The Effects of Leveled Book Room Resources on the Attainment of Reading Standards

Deanna Krueger
St. Catherine University

Follow this and additional works at: https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed

Part of the Curriculum and Instruction Commons

Recommended Citation
Krueger, Deanna. (2013). The Effects of Leveled Book Room Resources on the Attainment of Reading Standards. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed/18

This Action Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Arts in Education Action Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact amshaw@stkate.edu.
The Effects of Leveled Book Room Resources on the Attainment of Reading Standards

An Action Research Report

By Deanna Krueger
The Effects of Leveled Book Room Resources on the Attainment of Reading Standards

By Deanna Krueger

Submitted on October 30, 2013
in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree
St. Catherine University
St. Paul, Minnesota
Abstract

The objective of the research was to establish if a well-stocked, leveled book room and the resources contained within it could affect the acquisition of rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). The research was conducted in a second grade classroom in a public elementary school in the upper Midwest. The five data sources utilized in the study included a reading leveling system, a student survey, district-developed baseline assessments, teacher-developed formative assessments, and teacher observations. The data revealed a respectable increase in students that became proficient in the four targeted standards, but a significant surge in students that achieved measurable growth toward the same standards. A review of this research indicated that continuing the model used in the study would positively impact students’ attainment of proficiency in the CCSS.
Since the publishing of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, educators have been striving to match the increased content rigor represented in the standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). Our current district approved reading series is outdated when compared to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the three reading subcategories – literacy, informational, and foundational. This problem is highlighted when testing occurs, and students do not make adequate growth against those standards not represented in the current series’ instruction. After one recent testing period, our building teachers, specialists, and principal assessed the results. We found that our students were not making expected growth in some of the Common Core reading standards on the test.

The issue was pervasive. All grade levels within the school were affected similarly with a significant dip in two grade levels. It was also noted that there was a similar trend throughout the district.

Rigor can be mistakenly interpreted simply as challenging content. However, Blackburn (2011) defines rigor differently, saying it is how the instructor teaches and how students demonstrate the knowledge they gained. With this in mind, teachers must not only teach to the CCSS, but they must also evaluate the sophistication of the assessed student work. This re-evaluation combined with a review of current literature constitutes changes in materials and techniques, which are specified below.

Many districts are using reading instruction materials with copyright dates earlier than the publication date of the CCSS. This causes a misalignment of materials educators use and systems of assessment in place to measure how well our students perform against the CCSS (Peery, 2013). Because of this, supplementing is necessary. Another need for
supplementing surfaced because the CCSS separated reading into literary, informational, and foundational standards (Peery, 2013). We must meet each subcategory. Shanahan (2013) notes misunderstandings about the equal importance of all three strands of reading as stated in the CCSS. He is puzzled that some educators believe the new standards do not give phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency (foundational skills) the same importance as literature and information comprehension strands. He clarifies that all three are of equal importance and statements to the contrary are false. Current published reading instruction materials do not always contain a balance of the three pillars required by the CCSS, illustrating the urgent need for supplemental materials.

Peery (2013) states that a shift inspired by the CCSS to additional nonfiction text, in balance with fictional text, will impact teaching for years to come. There is a noted gap in reading achievement of fiction and nonfiction material in U.S. students due to a lack of informational text exposure in the early grades (Duke, 2010, as cited in Kern, 2012). This constitutes a pressing need to increase nonfiction exposure to achieve balance. The need for instruction based on nonfiction is even greater in grades 6 – 12 (Peery, 2013) than in the elementary years. Shanahan reiterates, stating that informational, or nonfiction text, should be half of all reading in elementary school and 70 percent by grades 6 – 12 (2013). Unfortunately, researchers have concluded that classroom libraries are often disproportionately stocked with fictional texts (Kamberelis, 1998; Kamil & Lane, 1997; Moss, 2008; Pappas, 1993, as cited in Maloch & Bomer, 2013). The suspected cause being the push in the 1980s and 1990s to incorporate literature into classroom reading instruction rather than a basal alone. An explicit study of nonfiction text features will also serve to increase reading comprehension and ease of maneuvering
(Hiebert, 2012) through complex content-heavy text. Text infusion, informational text embedded within reading instruction, as well as, content instruction, is optimal for reading success (Baker et al., 2011).

The connection between reading and writing is recognized by educators. Newkirk (1989) describes the disparaging shift in the genre of writing. During the elementary school years, fiction stories are encouraged. A sudden change takes place in high school. There students must produce nonfiction, such as reports, almost exclusively. The CCSS requires a balance in fiction and nonfiction writing and reading because when taught in conjunction, they parallel the understanding of the other (Maloch & Bomer, 2013).

Novice readers and writers need experience with all varieties of texts and all writing genres (Maloch & Bomer, 2013) because they build their understanding concurrently. Because students write in the same voice and style in which they read, it is vital that they are provided a balanced diet of narrative fiction and informational text. As students advance through the grades, they will be expected to write in both forms. There is perhaps still a heavy reliance on reports and other nonfiction writing in secondary education, so there is even more reason to incorporate a strong presence of nonfiction text reading materials (Maloch & Bomer, 2013).

