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Using Reader's Theater During Small Group Reading Instruction to Increase Prosody Within a Second Grade Classroom of Title I, Tier II Students

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Using Reader's Theater During Small Group Reading Instruction to Increase Prosody Within a
Second Grade Classroom of Title I, Tier II Students

An Action Research Report
By Stacey Knudson and Amanda Mahlum

Using Reader's Theater During Small Group Reading Instruction to Increase Prosody Within a
Second Grade Classroom of Tier II, Title I Reading Students

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to help second-grade children increase prosody by using Reader's Theater to improve all aspects of reading and comprehension. The research was conducted collaboratively by a second-grade teacher and a Title I Reading Specialist. Four Tier II, Title I reading students struggling with reading fluency were selected as participants. Reader's Theater was implemented within a small group setting where students reread scripts while educators modeled and coached them. Data was collected using student self-assessments, observational field notes, digital recordings, and a reading performance rubric. The data revealed a significant increase in the acquisition of reading prosody. Students also became fond of Reader's Theater and were able to recognize an increase in their own prosody. Due to the positive effects Reader's Theater provided during this study, the researchers plan to continue implementation of this intervention.

Keywords: reading fluency, prosody, Reader's Theater

Reading fluency is a key element often used to identify an individual's reading success. Our district uses the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to make data-driven instructional placement decisions to determine the reading prosperity of students. This process triangulates three pieces of educational data which consist of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores, as well as the Academic Improvement Measurement System based on the web (AIMSweb) rate and accuracy scores to place students into the following three categories. Tier I is the category most students should fall into, representing the need for on grade level, core instruction. Students that fall into Tier II indicate that a strategic intervention beyond core is necessary to move them along the continuum. The highest, or most critical level of placement, Tier III, suggests an intensive intervention is needed. Data is taken three times throughout the academic calendar and is referred to as Beginning Of Year (BOY), Middle Of Year (MOY) and End Of Year (EOY) data.

This information is used to assess students' needs and match available resources. Title I Reading Specialists work closely with classroom teachers to align common core curriculum and interventions to serve all Tier II and some Tier III students who do not receive other remediation or special education services. This study focuses solely on Tier II, Title I reading students from a second-grade classroom consisting of 19 students, in a school of 428 students in grades K-5. Out of 19 students, the BOY data revealed that two students fell within Tier III, four students were within Tier II and the remaining students made up Tier I.

Since this action research project was a collaborative effort between a second-grade classroom teacher and a Title I Reading Specialist, the four Tier II, Title I students were the only subjects in the study. It is important to note that pseudonyms are used throughout this report to

protect study participants' identities. Brian was a very compliant seven-year-old student with strong parental support. He also attended Sylvan Learning Center's tutoring services five hours a week after school. Victoria, a very kind-hearted eight-year-old girl, received speech-language services four times a week for twenty-minute sessions due to an articulation deficit. Joe was a well-mannered eight-year-old boy with a great support system at home. Donna, a very energetic seven-year-old girl, was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and placed on medication three weeks prior to the study.

As we combed through the data of these four students, we realized a low fluency score was a common thread amongst all of the Tier II students. This was the catalyst to delving deeper into the research to determine the components necessary for fluency.

Although there are five critical components of comprehensive reading instruction including phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, according to the National Reading Panel (2002), fluency is the area most commonly assessed and addressed. Vocabulary and comprehension build on the foundational phonemic awareness and alphabetic principle skills of decoding, as well as on fluency (Knight-McKenna, 2008). Reading fluency is a crucial component in the success of children as they become independent readers.

What is reading fluency, and why is it important? Simply stated, fluency is a complicated construct that is not easily measured. Fluency is a subjective term that is viewed differently depending on the user and the purpose. However contested the details may be, there is broad support for the importance of fluency as a component of the reading process because it provides crucial support to students as independent readers (Deeny, 2010; McKay, 2008; Rasinski, 2014).

Rasinski (2014) used two elements to describe fluency: automaticity and reading with expression to comprehend text. In other words, reading fluency links word recognition to reading comprehension. Deeney (2010) on the other hand, cited Harris & Hodges' (1995) definition of fluency as “freedom from word-identification problems that might hinder comprehension; automaticity” and the definition of a fluent reader as “any person who reads smoothly, without hesitation, and with comprehension” (p. 85). This definition consists of four components: rate, accuracy, comprehension and prosody.

Rate consists of the speed and automaticity of reading. In concurrence with Rasinski (2014), Deeney (2010) defined automaticity as recognizing and decoding words with very little effort. Children who exert a lot of time and energy decoding or identifying words struggle to comprehend what they have read, because they don't have enough cognitive energy left to focus on comprehension. Therefore, automaticity of word recognition and speed lead to comprehension. Accuracy is simply reading without errors.

Prosody is another universal component used to describe fluency (Denney, 2010). “Expression in oral reading, or prosody, is fluency's connection to meaning or comprehension” (Rasinski, 2014, p. 4). Readers need to understand what they are reading to appropriately read with expression and portray the author's intent. Reading with expression enhances comprehension by using four elements of prosody: volume, phrasing, pace, and smoothness.

Deeney (2010) stated that many children are only assessed on accuracy and rate, causing students as well as educators to focus more on these components of fluency. Focusing on only two components of fluency misinforms instruction as it causes children and educators to miss the big picture and overall aspects of reading. Furthermore, many of the assessments given by

teachers to assess accuracy and rate are administered with the use of technology such as AIMSweb. Deeney (2010) argued that although technology may save time by simply keeping track and recording errors students make while being assessed during one-minute reads, many of these assessments only allow educators to strike out errors. This limits an educator's understanding of the types of errors a student is making. Proper instruction is inhibited as a result of this process.

