before playtime). They collected their buddy who selected a book from the appropriate level and they then sat on the floor in the corridor and followed the outlined process.

At the end of the reading session, they questioned the students regarding their use of strategy in the reading session and made note of anything that was relevant in their log book. They provided stickers as a reward/incentive for reading. This continued on a daily basis for 12 sessions.

Obviously, being a school setting, there were times when this routine was interrupted – school excursions etc. The tutors, however, took it upon themselves to make up for many of the missed sessions – having an extra one at the end of the following day. While the original plan was for 15 daily reading sessions, only 12 of these were achieved within the 3 - week period.

The data was analysed through whole group comparisons and also through individual student comparisons. One student from Group B (Control Group) commenced Reading Recovery during the intervention running time. The results from this student have been omitted from the whole-group analysis as the data was quite skewed with its inclusion.

RESULTS:

While this was a very limited study – particularly in the length of the intervention, the overall results lean to the support my hypothesis. However, there were exceptions within the data. The results from the pre and post testing using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (Third Edition) are presented in Table 2.

As the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (Third Edition) enables a score to be calculated for Accuracy, Comprehension and Rate all scores have been included in this analysis.

As a whole, Group A (intervention group) showed quite a substantial increase in comprehension of text (with individual growth experienced by 80% of participants).
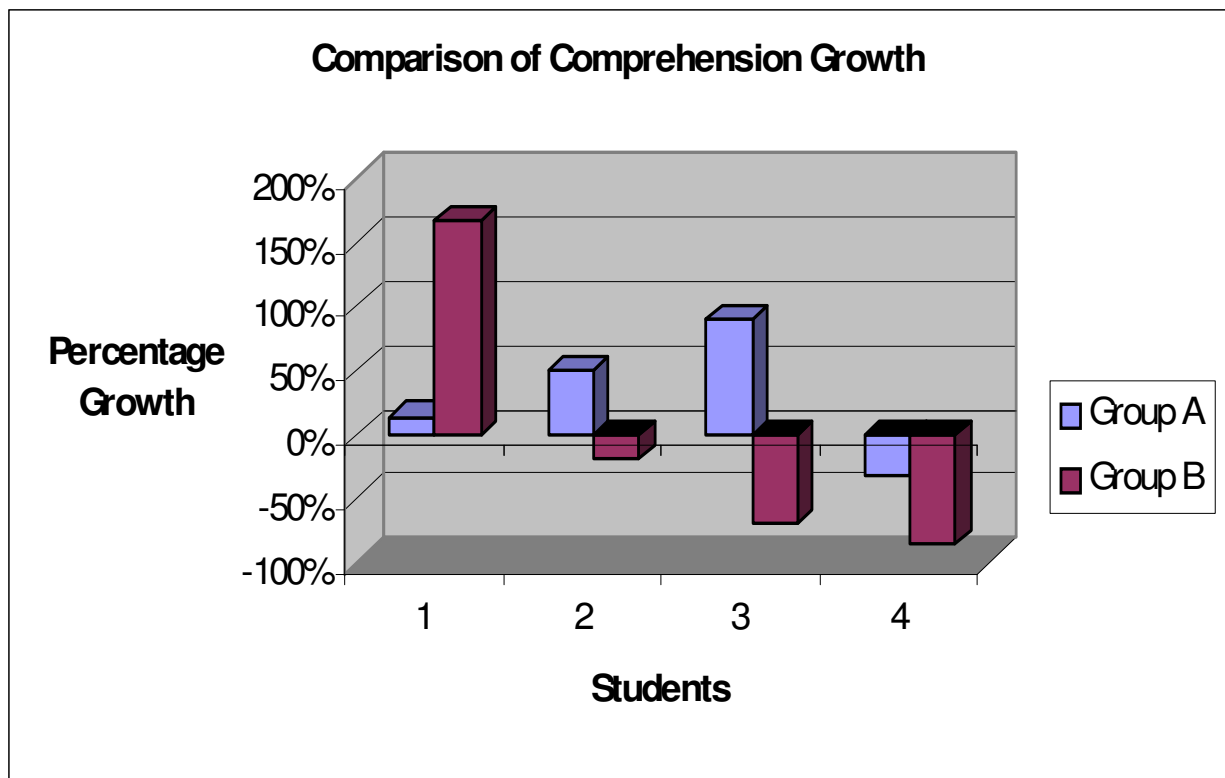
TABLE 2