The CCSS document (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) expresses that students should read a wide variety of “increasingly challenging texts” (p. 10). Past evidence suggests that overly complex text can inhibit learning, but new research demonstrates that a scaffolded approach to complex text can build reading muscle and stamina (Shanahan, Fisher, & Frey 2012). Shanahan (2013) later states that text should not always be complex. Early readers need text that is easily decodable in order to
become fluent, but as they get older students should have more close reading strategies to comprehend complex text. (Close reading is described in general in the following paragraph.) Older students should also have varied complexity of texts, with some text being less difficult so that they can increase fluency and mastery of all reading styles. Some reading should require teacher support and direction while other reading should be done independently. The brain will tire for additional learning if not given breaks in reading complexity within a given day (Shanahan, 2013).

The Standards refocus reading instructional practices from reading a text one time meticulously to reading material with complex text structure using close reading (Shanahan, 2013). Shanahan notes that close reading utilizes rereading as one prevailing feature. Peery (2013) remarks that educators must make note of the differentiation since close reading is not simply rereading. It is reading well rather than reading often. It is exploring the text and inferences that are not easily understood with one reading. Meanwhile, however, Shanahan (2012) comments that rereading is an important part of close reading. As many reading teachers remember, at one time pre-reading was touted as one of the most significant factors in understanding any genre of text. It is perhaps overused. Coleman (2011) supports the valuable strategy of pre-reading, but cautions that it should not overshadow the beneficial time spent in “close reading.”

As described above, students benefit and will be more likely to achieve proficiency toward the CCSS if they have experience with an abundance of nonfiction text as well as numerous opportunities to work through complex text using close reading. How will educators ensure these experiences? Book rooms are an integral part of a balanced literacy program (www.davidson.k12.nc.us) because they can provide the
missing pieces that our current reading instruction materials and basal programs are missing. The content of book rooms should have an equal amount of fiction and nonfiction text, with the contents being leveled according to a research-based leveling system (www.davidson.k12.nc.us). Heibert (2012) articulates the need for increased volume of reading each day in school. She contends that even seven minutes per day will be a big boon for reading achievement. Bookrooms, if stocked with a variety of rich content and varied reading levels, provide students the chance to dig deeply into interesting topics (Hiebert, 2012). She also notes that providing choice if even between just a few titles can empower the learner. The combined resources of a well-stocked book room can offer students many choices. Educators would do well to remember that the love of reading is still relevant (Peery, 2013) and often precedes, or at least coexists, with foundational and structural knowledge of reading. With that in mind, my action research question became, “What effect will using leveled book room resources have on the acquisition of reading standards mastery on second grade students?”

Research was conducted in a city in central North Dakota with an approximate population of almost 65,000. Twenty second grade students participated in the study. The classroom consisted of eleven boys and nine girls. Of these twenty students, two were significantly below grade level, one was an English Language Learner (ELL), one was in the gifted and talented program, and the rest of the students were at grade level. The classroom was contained in a k-5 school.

The goal of the action research project was to use additional resources commonly housed in a leveled book room to supplement reading instruction in order to successfully meet CCSS. The next section of this paper will more fully describe the research process I
used to attain this goal. The ultimate and far-reaching goal was for the students to achieve effective reading skills in order to participate fully in academic pursuits and become confident adult readers.

Description of Research Process

The research process and data collection began September 3rd and continued through October 4th. Data collection sources included district-developed baseline assessments, a student survey, teacher-developed formative assessments, and teacher observation.

For the purpose of this research project I chose to measure growth against the following district-assessed CCSS: Reading: Literature (RL) RL.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text, RL.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action, and Reading: Informational Text (RI) RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

Beginning the week of September 3rd, baseline assessments were administered to students (see Appendices A & B). The baseline assessments measured the above mentioned standards. The assessments were conducted in three separate whole class sessions with each student first reading a grade-level text, and then completing the task as described in the assessed standards. The district protocol does not allow the teacher to read any portion of the assessment, including the questions.
I used the Rigby (2007) leveling assessment kit to determine the appropriate reading level for each student. Because the book room is leveled, it was necessary to perform this task immediately. This step was vital to the findings in this research, and I must stress its importance for any teachers planning to make a big impact in student reading performance. Finding books suitable for each learner’s reading ability proved to be one of the most significant findings for this study. I will discuss this conclusion in more detail later within the next section.

This was a time-consuming task, especially considering it was proctored in the beginning weeks of a school year. At that time, students were not yet fully trained in the procedural management of the classroom; the students could not yet work independently for any meaningful duration of time. This made the laborious, although immensely beneficial, process of assessing student reading levels difficult. Using a leveling system such as Rigby (2007) takes a great deal of time for each student since it must be done in a one-on-one situation. However, once assessed, the information allowed me to provide students with instruction and guided reading at their reading levels. As I mentioned, performing the leveling was crucial and must be noted, but it does not specifically measure my research objectives.

An additional benefit to using the Rigby (2007) system was that it considered fluency, accuracy, and comprehension when leveling students. Because the CCSS for reading balanced literacy, informational, and foundational skills, it was significant that the leveling system also addressed a balance of foundational skills and comprehension within fiction (literacy) and nonfiction (informational). I made an approximation of the Rigby (2007) level based on my observations of students’ reading. This was difficult
because the school year was very new, making the task exceedingly time-consuming. If I had not been able to listen to a student read in these early days of the school year, I made a simple guess. The appropriate level was determined when the student read with at least 95% accuracy and at least 75% comprehension in combination with satisfactory fluency.