According to Deeney (2010), another factor that inhibits reading fluency scores is that educators only assess students for one minute. Accuracy and rate vary over time. Some students struggle with reading during the first minute of a passage, but improve over time. Others are proficient within the first minute of reading, but are unable to maintain accuracy and rate over time. Teachers should consider allowing students to finish these one minute passages, while keeping track of both data points. The data points refer to how long it took them to complete the entire passage, as well as how many words they were able to read in a minute.

Since rate, accuracy and comprehension are the most commonly assessed aspects of fluency and prosody is often overlooked, prosody is the focus of this action research study. We examined literature discussing the use of Reader's Theater as a highly effective strategy to increase prosody. Research shows that the average gain in WCPM (words correct per minute) is nearly doubled when this strategy is implemented in addition to a balanced literacy approach which incorporates "reading demonstrations, shared readings, guided reading, independent reading, and word study" (Young & Rasinski, 2009, p. 6). Furthermore, participation in Reader's Theater should occur daily, as a fundamental component of reading instruction, as opposed to sporadically.

Garrett & O'Connor (2010) define Reader's Theater as "an instructional method that connects quality literature, oral reading, drama, and several research-based practices" (p. 7). It is a strategy that provides students with an authentic reason for rereading texts. This in turn enhances basic sight word acquisition, builds fluency and ultimately comprehension by having students carrying out actions and gestures during performances (Garrett & O'Connor, 2010). By all accounts, Reader's Theater is relatively easy to implement in any context as scripts are readily available to buy or download for free online in a wide range of genres and reading levels. It can be done in whole or small groups, and there are no props, costumes or scenery involved. Reader's Theater can be integrated into any content area including writing, where students can assist in converting other text to this format.

McKay (2008) provides evidence that participants enjoy Reader's Theater and note the sound pedagogy in Readers' Theater does more than just increase reading fluency. Classroom teachers who have implemented this strategy report unanimously positive responses because its engaging nature promotes improved comprehension, motivation, appreciation of literature and students' self-confidence. Even though achievement scores are not the most important thing to consider when evaluating Reader's Theaters' effectiveness, the involvement of learners in meaningful reading/writing, listening/speaking, viewing/presenting activities positively impact achievement scores. McKay (2008), argues that there are two theoretical underpinnings that contribute to the success of utilizing Reader's Theater in language arts instruction. The first theory is credited to Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky's 1978 work on the social constructivist theory of learning, shared by McKay (2008), states:

Learners create or construct knowledge rather than simply receive it from others.

Constructivist classrooms are based on instruction and assessment in an environment that promotes the construction of student knowledge rather than one dominated by the transmission of teacher knowledge (p. 135).

Vygotsky's theory that students involved in interactive activities have a structure that facilitates independent thinking is congruent with the second theoretical underpinning known as Cambourne's Eight Conditions for Learning developed by renowned literacy and learning researcher Dr. Brian Cambourne. Cambourne (1995) described eight learning conditions including immersion, demonstration, expectations, responsibility, employment, approximations, response, and engagement, that align nicely with the attributes of Reader's Theater because these conditions are inherent in the planning, preparation and presentation process of this reading intervention (as cited by McKay, 2008, p. 135).

The following is a further explanation of the eight learning conditions. The first learning condition, immersion, is what happens naturally when students are immersed in text while planning, preparing and performing Reader's Theater. The second condition, demonstration, involves teacher modeling of the process to help students understand what good reading looks and sounds like. The third, expectations, simply refers to how the expectation of success that learners know is present when they prepare and present Reader's Theater actually promotes success. This condition leads nicely into the fourth, which is the responsibility the learners accept during the planning, preparing and presentation process. Employment is the fifth condition, which means that the students' repetitive practice of individual parts results in increased confidence and comprehension. Also resulting from this ongoing practice, is the sixth condition known as approximations. The Reader's Theater process allows learners the needed

opportunity of trying new things and making mistakes to help them improve their approximations. Finally, the last two conditions are response and engagement. Response pertains to specific, timely and nonthreatening feedback that is essential to growth and improvement. Engagement is just that. Students are engrossed in the work because the planning, practicing and performing involved with Reader's Theater provides authentic reading experiences and a real sense of purpose.

The second piece of evidence that supports the use of Reader's Theater is the Reader Response Theory. The connection between the reader and the text are at its core. Rosenblatt (as cited by McKay, 2008) suggests that reading is transactional because the reader brings along prior knowledge and past experiences to support understanding. "Personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes influence the meaning-making process involved in reading" (McKay, 2008, p. 138). The process of planning, preparing and presenting Reader's Theater brings meaning through past experiences, as well as through discussions/transactions with others about the text. It is both an active and language process where readers and authors are active in constructing meaning through syntactic and semantic communication of ideas. The competencies and positive attitudes acquired by participating in Reader's Theater are generally transferred to independent reading. This increases proficiency and achieves the ultimate goal of utilizing critical thinking and analytical skills allowing the reader to find pleasure and gain information.

The ultimate goal of this research project was to answer the question: What impacts, if any, does implementing Reader's Theater into small group reading instruction in a second-grade classroom have on the reading prosody of Tier II, Title I reading students? With so many demands placed on educators, we wanted to find a highly effective intervention that is easy to

implement, enjoyable for participants and requires minimal cost or resources. Our goal was to provide students with more authentic reading opportunities through the use of Reader's Theater. This, in turn, should increase student engagement and lead to wide reading opportunities across a variety of genres and text complexities, thereby enhancing prosody and all aspects of independent and oral reading, including comprehension.

Description of Research Process

Over the course of a six-week study, our focus was on the use of Reader's Theater to help increase various components of reading prosody among four Tier II, Title I reading students. The four main elements of prosody analyzed during this study consisted of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. We collected data using the following four methods: (1) performance/work samples (two digital recordings of students performing Reader's Theater scripts each week for six weeks) to monitor improvement before, during and after the intervention, (2) reading performance rubrics completed by both teachers before, during and after the intervention implementation to compare initial results with outcomes, (3) student self-assessments completed during and after implementation to gauge participants' feelings about Reader's Theater, and (4) observational data/field notes of student progress in the area of reading prosody.