Pre and Post scores are percentiles. Growth was calculated as a percentage to assist in analysis.

Group A

	Accuracy			Comprehension			Rate		
	Pre	Post	% Growth	Pre	Post	% Growth	Pre	Post	% Growth
Student 1	10	10	0%	7	8	14%	16	33	106%
Student 2	41	49	20%	24	36	50%	12	7	-42%
Student 3	49	73	49%	46	87	89%	68	38	-44%
Student 4	14	18	29%	19	13	-32%	58	31	-47%
Student 5	50	69	38%	8	59	638%	77	89	16%
Total	164	219	34%	104	203	95%	231	198	-14%
% Growth	34%			95%			-14%		

Group B

	Accuracy			Comprehension			Rate		
	Pre	Post	% Growth	Pre	Post	% Growth	Pre	Post	% Growth
Student 1	9	10	11%	3	8	167%	9	37	311%
Student 2	14	18	29%	15	12	-20%	9	5	-44%
Student 3	17	14	-18%	10	3	-70%	17	90	429%
Student 4	9	10	11%	7	1	-86%	6	37	517%
Student RR**	18	62	244%	8	38	375%	2	87	4250%
Total	49	52	6%	35	24	-31%	41	169	312%
% Growth	6%			-31%			312%		

*** Note: Student RR has been excluded from whole group analysis due to being placed on the Reading Recovery Program and therefore would have distorted outcome.**

Comparatively, Group B (control group) did not show the same growth in the area of Comprehension. When looking at the data, I was overwhelmed by the growth in all areas of Student RR. In discussion with staff at the school, I discovered that this student had recently commenced Reading Recovery, which was obviously working well for them! As a result, I decided to remove this data from the whole group analysis, as the scores were such that they were distorting the data quite dramatically. The following graph shows the comparison of percentage growth shown in the area of Comprehension.

Comparison of Comprehension Growth

Pre and Post scores are percentiles. Growth was calculated as a percentage to assist in analysis

The comparison of individual students in this area shows the growth of comprehension in Students 1, 2, and 3 from Group A with a decline in Comprehension for Students 2, 3 and 4 from Group B. One student (Student A4 – who receives LNSLN funding under the Severe Language Category) did not show the same positive growth in comprehension, rather showing a decline in skill in this area. However, a growth in Accuracy and a decrease in Rate were exhibited. This would indicate that he may be reading with more

care and may be focussing more on the decoding of text rather than the meaning to be found within the text.

Looking at the Comprehension results from Group B (control group) - without Student RR, a decline in skill was actually shown in 75% of the students. The exception to this was Student B1, who made some very positive progress in all areas, particularly in Rate.