After finding the appropriate Rigby (2007) level, I translated it using a correlation chart (see Appendix C) to the Guided Reading Levels (GRL) developed by Fountas and Pinnell (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The book room was organized by GRL, so this was a necessary step in order to use the book room most effectively. My students’ reading levels ranged from a GRL A to a GRL U, which correlated to kindergarten through fifth grade reading levels.

Once suitably leveled, I established four reading groups. Fortunately, four groups clearly emerged from the data allowing me to feel comfortable that all students would be properly served. Due to time constraints, I was not able to meet with every group each day, but I felt obligated to meet with the group assessed at a GRL A in order to make significant gains in their reading. I convened the other groups 2 – 3 times per week.

Typically, small groups met with each book two to three times to allow for close reading (Shannahan, 2013). Session one consisted of pre-reading strategies, a first read, vocabulary clarification, and a short discussion. Session two entailed an additional reading of the book, plus rereading sections for deeper understanding, inferences, author’s craft study, and reading strategy instruction and practice. Session three included an additional reading which stressed appropriate pace and expression, questions to gauge comprehension, and developing questions relevant to the story (CCSS RL.2.1 & RI.2.1).
The background research clearly indicated the importance of a balanced representation of fiction and nonfiction (Peery, 2013). With that in mind, I alternated between fiction and nonfiction books in order to achieve the desired equilibrium. When reading a fiction book, we studied characters, setting, and events. The students also had to compose a question that would require a deeper understanding of the literature (see Appendix D). We also dissected the beginning and ending of fiction stories. This was in an effort to meet the targeted reading in literature standards. When reading nonfiction, I assessed their understanding of the information by asking for details from the text. Because it is part of the reading for information targeted standard, students once again composed questions that showcased thoughtful insight into the content of the text.

I administered a student survey early in the research comprised of eight questions (see Appendix E). The questions ranged from the learning environment (whole class lesson or small groups), the reading material (basal versus leveled books from the book room), to specific skills such as what happens in the beginning and end of a fiction story. The latter referencing the RL.2.5 CCSS. I conducted the survey by reading the questions aloud in one session to the entire group. I collected the surveys to compare with the concluding research survey on the last day of the data collection period.

Teacher observations were noted throughout the research in a double-entry journal. My original intent was to record observations while working with students, but this proved difficult. My focus was on the students to such a degree that to stop and record observations would have affected the learning and would have felt clumsy to the general mood of the session. Instead, I took opportunities to record annotations and
reflections. This typically happened when students were with a specialist or after the students had left for the day.

Formative assessments (see Appendices F & G) were given during the week of September 30th. The formative assessments were given in the same manner as the baseline assessments in three separate whole class sessions. The protocol was maintained in the formative assessment sessions as it was in the baseline sessions. The same student survey (see Appendix E) was proctored during this week as well, this time in the small group sessions to better control the environment, limiting interruptions and maintaining student focus. All data sources were compiled and analyzed during the latter part of the week.

By the conclusion of my research, four data sources comprised my collection of information. They consisted of district-developed baseline assessments, a student survey, teacher-developed formative assessments, and teacher observation. The next section will describe the analysis of the data to determine how using a leveled book room to supplement a reading program affects achievement of the CCSS in a second grade classroom.

Analysis of Data

Once the data collection phase of the study had concluded, I began to analyze the data. The data sources included the Rigby leveling kit (Rigby, 2007), a student survey, district-developed baseline assessments for the targeted Common Core standards, teacher-generated formative assessments for the same standards, and teacher observations. In order to form reading groups appropriately based on reading levels, I administered the Rigby leveling kit (Rigby, 2007) for a quantitative data point. The
student survey (see Appendix E) provided both quantitative and qualitative data, with questions ranging from a self-assessment of reading skills to items that required students to determine the topic or focus of reading passages. Qualitative data was gathered from teacher observations made throughout the study period. Baseline and formative assessments then provided additional quantitative data to provide a balance.

My analysis began with the Rigby leveling (Rigby, 2007). The leveling was essential to the study. In order to make the book room resources work well, I needed to collect them based on the reading levels of my students. Like many elementary classrooms, a wide range of reading abilities was apparent in the findings as shown in Figure 1. The graph displays the number of students within each Guided Reading Level (GRL) at the beginning of the data collection cycle. There were 20 total student participants.

In an ideal educational setting, I would have met with each level as it presented in the leveling process. However, four groups would be the maximum allowed within the weekly schedule. Fortunately, four groups emerged by reasonably organic means as is clear in Figure 1, with three groups of six students each and one group of two students needing intensive instruction. Since the GRL J group was already composed of six students, it logically became a small group. This group contained students that demonstrated on-level reading. The GRL levels M, N, O, P, and Q comprised another group of advanced readers. I noted that the lone student in the GRL Q group would need additional enrichment since she was so much more sophisticated in her reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. Because she is in the school’s gifted and talented program, she is serviced there additionally. Students in Guided Reading Levels G, H, and I
composed another group. This group was slightly below grade level. It was plausible that they would catch up to grade level reading quickly with small group instruction. The two students in the very beginning reader levels made up my last and most intensive group.