Prior to the study, we retrieved standards-based assessment scores and formal testing results from our district's online database for the four Title I targeted reading students to establish a baseline of performance before intervening. A Fountas and Pinnell leveling kit was also used to formally assess students to determine their appropriate instructional book levels.

The Reader's Theater scripts used for this study were taken from the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention-Blue Kit that corresponded to the identified student reading levels.

Once each individual's book level and overall reading performance was established, we structured a routine for the week that was carried out at least four days a week (five days in most cases) for at least 20-minute sessions, for six weeks. The following paragraphs detail the prescribed regimen further.

On Mondays, the second-grade classroom teacher presented new Reader's Theater scripts to the students, had them make predictions about the stories based on the pictures, and reviewed tricky vocabulary terms from the text in a small group setting within the classroom. This twenty-minute session occurred during one rotation of their usual 90-minute reading block. Then, the Title I Reading Specialist worked with the students for another twenty-minute session to allow students' to choose their parts and digitally record the students using VoiceThread as they read through the script for the first time. Since our school encourages the specialists to use the push-in intervention model, the first week's sessions with the reading specialist were held in the second-grade classroom. However, we quickly decided to adapt the Reading Specialist's intervention sessions to the pull-out model in order to provide the students with a quieter, more secluded environment. This environment allowed them the freedom to read their parts with the appropriate expression and volume without disturbing others. The private room also minimized distractions and allowed the VoiceThread digital recording of the students to be free of background noises. This digital recording was shared with the second-grade classroom teacher, and a reading performance rubric created by Rasinski (See Appendix A) was used by both teachers to assess the reading prosody of each student. Observational field notes for each

recorded session were taken by both teachers as well. The field notes consisted of data in regards to student participation, engagement or interest, and improvement in reading behaviors that displayed prosody. This data was analyzed to compare whether notable individual gains were made in all of the aforementioned areas.

On Tuesdays, the Title I Reading Specialist read through the entire script and modeled exemplary prosody for each character's dialogue. The students read through their particular Reader's Theater parts as she coached and encouraged them to focus on their pace, smoothness, phrasing, expression and volume to improve their fluency. She again modeled lines of text for certain students that needed a bit more instruction and encouraged them to replicate her reading. They did not practice as a whole group during this session but instead read their individual parts over and over again trying to perfect their pieces. Anecdotal field notes along with an informal checklist were completed during and immediately following each session and shared with the classroom teacher.

On Wednesdays, the second-grade classroom teacher had the students read their scripts within the classroom as she coached them on all aspects of reading prosody. During these sessions, the students read their scripts from beginning to end as a group. The classroom teacher also used an informal checklist and took anecdotal field notes to monitor prosody progress as well as student engagement and participation during her session. She shared her notes with the Reading Specialist upon completion of the session.

On Thursdays, the students read through their script together several more times with the Title I Reading Specialist to polish any rough spots and prepare for their final performance.

Fridays were the big day, and the students were remarkably excited to share all of their hard work by presenting their Reader's Theater scripts in front of an audience of their peers. The final readings were also recorded using VoiceThread. The teachers used the digital recordings from Mondays and Fridays to compare the student's cold reads with their repeated readings. They also showed the students both videos to demonstrate how much their prosody changed from the beginning of the week to the end of the week. This motivated the students to persevere through numerous practices throughout the week without complaint and gave them a sense of pride for their accomplishments.

Students completed self-assessments (See Appendix B) during the first, third and sixth week of this study. The self-assessments were used to gauge the participants' feelings about using the Reader's Theater intervention to increase prosody, as well as to rate themselves on how well they felt they had performed in regards to the four elements of prosody. The self-assessments were read aloud and explained to the students to ensure understanding. This data was used to compare how students' perceptions of themselves as effective or ineffective readers changed from the beginning to the end of the study.

Analysis of Data

We retrieved reading scores from our school district's database and informal reading inventories regarding the four Tier II, Title I reading students in our study in order to determine the initial book level used in the Reader's Theater intervention. This information was used to establish a baseline to compare to the data collected during our action research project. It is important to note, that once we found the average instructional reading level for all four students, we chose to implement the first Reader's Theater script slightly below this, at their independent

reading level. Implementing at their independent level was a conscious decision made to ensure that students would not become immediately frustrated or overwhelmed with lengthy character dialogue. We felt that it was critical to lay the groundwork by focusing on the process and expectations that would be used throughout the entire six-week intervention to maintain consistency between both interventionists and facilitate a successful outcome. In the following weeks, the levels of the scripts were adjusted three times to match their ascending instructional reading levels.

The first two pieces of data analyzed were the performance/work sample digital recordings of the students' initial and final reads, along with the 4-point reading performance rubric (see Appendix A). The data sources were used jointly by the classroom teacher and the Title I Reading Specialist to assess the students' initial reading prosody results as well as their final prosody outcomes. The four areas evaluated for each student were: overall expression and volume, phrasing with sentences, smoothness of the whole text, and pace. The initial six-week rubric scores were averaged, presented in the following graph, and compared to the final six-week averaged scores for each student. Figure 1 illustrates that the overall students' average growth in all measured areas of prosody ranged from a 1.9 initially to an eventual 3.4 over the six-week intervention period.