Interestingly, 60% of Group A (Intervention Group) showed a reduction in Rate – possibly due to the fact that they had begun to slow down the process of reading in order to re-read and consequently comprehend. Group B, however, showed quite the opposite – with 75% of students showing an increase in Rate – of over 300%!
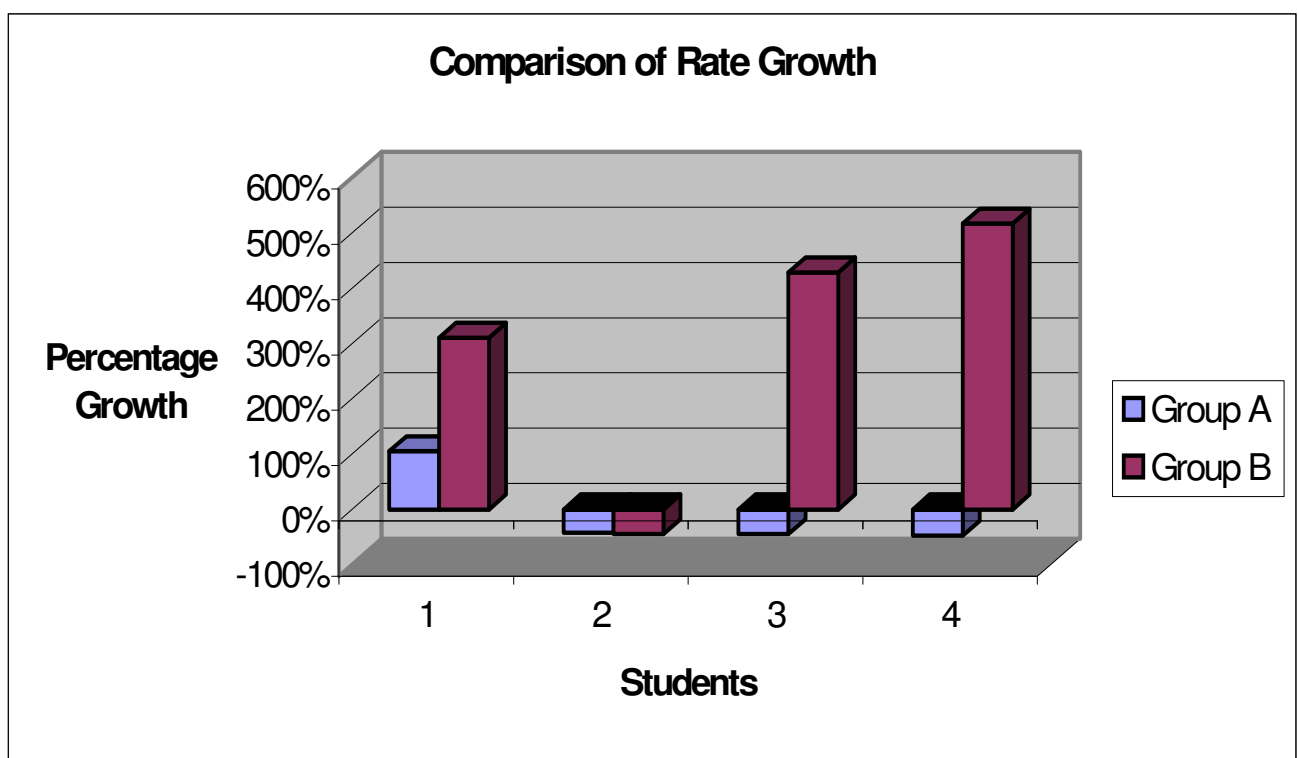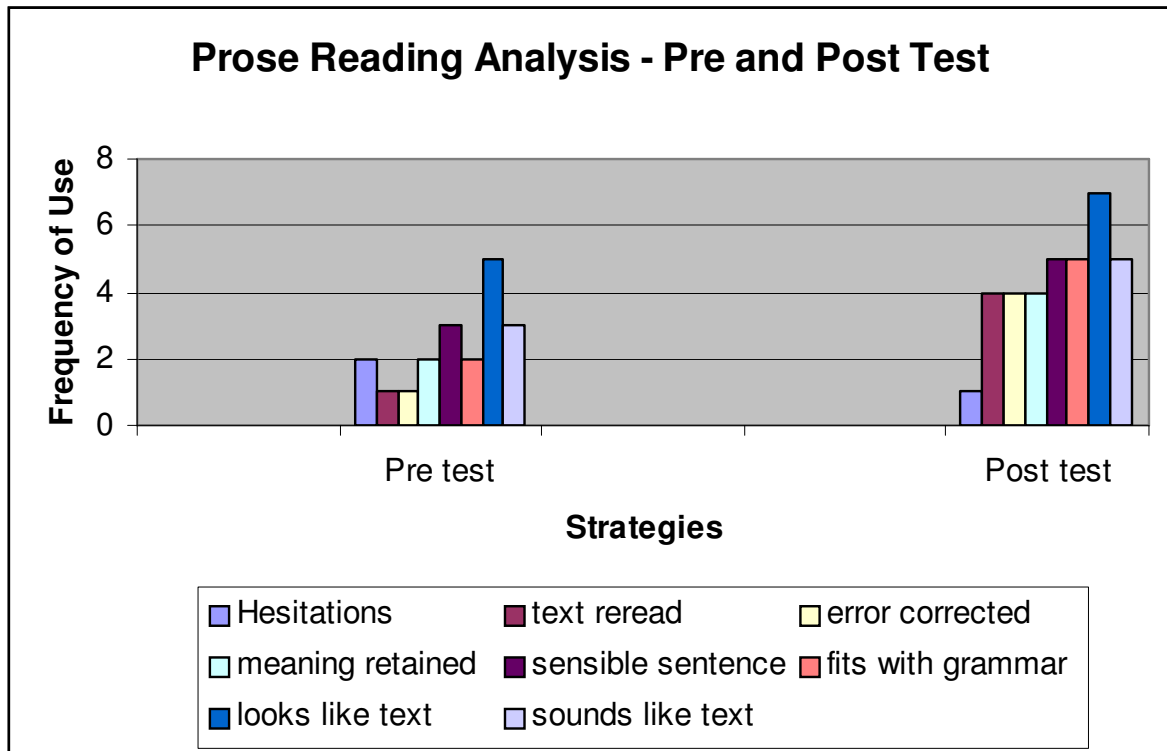