![Students in Guided Reading Levels](image)

*Figure 1.* Students in guided reading levels. This graph represents the total number of students in each of the eleven represented Guided Reading Levels.

My first meeting with the two struggling readers was enlightening. As I mentioned earlier, they were placed at a GRL A. Books in this level are very basic with predictability and repetition. Both boys commented that the first book was easy. They were so pleased with their reading performance that they asked to read it over several times. Of course, this was valuable practice for fluency, and it was convenient that the boys requested the repetition rather than repetition by my command. The nature of the request provided a conducive atmosphere for learning during my sessions with them.

Because of the fluency ease, the instruction of CCSS targeted standards RL.2.1 and RI.2.1 was less complicated. Although it seemed obvious that providing appropriately
matched reading material would be helpful to children learning to read, this occurrence crystallized the concept for me. Working with the other groups confirmed this phenomenon.

These groups remained static for the duration of the study due to the short term of the data collection. These students would be reassessed using the Rigby leveling system (Rigby, 2007) at midyear and again at the end of the year to conclude an accurate sense of whether or not using the book room resources in conjunction with small group instruction would create a convincing case for its continuation. However, the reassessment periods would occur after my study.

The baseline and concluding student surveys were analyzed next (see Appendix E). Although all eight questions elicited some information, I chose to summarize questions one, four, five, seven, and eight. Questions four and five were combined. The first question was designed to see if students had an accurate notion of how they rate as a reader. Was the student a better reader than most second graders, about the same as most second graders, or a struggling reader? This was important information. When readers were unaware that they were lagging in reading skills, I had noticed apathy toward reading practice. This possibly indicated reluctance, due to the lack of skills, or obliviousness to the necessary dedication required to improve reading skills; to those students, the task did not seem relevant. Of twenty students, only half were aware of their reading ability compared to peers. See Figure 2 for survey results. At the conclusion of the study, fourteen students assessed themselves correctly. The fact that six students were still unaware of their reading ability at the close of the research indicates that there was
still work to be done. For the fourteen that became cognizant, I anticipated that great gains would be achieved in the coming months.

After graphing the results, it was clear that a significant portion of the class had a strong aptitude for distinguishing fiction and nonfiction even before lessons commenced. I attributed this to sound instruction in their previous years of schooling. I also conceded that it was possible that a guess yielded some of the correct results. However, I was pleased to see in the concluding survey that a solid majority of the students could determine fiction and nonfiction. Again, it was possible that some students made advantageous guesses. See Figure 2 for summary results.

The next survey question summarized was open-ended. It was intended to conclude if students could decipher the topic of a story. This data revealed the most significant growth of the survey content as shown in Figure 2. It was reassuring to see that students attained a robust improvement in this isolated skill.

The last question of the survey was also intended to isolate a skill for a detailed inspection of student ability. The results of this portion were a bit disappointing. In the baseline survey, ten students out twenty were already able to determine the focus of the given paragraph. Again, this might be attributed to efficient guessing as the question was in a multiple-choice format. Two additional students were able to determine the focus of the paragraph at the concluding survey. See Figure 2 for the results. Before analyzing the results, I had been quite sure that a larger portion of students would do well on this skill since we had spent considerable time in nonfiction texts practicing ascertaining the focus of individual paragraphs as described in the CCSS 2.RI.2. Because of the small group settings that I had established by reading ability, I was able to execute several formative
checks of this skill with each group member. These checks had reassured me of the students’ growing proficiencies in this area. The survey results made me pause for further reflection. Why didn’t this data jive with the other formative checkpoints? It wasn’t until I analyzed the other formative assessments (see Appendix B) that I felt bolstered again. I will discuss this later within this section of the paper. The results as shown in Figure 2 were noted as modest improvement.

Figure 2. Student survey. This figure represents the number of students in each summarized portion of the student survey.

The next data source studied was the baseline and formative assessments that specifically measured growth against the CCSS for fiction stories 2.RL.1 and 2.RL.5, as well as 2.RI.1 and 2.RI.2 for nonfiction passages (see Appendices A & B). While promising, it should be noted that these are end of second grade expectations. The data
collection ended the first week of October. With the exception of a few outliers, I anticipate that most students will measure within the proficient range by May.

Figure 3 denotes the number of students gaining proficiency or nearing proficiency in the CCSS: Reading: Literature (RL) RL.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text, RL.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action. While two students achieved proficiency on the baseline assessment for 2.RL.1 Ask and Answer Questions, which is administered before instruction, not a single student demonstrated proficiency on the baseline for Text Structure. This was surprising to me since gifted and talented students can often prove proficiency before instruction. I had one student identified as gifted and talented during the research, but not even she could exhibit proficiency on this challenging standard.
*Figure 3.* Reading literature standards. This graph represents the number of students achieving proficiency in reading literature assessed standards during the data collection phase.