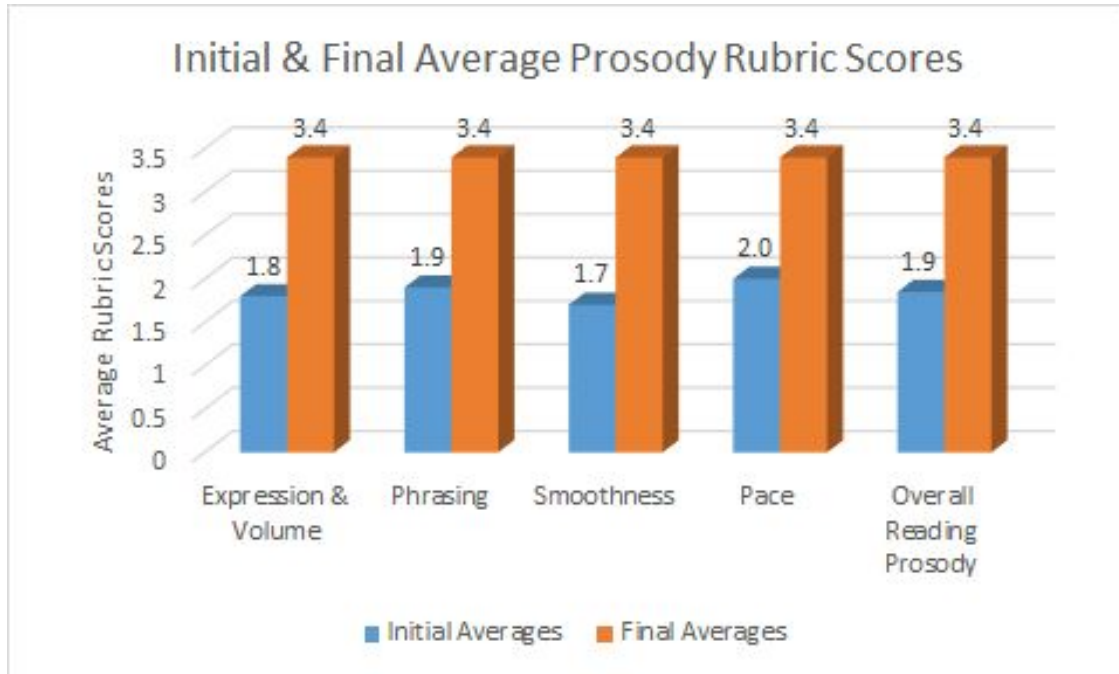


Figure 1. The Initial & Final Average Prosody Rubric Scores graph compares the initial and final 6-week combined average scores for all students in each of the prosody components separately as well as overall.

While comparing all four students' 6-week initial average scores to their final collective averages in all areas of prosody, we quickly discerned the growth produced by implementing the Reader's Theater intervention. Notably, the biggest impact was seen in the subcategory of smoothness as it increased from a 1.7 rubric score to 3.4. When we compiled this particular data, we noticed that some students made greater gains than others that displayed a lack of focus and exhibited off-task behaviors at times. These behaviors had a negative impact on the average scores. Therefore, to represent the data more precisely, we included the following individual student's graphs in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 to interpret the results further. Please note the students' names used in these graphs and within this study are pseudonyms.

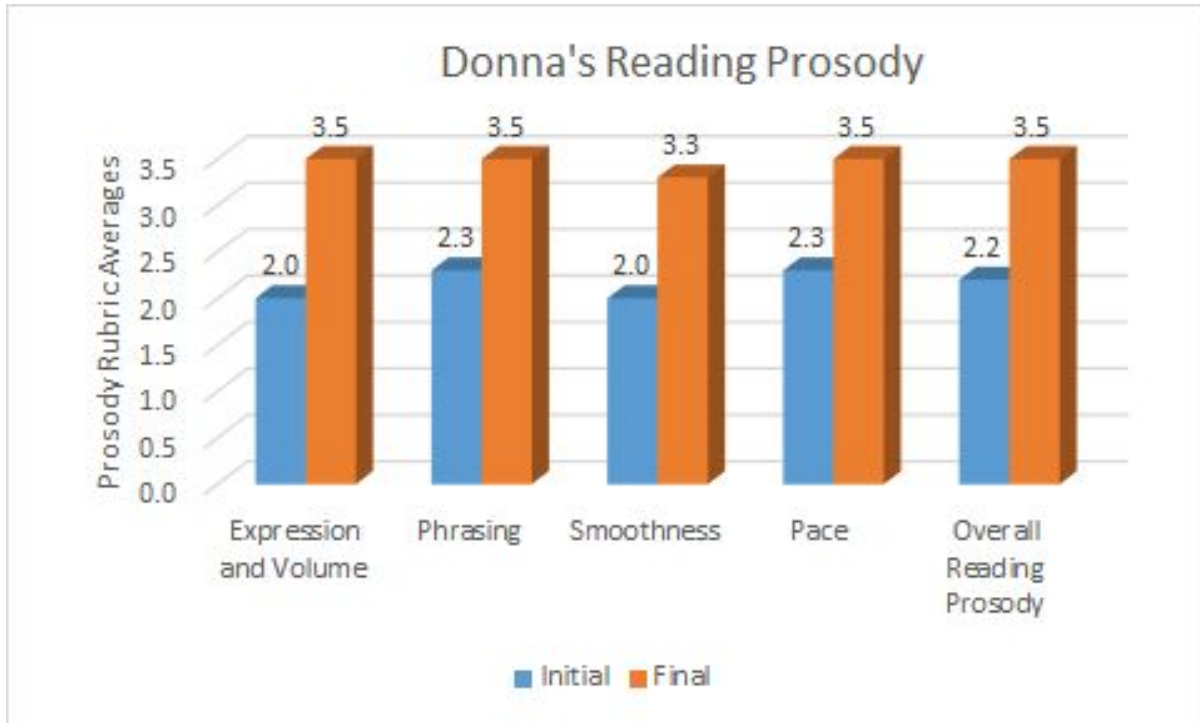


Figure 2. Donna’s Reading Prosody graph represents her initial and final 6-week averaged prosody scores for all four components and her overall reading prosody.