Pre and Post scores are percentiles. Growth was calculated as a percentage to assist in analysis

A further analysis of the strategies that were being used was conducted on Student 3A through the Prose Reading Analysis (Munro). See Appendix 5 and 5. This analysis was conducted as a pre and post – test (See Table 3).

An analysis of the use of strategies found that Student 3A had increased her use of the re- reading strategy from 14% of the time an error was made to utilising this strategy 57% of the time.

Prose Reading Analysis - Pre and Post Test

[Bar chart showing Frequency of Use (y-axis, 0 to 8) by Strategies (x-axis: Pre test, Post test)]

Legend:
- Hesitations
- text reread
- error corrected
- meaning retained
- sensible sentence
- fits with grammar
- looks like text
- sounds like text

Also notable was that her use of words that maintained a sensible sentence rose from 43% of the errors to 71% of the errors – thus she seemed to be maintaining meaning to a greater extent. This was reinforced by the increase in her ability to maintain the grammatical structure of the text (from 29% to 71% of the time an error was made). It was also good to note that she was still using the visual cues from words – which combined with meaning, set up some good strategies.

Student 3A's overall reading improved – not only in the use of strategies and on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability – Third Edition, but she also progressed from reading Text Level 22 to Text Level 25 at an instructional level! The improvement shown on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability – Third Edition was quite substantial with a 49% growth shown in accuracy and 89% in the area of comprehension. In the area of rate, however, she showed

a decline in score – with a reduction on 44% being shown. This may be due to increased attention being paid to the decoding and meaning of text, thus reducing the rate.

The logs completed by the tutors also provided some valuable information regarding the use of strategy. While this data is purely qualitative, the feedback from the tutors suggests that all students were better able to identify and use the targeted strategies more independently. Certainly, the logs suggest that the students and the tutors found the experience to be a positive one. One tutor wrote,

" I reckon that Student B improved in her reading a lot because now she knows what to do when she comes across a word she doesn't know. I enjoyed it a lot because we got to stay with grades 1 and 2 more. It was really worth doing it."

