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# Understanding Reading Through the Eyes of Third-Grade Struggling Readers

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UNDERSTANDING READING  
THROUGH THE EYES OF THIRD-GRADE STRUGGLING READERS

by

Christine E. Wiggs

B.S., Union University, 2003  
M.A., Southern Illinois University, 2008

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in the Graduate School  
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

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TITLE: UNDERSTANDING READING THROUGH THE EYES OF THIRD-GRADE STRUGGLING READERS

MAJOR PROFESSORS: Dr. Marla H. Mallette / Dr. Lynn C. Smith

Within the vast research base on struggling readers, very few studies address the nature of struggling readers from their own perspectives; that is, how struggling readers experience reading instruction. The purpose of this qualitative case study research was to gain a deeper understanding of how three third-grade struggling readers viewed themselves as readers and how they experienced reading instruction in their classroom setting. In turn, this study captured their realities of being a struggling reader from their own perspectives. Data sources included measures of reading affect (i.e., attitude, motivation, and self-perception), interviews, classroom observations, work samples, records, and drawings. Data for each of the three cases were first analyzed separately using Boeije's (2010) Spiral of Analysis model, and then through a cross case analysis. In looking across the three cases, the unique and complex perceptions of each student were situated in three broad similarities: (a) their perceptions of reading centered on the idea that *reading is about hard words*, (b) their perceptions of themselves as struggling readers revealed their *internal struggles*, and (c) their *sensitivity to the social* in their perceptions of others' perceptions of them. The findings capture the important and often missing voice of the students, a major stakeholder in their own education, which leads to educational implications for reading instruction.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“When I have to read aloud my hands get so sweaty and my legs start to shake a little,” said Beth. “Yeah, I know and everyone tries to tell me the word. If they would just give me a little bit of time, I could figure it out,” sassed Courtney while rolling her eyes. Beth responded, “I just hate to read aloud! My teacher thinks I am not listening, but I am. I just get so nervous that I freeze up when she calls on me to read.”

The above dialogue took place two years ago in my Title I reading class when I asked two third-grade girls how they felt about reading aloud in their classrooms. Following is the teacher’s response when I questioned her about the girls reading aloud: “Those girls could read if they wanted to. They just never pay attention. When I call on them to read, they have no idea where we are [in the story].”

This verbal exchange ignited a spark of curiosity about how other struggling readers feel about reading aloud and about how they experience reading instruction in their classrooms. Even though teachers, myself included, engage in professional development where *new* instructional reading strategies, approaches, and curriculum are proposed to *fix* all the problems that students have with reading, there are still students who struggle as they walk away from the same reading lesson as their peers without gaining an understanding of the skill or strategy taught. This concern, along with similar observations of struggling readers, initiated an interest in how these students, who were neither grasping reading strategies and skills nor showing growth in reading performance, were experiencing reading instruction. Rather than observing reading instruction from a teacher’s perspective, I thought about what it would be like to see the instruction from the struggling reader’s perspective, through his/her eyes. Further, I wondered

how the students' experiences of the enacted curriculum and their perspectives of themselves as readers might differ from the goals, visions, and perspectives of the classroom teachers (as in the above dialogue). These ideas helped shape this dissertation study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the field of literacy, researchers have conducted a plethora of studies to examine reading instructional methods and approaches used with struggling readers (see e.g., Allington, 1983; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Gambrell, 2004; Lenski, 2001; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). However, within this vast research base on struggling readers, very few studies address the nature of struggling readers from their own perspectives; that is, how struggling readers experience reading instruction. As Oldfather (1995) suggested surveying when this field, "students are a rich but often untapped resource for teachers" (p. 14). She argued that simply talking and listening to students could help educators improve their instructional programs. Even though students are rich informants and stakeholders in the reading process, researchers seldom focus on understanding how students perceive classroom reading instruction and themselves as readers. A range of researchers have noted this gap (Chapman, Greenfield, & Rinaldi, 2010; Erickson & Schultz, 1992; Evans, 2002; Oldfather, 1995). Erickson and Schultz (1992) recognized this problem by asserting, "If the student is visible at all in a research study, he is usually viewed from the perspective of...educators' interests and ways of seeing....Rarely is the perspective of the student herself explored" (p. 467). In addition, educators and researchers often make assumptions about students and their learning that are different from students' perceptions (Wray & Medwell, 2006). Thus, more research is needed to better understand how struggling readers are experiencing reading instruction from their own perspectives. Since the whole focus of

reading instruction is to benefit and enhance student learning, it seems imperative to hear from those who are meant to receive the benefits: the struggling readers.