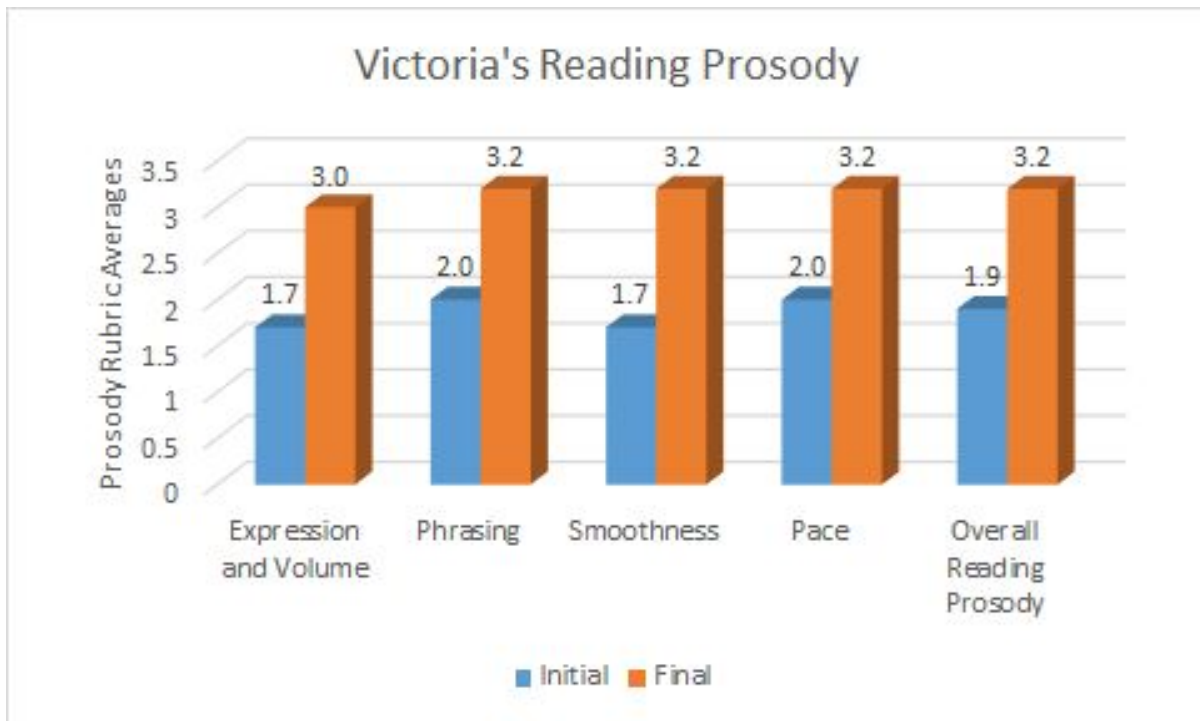


Figure 3. Victoria’s Reading Prosody graph represents her initial and final 6-week averaged prosody scores for all four components and her overall reading prosody.

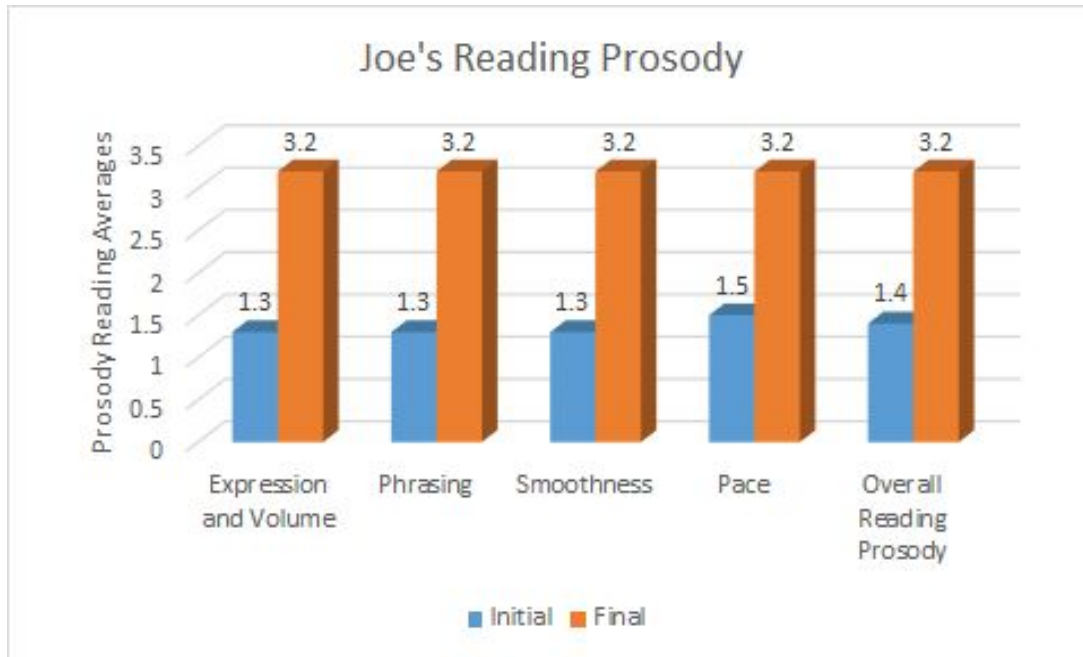


Figure 4. Joe’s Reading Prosody graph represents his initial and final 6-week averaged prosody scores for all four components and his overall reading prosody.