I also utilised the Self - Efficacy Scale that is a part of the ERIK program (Catholic Education Office). While I felt that this would provide valuable information from the students, there was very little variance (if any) between the pre and post assessments. It seems that all the students felt that they were good readers to begin with – and they could certainly identify the strategies that they should be using, even if they weren't using them! As such, I have no data to add to this study from this source.

DISCUSSION:

My original hypothesis was to see an improvement in the area of Comprehension. While the trend of the data lends support to this, the growth shown in the area of Accuracy, while not unexpected was pleasing to see. It makes sense that if utilising the re-reading strategy effectively, that Accuracy would also improve and that this may also slow down the speed of reading (Rate).

While this was the general trend of the data (as seen in the results for Students 2 and 3, with Student 5 showing gains in all areas – including Rate), there were certainly exceptions. Student 1 maintained reading accuracy, showed some slight improvement in comprehension and considerable gains in rate and Student 4 (funded under the ID category) showed an increase in accuracy, with a decline in rate and comprehension. This may indicate that he is reading with more care and may be focussing more on the decoding of text rather than the meaning to be found within the text. While Kourea, Cartledge and Musti-Rao (2007), found an improvement in both fluency and comprehension through a peer - tutoring program, my findings did not quite match. However, I would suggest, that if this study was extended, then we might have been more likely to see similar results – as student's confidence grew and their ability to utilise these strategies became increasingly automated.

Interestingly, Group B (Control Group) showed some considerable variance in their reading rate from the pre-test to the post-testing results. I am not a regular teacher at the school (as I work in a support role within many Catholic schools), I feel that my increased presence and interactions with the students during the course of the intervention, may have had some impact on individual student performance in the assessment tasks (possibly due to an increased familiarity with me, as the assessor). This would also need to be taken into account for Group A.

Student responses to the use of strategy support their increased use of those skills that were targeted. Their tutors also reported increasing independent use of these strategies and an ability of the students to articulate the strategies that were being utilised. This would suggest that they were more able to move between strategies, thus identifying the "when" and " how" to utilise them within the context of the text that they were reading. The increased use of useful reading strategies (as shown in the Prose Analysis on Student 3A) also supports this trend. All of this combined upholds the work of Munro (2005) and Mason, Meadan, Hedin and Corso (2006) who identify the

need to be able to manage and self direct reading through the use of appropriate strategy.

I believe that further study in this area may give us greater insights into the benefits of such a program over a longer term. The research that I used on which to base this study did not address the benefits of targeting specific skills within the peer – tutoring, and while the results are not totally conclusive, they certainly suggest that there are positive gains to be made through such an approach.

I would like to determine whether this approach may have better results with students who score within the average range in accuracy (and therefore have developed some necessary skills at the word level), before targeting other strategies in such a manner. Alternatively, it may be an approach that supports those students who have just completed the Reading Recovery program that reinforces those strategies that have been targeted. These may be areas for further investigation.

If I ever find myself in a classroom again, I am certain that I will utilise this strategy for reading within my program. Almost all classrooms have some time each day for individual reading. I would certainly see this as an additional reading support that could be integrated into this time allocation and would provide benefits for both the tutors and the younger students alike. By reinforcing reading strategies that have been explicitly taught within the classroom environment, the concept of peer –tutoring becomes even more refined. What a great way to provide daily, focussed reading practice to all students!

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

As I reach the end of this research project, I would like to identify growth of a personal nature. While I enjoy the knowledge that I gain through study and research, I am a bit reluctant to say that I enjoy the process of completing assignments. However, I know that this is where the real learning occurs – where I "tie' all the knowledge together into something that is truly meaningful for me. Thus, I complete this process with a very clear result – to have all my new -found knowledge (from these units) firmly established into my own world.