A forty percent increase in one standard and a twenty-five percent increase in the other was promising given the fact that the time between the baseline data and the ending data collection was only a few weeks. Fortunately, there were seven additional months in which to gain proficiency for all or near all students before the conclusion of the year. See Figure 4 for another view of the number of students with proficiency at the end of the data collection phase of the study in 2.RL.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. See Figure 5 for a similar view of the proficiency at the end of the data collection phase of the study in 2.RL.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.
Figure 4. Students achieving proficiency in 2.RL.1 Ask and Answer Questions during data collection phase. This figure shows the percentage of students that achieved proficiency in the standard and the percentage that did not achieve proficiency.

![Pie Chart: Students Achieving Proficiency in 2.RL.5 Text Structure at the Conclusion of Data Collection Phase]

Figure 5. Students achieving proficiency during the data collection phase in 2.RL.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action. This figure represents the percentage that achieved proficiency and the percentage that did not achieve proficiency.

I was also curious about how many students made growth even if proficiency had not yet been achieved. Fourteen out of twenty students made growth toward proficiency or maintained proficiency in 2.RL.1 during the data collection phase as shown in the first bar of Figure 6. Twelve out of twenty students made growth toward proficiency or maintained proficiency in 2.RL.5 during the data collection phase as shown in the second bar of Figure 6. This was cause for celebration as a significant portion of the class attained measurable growth.
Figure 6. Students making growth in 2.RL.1 and 2.RL.5. This figure indicates the total number of students making growth in the two targeted standards 2.RL.1 and 2.RL.5 during the data collection phase.

Through alternating fiction and nonfiction texts I was able to achieve the balance emphasized in the review of literature (Maloch & Bomer, 2013). Additional cycling of the two will ensure repeated practice of the assessed standards 2.RL.1, 2.RL.5, as described earlier, as well as the nonfiction standards Reading: Informational Text (RI) RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010).

The results for the nonfiction standards were equally compelling. While twelve students will still need to become proficient in 2.RI.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text before the conclusion of the year, a thirty percent increase in the number reaching
proficiency at this time is respectable. An increase of only ten percent in 2.RI.2 is slightly discouraging, but a closer look shows that six students are only trailing slightly with a partially proficient ranking. See Figure 7 for the summary of this data collection source.

Figure 7. Reading information standards. This figure reveals the number of students achieving proficiency in reading information assessed standards during the data collection phase.

Another view of proficiency achievement in each standard is demonstrated in the summarized view.
Figure 8. Students achieving proficiency in 2.RI.1 Ask and Answer Questions at the conclusion of data collection phase. This figure represents students that achieved proficiency in 2.RI.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text during data collection phase.
Figure 9. Students achieving proficiency in 2.RI.2 Topic and Focus at the conclusion of data collection phase. This figure represents students achieving proficiency during the data collection phase in 2.RI.2 Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.

I was again compelled to measure growth toward these standards even if proficiency had not yet been achieved. Figure 10 displays this information effectively. Sixty percent of the class made gains or maintained proficiency for 2.RI.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. A sizeable seventy-five percent of the class made gains or maintained proficiency for 2.RI.2 Identify the main topic of a multi paragraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.
Figure 10. Students making growth in 2.RI.1 and 2.RI.2. This figure shows the total number of students making growth in the two targeted standards 2.RI.1 and 2.RI.2 during the data collection phase.

I felt compelled to mention a small but significant piece of information. I wondered how my two novice readers would perform if the reading portion of the task were read to them or if they were able to perform the task, but at their reading level. This following information is not included in the data above because the standards explicitly state that the standards are measured on second grade level texts. However, I desired to honor my curiosity about whether or not the two students were gaining any of the standards knowledge. I was quite sure their fluency was making progress. I also considered the information to be central to the integrity of the research.

After I had scored their attempt at the standard as it was meant to be delivered, meaning they had read the text on their own, I read the text to the students. I should
mention that neither of the students had been successful in reading the text on his/her own. It was no wonder then that they could not perform the following performance tasks at all. After I had read the text to them individually, they were able to score significantly higher on all four standards, with at least partial proficiency on all.

I also had them perform the task individually with text at their level. It was difficult to find text at the beginning reader stages with enough substance to have the required components of the standards. Fortunately, the book room provided the necessary resources. There were ample sources of fiction and nonfiction. If I had not had access to the book room, it would have been most problematic to make this experiment occur. I was pleased to discover that both students achieved proficiency in the measured standards using text at their level, with the exception of one student who scored partially proficient in one of the four assessed standards. Although I could not use this data on our standards-based report cards or district data collection, I was pleased to establish that they were indeed making growth.

I found the teacher observations to be the most compelling source of data. Perhaps this was because it allowed for more organic reflection. I made my observations in a double-entry notebook. The style of the entries and the log itself was very informal but most practical and extremely beneficial.

I gleaned several significant key findings during the review of my observation notebook. First, I remembered how much I enjoy working with small groups. Each student can be held accountable. I also noted that each student was engaged in the learning even without me prodding them. They were simply part of the reading, activity,
or discussion. This reflection makes me recall why I chose the teaching profession. In a small group setting, one can truly see and feel the learning as it is happening rather than wait until at home correcting a paper.