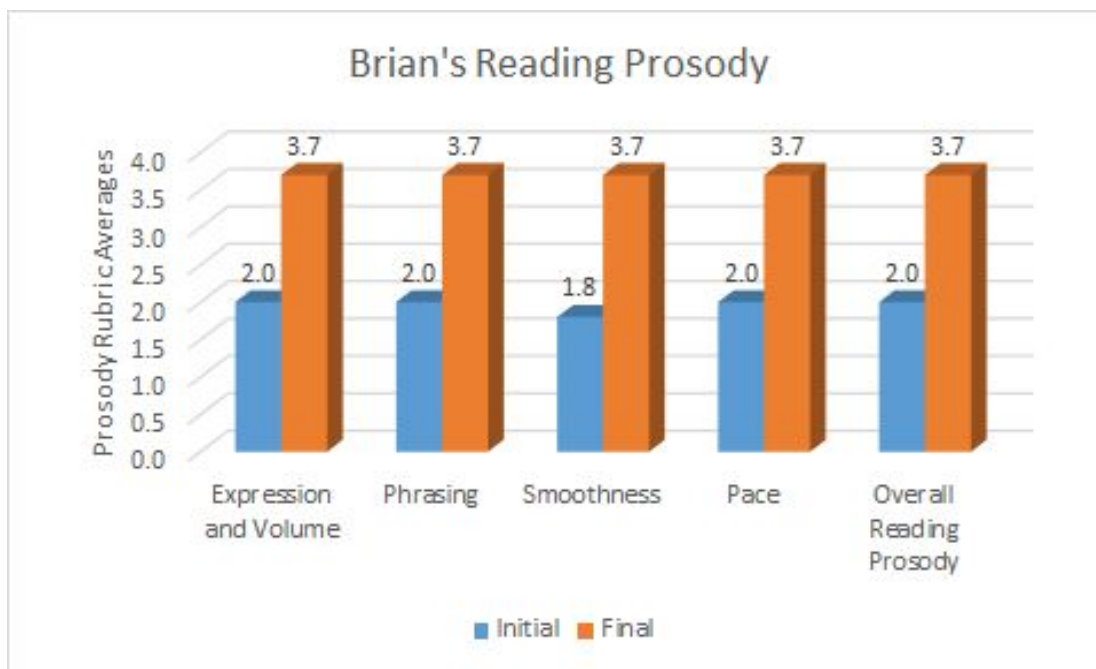


Figure 5. Brian’s Reading Prosody graph represents his initial and final 6-week averaged prosody scores for all four components and his overall reading prosody.

Student self-assessments made up the third data source (See Appendix B). Students completed the self-assessments before, during and after implementing the Reader's Theater intervention. This opinion-based inquiry allowed us to analyze each student's impression of the intervention and its effectiveness in prosody acquisition. Each respondent chose the Likert scale rating that best corresponded to his or her mindset about Reader's Theater. The Likert scale answer codes are as follows:

1. Strongly Disagree = 1
2. Disagree = 2
3. Neutral = 3
4. Agree = 4
5. Strongly Agree = 5

Figure 6 below displays each student's perception of his or her prosody performance. The students rated themselves on expression, phrasing, smoothness, and the ability to read at a conversational pace. These components for the first, third and sixth week of the study were averaged to attain mean prosody scores for each of those weeks, represented in the following graph. To assure student understanding and induce honest, thought-provoking responses, all of the questions were read aloud and explained. Overall, student results were very encouraging and progressed from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" on the Likert rating scale by the end of the study, on several components by a majority of the participants.

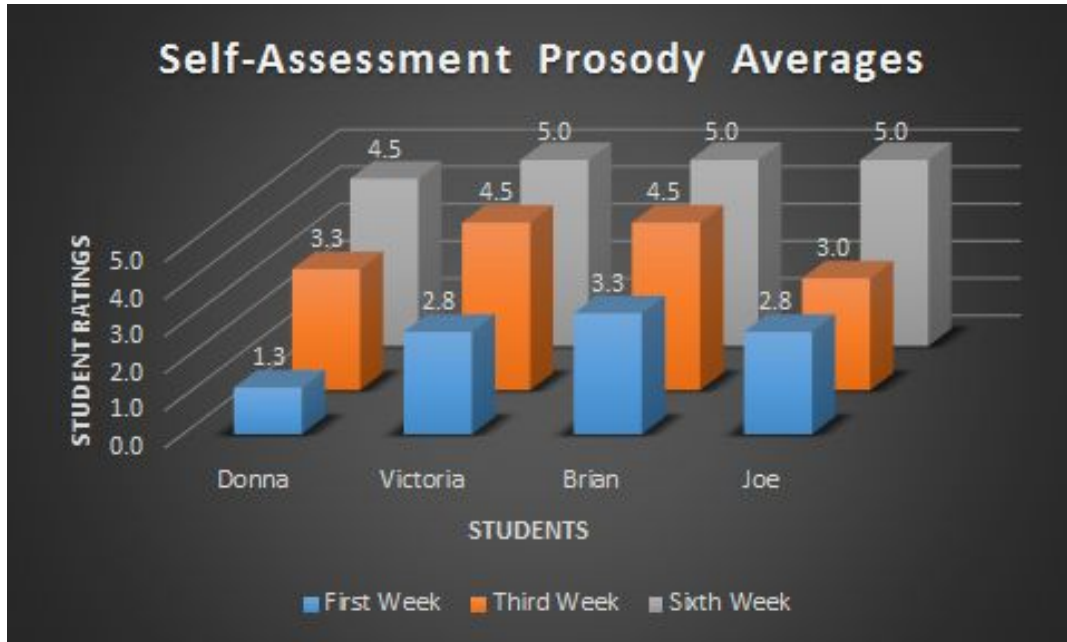


Figure 6. The graph above indicates students’ perceptions of prosody performance for the first, third, and sixth week of implementation.

According to the student self-assessment rating scales, the students’ mindsets regarding Reader’s Theater changed over the course of the six-week intervention.