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REREADING

If you are stuck on a word:

- ♦ Try to sound it out
- ♦ Look at the pictures
- ♦ Look at the word again and then reread

Sometimes rereading helps you to remember what the sentence is about and this helps you to have a better guess.

REREADING

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Sometimes rereading helps you to remember what the sentence is about and this helps you to have a better guess.

APPENDIX 3

TUTOR DIRECTIONS:

Sessions 1 – 5
- Look at the front cover – what do you think that the book may be about? (If the student in struggling a bit, then perhaps give some prompts such as...
- What can you see in the picture?
- What might happen to him/her/it?
- What other character or things might be in the story?
- Let's start reading….
- When the student comes across a word that they don't know ask them to try to sound it out and to think about the pictures. If they are still stuck use the bookmark as a prompt and take them through the re-reading strategy. You may need to identify a starting point for their rereading.
- If they are still unable to identify the word – then you re-read the sentence and identify the word for them. Discuss how the meaning of the sentence may have helped you to identify the word.
- Continue with the reading, following the same process if a difficulty occurs.
- Ask the student:
- How did you feel about your reading today? (Use faces and record response)
- What did you do while you were reading when you came across a tricky word? (record response)
- What did you learn?
- Tutor completes the log

Sessions 6 – 10

The aim of these sessions is to help the student to begin to use the strategies on his or her own. They may still need your support, but you should be trying to encourage them to think about the things that you were doing last week and to do them independently. You need to help them and encourage them.

- Ask the student "What should we do before we start reading?". If the student is unable to answer this then help them by saying, "Look at front cover". Use the prompts from last week if needed.
- Let's start reading…
- When the student comes to a word they don't know ask them what do they think that they should do first. If they are unable to answer respond with "try to sound it out"; " look at the pictures".
- If they are still stuck ask them " what could you do now?" If they are unable to answer point to the bookmark. If they need help to follow the process then take them through it as you did last week.

- Continue with the reading, following the same process if a difficulty occurs.
- Ask the student:
- How did you feel about your reading today? (Use faces and record response)
- What did you do while you were reading when you came across a tricky word? (Record response). Reinforce the use of this strategy by saying something like…
- "I thought that you re-read that bit really well"
- "you used your sounding very well on that bit"
- "I liked the way you used the pictures and the beginning of the word to help you"
- What did you learn?
- Tutor completes the log

Sessions 10 – 15
From now on the aim is for the student to use the strategies on their own and you should only offer support if they are unable to do so. Try to guide them in this and use as few prompts as are necessary. If needed use the following prompts:

- Ask the student "What should we do before we start reading?". If the student is unable to answer this then help them by saying, "Look at front cover". Use the prompts if needed.
- Let's start reading…
- When the student comes to a word they don't know let them have some time to think, then ask them what do they think that they should do first. If they are unable to answer respond with "try to sound it out"; " look at the pictures".
- If they are still stuck ask them " what could you do now?" If they are unable to answer point to the bookmark. If they need help to follow the process then take them through it as you did last week.
- Continue with the reading, following the same process if a difficulty occurs.
- Ask the student:
- How did you feel about your reading today? (Use faces and record response)
- What did you do while you were reading when you came across a tricky word? (record response)
- What did you learn?
- Tutor completes the log

TUTOR LOG - (This was repeated for all sessions)

Session 1:
STUDENT RESPONSE:

♦ How did you feel about your reading today?

1   2   3   4   5

   ♦ What did you do while you were reading when you came across a tricky word?

      ♦ Sound it out

      ♦ Look at the pictures

      ♦ Re-read

      ♦ Other……………………………………………………………………………

♦ What did you learn?

_____

_____

YOUR OBSERVATION:

The student was able to:

♦ Use the pictures/ front cover to help them   **I**   **H**

♦ Sound out unknown words   **I**   **H**

♦ Re-read   **I**   **H**

♦ Identify strategies that they used   **I**   **H**

Other comments:

_____

_____