A review of my observation notebook also helped me reflect on the practice of quality read aloud books. In order to introduce or have further discussion regarding one of the assessed standards, I often used an entertaining or high-interest read aloud book. Just like the small group reading text, I alternated between fiction and nonfiction. It was no surprise that I accessed the book room in order to find the most appropriate books to demonstrate the highlighted concept. As an experienced classroom teacher, I had a large classroom library which I often turned to for suitable choices. Still I have retrieved additional titles from the book room. I imagined I was a first-year teacher again. It would have been beneficial to have access to the surplus of titles available through a book room.

Additionally, I retrieved theme tubs that were housed in the book room to attain the aspired balance of fiction and nonfiction. Because classroom libraries have typically been disproportionately stocked with fiction titles (Kamberelis, 1998; Kamil & Lane, 1997; Moss, 2008; Pappas, 1993, as cited in Maloch & Bomer, 2013), it was necessary to supplement. The tubs contained books of varying levels and complexity but were based on high-interest themes such as space or reptiles, etc. As revealed in a review of literature, there is a pressing need to achieve balance between exposure to fiction and nonfiction (Peery, 2013). These appealing theme tubs were well-suited to achieve this goal. The students loved them and would often choose to read books from the tubs during choice time.
Furthermore, I used the theme tubs to enhance our nonfiction text features study. The practice of teaching the nonfiction text features was highly touted by Hiebert (2012), so I resolved to incorporate it for the benefit of my students. I used the books within the tubs for a nonfiction text feature scavenger hunt after they had been featured in a lesson. The students enjoyed the activity, but I will need to address and have additional scavenger hunts in the future in order for students to solidify the features. Interestingly, these features began to pop up spontaneously in student informational writing. It was quite pleasing to see a Table of Contents or diagram within student writing without my requiring it.

In conclusion, the power of a book room lies first in the ability to organize small groups around reading levels using a solid leveling instrument such as the Rigby (2007) leveling kit. Coincidentally, this kit is housed in our book room. Once leveled and organized in small groups, there is strength in the accountability of the individual students as well as in their resulting engagement. The resources of the book room provide high-interest text with both fiction and nonfiction titles that are accessible to any member of the school regardless of personal book collections. Using the resources of a book room allows me to use the CCSS as curriculum rather than a reading series that dictates the content and scope and sequence of reading objectives. Using this knowledge, I will describe how I will continue to use the book room and its resources in the years to come. Any changes required will also be discussed in the next section.

Action Plan

My research indicated promise using the book room resources. As seen in the data analysis portion, students made growth using the various tools secured in the book room.
The quantitative data represented in the analysis supported the use of book room resources, but the qualitative and informal observation data was convincing, as well. Students expressed their preference to the leveled materials that were at an appropriate instructional reading level. This relative ease in reading spurred attainment of the content standards. In other words, because students could read the material, they could apply the understanding of the standards. This was true in both literature and informational texts. This comfort with reading enhanced the learning atmosphere, as well. There was a positive “I can” attitude present where there had been resistance and insecurity before. This may have been due in part to the small group lessons which replaced whole group lessons. The size of the learning group impacted the accountability for each student. The students did not have the choice to be passive participants in learning; they were required to be actively involved in every aspect of the discussion or activity.

Another advantage to using a book room was having access to multitudes of interesting stories and high-interest nonfiction. A teacher must be very creative in order to engage students when using dry basals or text books. When students were enticed by interesting text with appealing illustrations, they were more apt to be fully engrossed in learning.

I also relished the simplicity of focusing upon the standards rather than a manual when preparing lessons. When using a standard teacher’s manual, I have been overwhelmed with the numerous options available to the teacher. It was difficult to sort through the pertinent and necessary content. When focusing on the standards, I knew that I was covering what was necessary. This clarity also made it easier to adapt as needed for students that needed re-teaching or enrichment.
Because children come to school with different levels of experience with text which impacts their reading ability, educators ought to meet their individual reading needs. A well-stocked book room can supply the tools to achieve growth. I will continue to access our blossoming book room in order to match text to students’ reading levels. My study confirmed the need to use appropriately leveled books for student reading growth, especially the standards measured in the study.

Although I considered the research successful, there are some changes that I would make upon the continuance of employing the book room resources. After conducting this action research project, I decided to change the following items.

- After using the leveled books in a small group setting, students would be encouraged to include them in their book boxes for additional independent practice. Since the students would have read the books with the teacher two to three times prior, the text should be appropriate for independent reading.
- After each assessment period, I would make a graph, similar to those embedded in the data analysis portion of the paper, so that students can see how many of them are achieving proficiency. Identifying information would not be included. The graph would merely display the number of students for each assessment period. The graph would be displayed on a classroom wall.
- Another addition that I would make would be to have a class celebration after each assessment period. The celebration would be correlated to the number of students that achieved proficiency.
- I would also see each group a minimum of four times per week. A review and revamping of my schedule would be necessary to determine how this could be
done. During the study, I met with only the most intensive group every day.
The other groups met only two to three times per week depending upon other
weekly activities and commitments.

- A more intensive study of nonfiction text features would be incorporated.
  Students would make posters or books with each page depicting one of the
  features. This would likely reinforce each feature since students would need to
  create or recreate the feature that was found in a book or magazine.