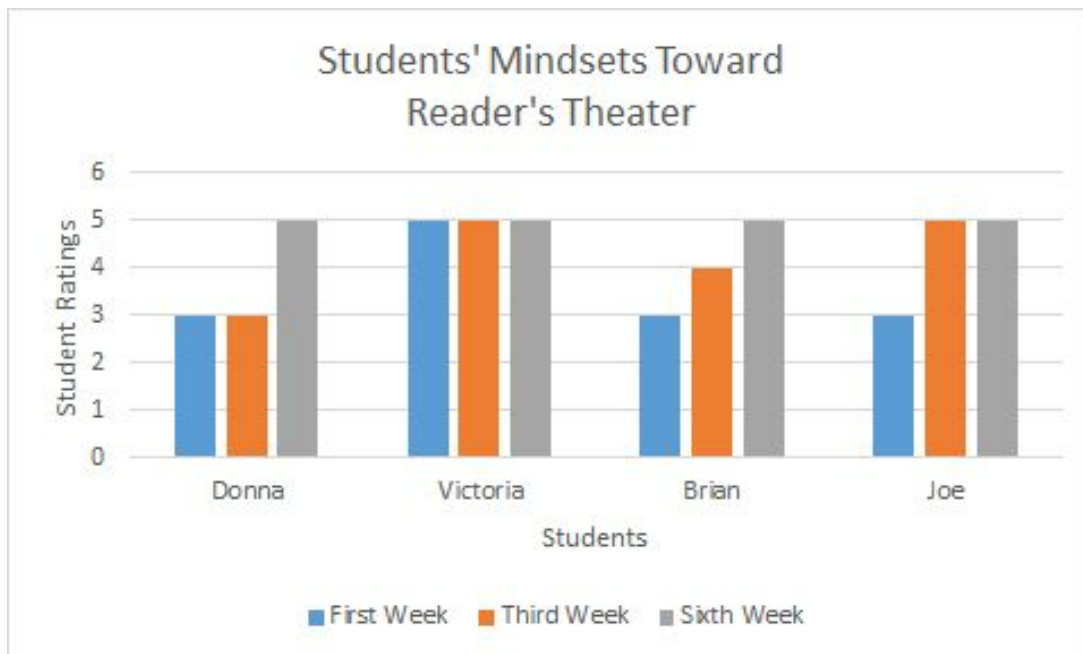


Figure 7 Students’ mindsets regarding prosody for the first, third, and sixth week of the Reader’s Theater intervention.

The final data analyzed were the observational field notes taken by both teachers throughout the study. On-task and off-task reading behaviors, individual reading progress exhibited, and student engagement were noted. Similar to the student self-assessment findings, noticeable improvements were documented. Our consensus regarding the most evident progress made by implementing Reader's Theater into our small reading group was the ascent in motivation and engagement displayed by students. Overall, on-task behaviors improved noticeably compared to previous small group reading sessions using other genres. Due to the increased student engagement in the task at hand, individual reading breakthroughs were obtained.

Our interpretation of all the analyzed data answered the essential question that led us to this action research topic. We concluded that implementing Reader's Theater into small group reading instruction in a second-grade classroom had a very positive impact on the reading prosody of Tier II, Title I reading students. We met our goal of providing students with more authentic reading opportunities, which in turn increased student engagement and led to significant reading improvement. All of the data included in this report provide evidence of this determination. Furthermore, our school district's database confirms our findings by providing triangulated formal assessment data that is taken three times a year to place students into three tiers. We were pleasantly surprised to find out that three out of the four Tier II, Title I reading students that participated in this study moved to a less restrictive placement, Tier I, indicating they are now on grade level. As a result, these students were dismissed from the Title I reading program immediately following this study.

Action Plan

Our research revealed the positive impact Reader's Theater had on the specific component of reading fluency referred to as prosody when implemented into our daily, small group reading routine. The data we collected helped us determine that the second grade, Tier II, Title I reading students that participated in this six-week study demonstrated an increase in all five areas of prosody: expression, volume, phrasing, smoothness and pace. While results varied slightly based on individual student differences such as the ability to focus, innate interest in this genre or reading in general, and motivation or effort made towards self-improvement, the results were consistently positive. Students' overall reading fluency improved over the course of the six-week period, along with their confidence levels and comprehension. After Reader's Theater was implemented, all four students achieved a combined average rate of improvement ranging from 1.4 to 1.7 rubric score points while comparing initial and final prosody performance outcomes. Students' self-assessment input concurred with this finding, as students' self-reports presented a mean increase of 2.3 Likert scale points measuring their impression of this intervention's effectiveness on improving personal reading prosody. Both the second-grade classroom teacher's and Title I reading specialist's field notes substantiated this information as well.

Although this was a positive experience for all participants involved, one possible shortcoming of the study that we noted was novelty diminishing over time if this strategy is overused. Students were happy to engage in these small group reading sessions utilizing Reader's Theater because it was something new and different than what they were used to doing. The fact that the beginning and ending sessions were digitally recorded weekly, thereby allowing

students to tangibly appraise their gradual progress throughout this process, also played a crucial role in promoting and sustaining motivation. However, this too could potentially get boring and decrease stamina if implemented for a much longer span of time.

Another factor to consider is that not all students have an inherent interest in Reader's Theater, or like to read orally in front of their peers. They may be shy, embarrassed or lack the confidence to perform in front of their classmates. They may find this genre of text unappealing and the passage content or subject matter boring. After considering this possibility, we realized that further research may be warranted on the effects of allowing students to choose the scripts or even having them modify stories to write their own Reader's Theater adaptations.

Furthermore, not every intervention works for every student. There is no one-size fits all approach that will benefit everyone the same. If progress is not being made by certain individuals, such as someone with a severe learning disability or someone exhibiting extreme Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, also known as ADHD, it should be documented and discontinued in order to find the appropriate intervention to match the student's reading skills gap. Reader's Theater worked well in our case, while using it with the Tier II, or strategic level, of Title I reading students because these students all had approximately the same starting point or reading level and displayed similar reading difficulties. But, this may not be the case when attempting to implement such a simple, loosely structured approach with students functioning with a much wider range of skills sets from the Tier III, or intensive level of Special Education students.