### **Definition of Struggling Readers**

As *struggling* is an ambiguous term, there are many ways to characterize a struggling reader. Over the years, researchers and educators have used a wide range of terms and descriptions to describe students that are not reading at the expected proficiency level. In the 1980s, educators and researchers often used the term *retarded readers* to describe the students that struggled with reading (e.g., Neville & Hoffman, 1981). Additional terms included *disabled readers* (e.g., Ford & Ohlhausen, 1988), *poor readers* (e.g., Zabrucky & Ratner, 1992), and *problem readers* (e.g., Walker, 2004). Currently, the terms *at-risk* students or *struggling readers* (e.g., No Child Left Behind, 2001) are commonly used in education.

There are wide-spread definitions of what the term struggling reader means and what characteristics qualify a student as a struggling reader. Allington (2006) suggested that a struggling reader is simply a student who has difficulties learning to read. More specifically, Lapp and Flood (2003) defined struggling readers “as students who are not reading grade-level material with fluency and comprehension” (p.14). Often students are considered struggling readers if they score below grade level on standardized tests or fall below grade level on other assessment measures, such as DIBELS, or the DRA assessment (IDEA, 2004; NCLB, 2001).

When thinking about struggling readers, some researchers consider reading tasks outside of the academic context. For example, Alvermann (2001) pointed out that even though educators categorize students as struggling readers based on their classroom performance, these students may spend a great deal of their free time reading proficiently in alternative formats, such as video games, Pokemon and Yu-Gi-Oh cards, or other authentic contexts.

Although I found a variety of definitions to be appropriate to describe a struggling reader, for the purposes of this study, I focused on students that encountered struggles in an academic setting. Further, an assumption that I made was that if students were struggling in the area of their word attack skills and reading rate, then they were also going to be struggling in other aspects of reading as well. For example, as Stahl and Kuhn (2002) noted “if children fail to make the transition to fluent reading, they will encounter significant difficulties in constructing meaning from the text” (p.1). Further, a lack of fluency in readers may also affect their interest and motivation to read (Meyer & Felton, 1999).

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

One purpose of this study was to add an important and missing voice to the understanding of the complexities of reading and reading instruction: the voices of struggling readers. Thus, I conducted case study research of three struggling readers in third grade to capture their realities of being a struggling reader from their own perspectives. As Dewey (1938) explained, an experience is always a transaction between an individual and his/her environment. Further, the environment is “whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience that is had” (p. 44). Hence, one purpose of this study was to examine struggling readers in the environment (their classrooms) where the experiences shape them as readers. Further, this study allowed me to investigate how the students perceive these experiences. Paley (1986) contended that, “The first order of reality in the classroom is the student’s point of view” (p. 127). Regardless of the intent of the reading instruction, how the students receive, experience, and perceive instruction, could influence their learning.

The two main research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do struggling readers view themselves as readers?
2. How do struggling readers experience reading instruction in a classroom setting?