Due to this research, I will use whole class lessons much less frequently than
before. I have a deeper appreciation for the power of small-group instruction. This is
most certainly true in the language arts arena. This research also solidified the notion that
using one level of text to meet all students’ needs is futile. I have found that I now rarely
use the reading anthology, not because the stories aren’t valuable, but because the
anthology only matches the readability of a portion of my class. That is simply not
suitable. In order to achieve growth, students must have reading training using materials
at their instructional reading level.

The power of the book room does not have to end within my classroom. With this
research in mind, students in any school with a book room can benefit from reading
materials that are not only suitable to their reading abilities, but are motivational because
of their captivating illustrations and content.
References


Book Rooms. (n.d.) Retrieved from


It was field trip day. Miss Ray was taking her class to the zoo. She got to school early to get the name tags ready.

In the morning, the children came into the room. Miss Ray handed out color coded name tags. “Everyone choose a partner,” she announced. “Then we’ll get on the bus!”

The children got on the bus and sat in a seat with their assigned partners. Parents joined the class to help. The bus was noisy! They sang songs and spoke about the animals they hoped they would see.

When the bus arrived at the zoo, Miss Ray said, “We will all stay together and follow the trail to see the animals.”

After they saw many different types of animals, Miss Ray said, “It’s time to go back to school!” The class climbed back on the bus. This time, there were not many sounds on the bus, except the sounds of snoring!
2.RL.1 I can ask and answer questions to show that I know what I read.

Who are the characters in the story?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Where does most of the story take place?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

When does the story take place?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Write a question using one of the question words. (who, what, when, where, why, or how)

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
2.RL.5 I can tell the important details about how a story begins and ends.

This is the beginning:

It is the beginning because...

This is the end:

It is the end because...
2.RL.5 Text Structure - A Trip - Baseline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The children got on the bus and sat in a seat with their assigned partners. Parents joined the class to help. The bus was noisy! They sang songs and spoke about the animals they hoped they would see.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the morning, the children came into the room. Miss Ray handed out color coded name tags. “Everyone choose a partner,” she announced. “Then we’ll get on the bus!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After they saw many different types of animals, Miss Ray said, “It’s time to go back to school!” The class climbed back on the bus. This time, there were not many sounds on the bus, except the sounds of snoring!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was field trip day. Miss Ray was taking her class to the zoo. She got to school early to get the name tags ready.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the bus arrived at the zoo, Miss Ray said, “We will all stay together and follow the trail to see the animals.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

**A New Home**

In the spring, the robin returns to find a tree in which to build a nest. She then uses twigs and grass to make the nest in the new location. Mud holds the nest together. Soft grass lines the nest.

The mother robin lays and cares for three or four eggs. The eggs are blue-green with small speckles. The mother sits on the eggs to keep them warm and to protect them. The mother will care for the eggs for a few weeks.

When the eggs hatch, the baby birds cannot care for themselves. The babies are helpless. Their eyes are closed and they do not have feathers. They cannot fly.

The parents work hard to care for the baby robins. They bring the babies worms, insects, and berries to eat.

By fall, the young robins are ready to be on their own. They are ready to care for themselves. In the spring, the young robins will return to start their own families.
What is this selection about?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

Where does it take place?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

How does a robin build a nest?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

Write a question using one of the question words. (who, what, when, where, why, or how)

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

2.RI.1 I can ask and answer questions to show that I know what I read.
RI.2 Find the main topic of the story and the focus of each paragraph.
I can identify the main topic of a story. The main topic tells who or what the whole story is mostly about.
I can tell the focus or key detail of each paragraph. The focus or key details are what the paragraph is mostly about.

After reading the selection, answer the question below.

What is the main topic of the selection? _________________________

Read each paragraph. Write the focus/key detail of each paragraph.

In the spring, the robin returns to find a place to build a nest. She then uses twigs and grass to make the nest in a new location. Mud holds the nest together. Soft grass lines the nest.

Focus/Key Detail: _________________________

The mother robin lays and cares for three or four eggs. The eggs are blue-green with small speckles. The mother sits on the eggs to keep them warm and to protect them. The mother will care for the eggs for a few weeks.

Focus/Key Detail: _________________________

When the eggs hatch, the baby birds cannot care for themselves. The babies are helpless. Their eyes are closed and they do not have feathers. They cannot fly.

Focus/Key Detail: _________________________

The parents work hard to care for the baby robins. They bring the babies worms, insects, and berries to eat.

Focus/Key Detail: _________________________

By fall, the young robins are ready to be on their own. They are ready to care for themselves. In the spring, the young robins will return to start their own families.

Focus/Key Detail: _________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rigby Levels</th>
<th>Bookroom Levels</th>
<th>Grade Level Expectations</th>
<th>Burns &amp; Roe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Mid K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Mid K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>End K / Beg 1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>End K / Beg 1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7, 8</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mid 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11, 12</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13, 14</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Mid 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17, 18</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19, 20</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>End 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; / Beg 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What I need to know about stories...

Name __________________

1. Is the story fiction or nonfiction? __________________

2. List the main characters.
   __________________

3. What is the setting?
   __________________

4. Write a question about the story. What did you wonder about while reading?
   __________________

What I need to know about stories...