Our big takeaway from this project is that Reader's Theater can be a very successful intervention when used effectively, and effectiveness needs to be often monitored so that

adjustments can be made when needed. The positive aspects gained from utilizing Reader's Theater include students' enhanced reading prosody, broadened confidence and improved comprehension. These findings will be shared with our colleagues and administration, as well as the possible limitations noted earlier. As for our teaching practices, Reader's Theater will always hold some place in the curriculum resources toolkit we take from when planning instruction to meet every student's needs. However, this intervention's duration and content will certainly look different from year to year, depending on the intended purpose and audience.

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Appendix A
Reading Performance Rubric

K-6 Fluency Rubric for Prosody – Common Core State Standard, Reading Foundational Skills #4






	4 (At Grade Level)	3 (Almost At Grade Level)	2 (Approaching Grade Level)	1 (Below Grade Level)
Expression and Volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads with great expression Shows enthusiasm throughout the text Varies expression and volume to match his/her interpretation of the passage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes text sound like natural language for most of the passage Occasionally reads with enthusiasm Generally, voice volume is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begins to make text sound like natural language Focus remains largely on pronouncing words Reads in a quiet voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seldom or never makes text sound like natural language Reads words just to get them out—robotically Reads in some or mostly in an inaudible voice
Phrasing (Within Sentences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally reads with good phrasing Adheres to punctuation stress and intonation Adequate attention to phrasing for expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads with a mixture of run-ons Mid-sentence pauses for breath and some choppiness Reasonable stress and intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads in two or three word phrases resulting in choppy reading Does not adhere to punctuation, stress, and intonation (fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads word by word in a monotone voice Exhibits no sense of phrasing or expression
Smoothness (Whole Text)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads smoothly with some breaks but word and structure difficulties are resolved Reads with no or rare breaks since difficulties are resolved quickly most often through self-correction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads with occasional breaks in rhythm Reads larger more meaningful phrases Reads with occasional breaks in smoothness that are the result of difficulties with specific words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads with extended pauses or hesitations Reads with frequent breaks in smoothness which are the result of difficulties with specific words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently hesitates while reading, sounds out words, and repeats words or phrases Reads with frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound outs, and repetitions
Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently reads at a conversational pace throughout the reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains an inconsistent pace (fast and slow) throughout the reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads slowly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads slowly and laboriously
<p>*This Fluency Rubric for Prosody should be used when students are approaching grade-level accuracy and automaticity levels.</p>				

Modified June, 2015, from Rasinski, R. (2004). Creating Fluent Readers. *Educational Leadership*, 61, 14-18.






Appendix B Student Self-Assessment

Survey: Prosody Survey






I read with expression.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
--	---	--	--	---






I use phrases within sentences.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
--	---	--	--	---

I read smoothly.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
--	---	--	--	---






I read at a conversational pace.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
--	---	--	--	---






I read with prosody.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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I like using reader's theater scripts.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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I like reading books.

 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Disagree	 <input type="radio"/> Neutral	 <input type="radio"/> Agree	 <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree
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Appendix D
Self-Assessment Data Sheet

Student Self-Assessment			
(1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree)			
I read with expression.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six
I use phrases within sentences.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six
I read smoothly.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six
I read at a conversational pace.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six
I read with prosody.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six
I like using reader's theater scripts.			
Student Names	Week One	Week Three	Week Six

Appendix E Observational Checklist

Observation Checklist/Notes						
Week of: _____			Observer's Name: _____			
BEHAVIORS	STUDENT NAME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRI.
On Task Student Participation (The student is paying attention and promptly reads his/her line at appropriate times.)						
Comments:						
Off Task Student Participation (The student is not following along and needs to be prompted to read when it is his/her turn.)						
Comments:						
The student is interested in the Reader's Theater script.						
Comments:						
The student reads with expression .						
Comments:						
The student reads with volume .						
Comments:						

BEHAVIORS	STUDENT NAMES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WED.	THURS.	FRI.
The student uses phrases within sentences.						
Comments:						
The student reads smoothly .						
Comments:						
The student uses a conversational pace when reading.						
Comments:						

Appendix F
Parent Notification Letter

Dear Parents,

As you may know, we are St. Catherine University students pursuing a Masters of Education degree. An important part of the program is the Action Research project.

As your child’s second grade teacher and Title I Reading specialist at Robert Miller Elementary, we have chosen to learn about the most effective ways to improve children’s reading fluency to help them become successful readers. We are working with a faculty member at St. Catherine’s University and an advisor to complete this particular project. We will be implementing reader’s theater scripts within our small group rotations of 4-5 students each, for 20 minute sessions, 5 days a week during the 90 minute reading block to achieve this goal. Readers theater is a form of dramatic interpretation that involves students in reading scripts orally and has no scenery, costumes, or action. Readers convey mood, tone, and emotion of the characters through the use of their voices, facial expressions, and gestures.

We will be writing about the results that we get from this research, however none of the writing that we do will include the name of this school, the names of any students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in our study.

When we are done, our work will be electronically available online at the St. Catherine’s library in a system called Sophia, which holds published reports written by faculty and graduate students at St. Catherine’s. The goal of sharing our final research study report is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

There is no risk to your child and only benefits of learning. We will be collecting data to determine the effectiveness of reader’s theater to improve reading fluency.

This study is voluntary. If you decide you **do** want your child’s data included in our study, you do not need to do anything. If at any time you decide you do not want your child’s data included in the study, you can notify us and we will remove included data to the best of our ability.

If you decide you **do not** want your child’s data in the study, please sign below. There is no penalty for not having your child’s data involved in the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 701-323-4170. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask us or our instructor, Siri Anderson at 651-690-6121 who will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at [\(651\) 690-7739](tel:6516907739).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Amanda Mahlum, 2nd Grade Teacher Stacey Knudson, Title I Reading Specialist _____
Date

OPT OUT: Parents, in order to exclude your child’s data from the study, please sign and return by December 10, 2015. I do NOT want my child’s data to be included in this study.

Signature of Parent _____
Date