Name __________________

1. Is the story fiction or nonfiction? __________________

2. What is the topic of the selection. (What is it about?)
   __________________

3. Where does it take place?
   __________________

4. Write a question about the story. What did you wonder about while reading?
   __________________
Appendix E

Name ____________________________________________  Date_____________________

1. What kind of reader are you?
   _____ I am better than most kids my age.
   _____ I am about the same as other kids my age.
   _____ Reading is hard for me.

2. Is it easier to learn from whole class reading lessons or small groups at the table?
   _____ whole class lessons
   _____ small groups at the table

3. Which do you think helps your reading?
   _____ the reading anthology
   _____ the leveled books from the book room that we use in groups at the table

4. A story that is not real is
   _____ fiction
   _____ nonfiction

5. Reading that is real or gives information is
   _____ fiction
   _____ nonfiction

6. List as many nonfiction text features as you can.

   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________
7. What is the topic of the story *Exploring Space*?
______________________________________________

8. What is the focus of this paragraph?

   I love recess! I can play on the monkey bars. I really like to play soccer in the field. I also just enjoy hanging out with my friends. Who wouldn't love recess?

   _______ The focus is that soccer is cool.

   _______ The focus is my friends.

   _______ The focus is that recess is fun.
A Very Special Lunch

It was a fine summer day. Fran the fox was walking in the forest when she saw her friend Roy the raccoon. Roy was carrying a basket and a blanket.

"Hello, Roy," said Fran. "What are you doing?"
"I'm going to a picnic," answered Roy.
"What is a picnic?" asked Fran. "Is it a game?"
"No," Roy laughed. "A picnic is different from a game. It is a special kind of lunch. You get to eat outside! Would you like to come?"

"Oh, yes! I'm hungry," said Fran.
Roy and Fran walked together in the forest. Soon they met Ben the bird.

Ben asked Roy and Fran, "What are you doing today?"
"We're going to a picnic," they said.
"What is a picnic?" asked Ben. "Is it a contest?"
"No," Roy answered. "A picnic isn't a contest. It's a lunch that you eat outside. Come with us! You'll see."

Soon the three friends came to a big tree.
"Here is a perfect place for our picnic," said Roy.
Fran and Ben looked everywhere. They didn't see any table or food.
"Where is the picnic?" they asked.
"We have to make the picnic! We'll make it here!" said Roy.
Roy put the blanket on the ground in the shade beneath the tree. Then he opened the basket. He brought out bread, apples, cookies, and milk to drink. Roy set everything on the blanket.
"This is a picnic. Now it's time to eat lunch!" said Roy. "Thank you for coming!"
2.RL.1 I can ask and answer questions to show that I know what I read.

Who are the characters in the story?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Where does **most** of the story take place?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Who knew what a picnic was at the beginning of the story?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Write a question using one of the question words. (**who**, **what**, **when**, **where**, **why**, or **how**)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
2.RL.5 I can tell the important details about how a story begins and ends.

This is the beginning:

It is the beginning because...

This is the end:

It is the end because...
"Here is the perfect place for our picnic," said Roy.
Fran and Ben looked everywhere. They didn't see any table or food.

Roy set everything out on the blanket.
"This is a picnic. Now it's time to eat lunch!" said Roy. "Thank you for coming!"

"Would you like to come?"
"Oh, yes! I'm hungry," said Fran.

It was a fine summer day. Fran the fox was walking in the forest when she saw her friend Roy the raccoon. Roy was carrying a basket and a blanket.

Roy and Fran walked together in the forest. Soon they met Ben the bird.
Ben asked Roy and Fran, "What are you doing today?"

"I'm going to a picnic," answered Roy.
"What is a picnic?" asked Fran. "Is it a game?"
"No," Roy laughed. "A picnic is different from a game. It is a special kind of lunch."
Liz starts the engine as the firefighters jump in. She flips on the sirens and lights and drives out of the fire house. The truck speeds toward the fire.

The fire is spreading quickly through the home. There’s no time to lose! Liz hooks a hose from the truck to the nearest fire hydrant. Liz and another firefighter point the hose at the fire.

The fire has damaged the staircase. It could fall down at any time. The firefighters climb the stairs very carefully.

Hours later the flames are out. Liz sprays water on the parts still glowing red. She is tired and dirty --and very hungry!
What is this selection about?
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Where does it take place?
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

What could happen to the staircase?
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Write a question using one of the question words. (who, what, when, where, why, or how)
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
2.RI.2 Find the main topic of the story and the focus of each paragraph.
I can identify the main topic of a story. The main topic tells who or what the whole story is mostly about.
I can tell the focus or key detail of each paragraph. The focus or key details are what the paragraph is mostly about.

After reading the selection, answer the question below.

What is the main topic of the selection? ________________________________

Read each paragraph. Write the focus of each paragraph.

Liz starts the engine as the firefighters jump in. She flips on the sirens and lights and drives out of the fire house. The truck speeds toward the fire.
Focus: ________________________________

The fire has damaged the staircase. It could fall down at any time. The firefighters climb the stairs very carefully.
Focus: ________________________________

Hours later the flames are out. Liz sprays water on the parts still glowing red. She is tired and dirty – and very hungry!
Focus: ________________________________