### **Importance of the Study**

Cunningham and Allington (1999) contend that, “Classroom teachers are the most important factor in the success or failure of at-risk children in our schools. They are responsible for the minute-by-minute instruction; the decisions teachers make and the kind of instruction and support they provide make the difference between success and failure” (pp. 2-3). However, it seems that classroom teachers rarely ask students about their thoughts, opinions, and perceptions of their classroom learning experiences (Erickson & Schultz, 1992; Evans, 2002) to assist in making the plethora of daily decisions about the kinds of reading support and instruction they implement. Evans (2002) sought students’ perceptions of their experiences with literature discussion groups. Based upon the findings in her study, she noted, “...hearing the students’ perspectives regarding the impact of gender and bossy members on their experiences had implications for me as an educator” (p. 66). Student insights and perceptions allowed Evans and other educators to make better instructional-based decisions regarding the social contexts of group work to foster the most beneficial environment for all the students involved. Pflaum and Bishop (2004) argued that, “how students perceive reading in school has the potential of informing teachers about practice on many levels ...” (p. 202). Thus, learning more about struggling readers’ perceptions of themselves as readers and of the classroom instruction could help teachers be better equipped to tailor their instruction to best practices that would help these students and others in similar situations develop a healthy reader self-perception and a positive classroom learning experience.

Pollart, Thiessen, and Filer (1997) suggested that, “what is taught is not necessarily what is learned” (p. 5). In part, this is because educators and researchers make assumptions about students and their learning that are different from students’ perceptions (Wray & Medwell, 2006). Viewing reading instruction from the students’ perspectives could help teachers gain an understanding of how and where instructional communications break down. Further, as suggested by Dewey (1938) experiences alone do not comprise education, but rather learning depends on the quality and type of experience that the individual has. Moreover, he claimed that just as experiences can be educative, they can also be *miseducative*. Hearing about reading instruction from a student’s perspective can shed insight into how the educational experiences either enhance learning or cause boredom, confusion, and/or disengagement. Erickson and Schultz (1992) asserted that, “Teachers themselves need to know more about varieties of student experiences if they are to educate a wide variety of students really well” (p. 471).

In considering that 33% of fourth-grade students scored below basic on the national reading assessment (NAEP, 2009), there is compelling evidence that students are experiencing reading difficulties in some capacity. If educators truly want to meet the needs of struggling readers, it is essential to better understand student perceptions, which could then help guide reading instructional decisions, shed insight into how and where communications break down, and in turn potentially help close the learning gap for struggling readers.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is organized around three constructs, which served as conceptual frameworks for this study: (a) struggling readers, (b) reading attitudes, motivation, and self-perceptions, and (c) students' perspectives about reading. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of literature in a chronological fashion reflecting the shifting perspectives of research in the area of instructing struggling readers. Next, I examine the affective domain of reading by discussing research in the areas of readers' attitudes, motivation, and self-perceptions. In the final section, I focus on research that has explored aspects of reading from the students' perspectives.

#### **Struggling Readers**

Just as the various names used to describe students that struggle with reading (e.g., disabled, poor, struggling, at risk) have changed throughout the years, so have the instructional philosophies and models in which to assist these students. Instructional models have shifted from remedial approaches with struggling readers, to preventative and early intervention approaches for struggling readers, to whole school preventative approaches.

#### **Remedial Approaches**

In the early 1960s, children who did not make reading progress with classroom instruction were either retained or referred to special services staff for evaluation and possible placement in special education (Gaffney, 1998). However, in 1965, with the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965), federal funds were provided to schools to offer students services through Title I. Consequently, remedial services through Title I and special education were the predominant models used to serve students that struggled in reading.



This remediation model was based on failure; that is, once students showed failure in reading, then remediation would occur (Gaffney, 1998). When implementing this remediation model, educators would often wait until students were at least two years behind grade level expectations before remedial instruction would begin; third grade was often a beginning time for remedial instruction (Pearson, 2003). However, researchers found that the *wait until they fail* approach was quite problematic (Clay, 1993; Juel, 1988; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

For example, Clay (1993) argued that waiting to provide additional instruction to children until they fail creates gaps or deficits in their learning and has serious consequences for a child's school achievement, personality, and confidence. She contended that when a child has habitually practiced with the wrong responses and approaches, there will be blocks to learning effective reading strategies. Likewise, Juel (1988) asserted that it is hard to make up for years of lost reading experiences. She conducted a longitudinal study of children from first grade to fourth grade. She reported that the probability that a poor reader at the end of grade 1 would continue to be a struggling reader at the end of grade 4 was very high (.88). If the child was an average reader in first grade, the probability that the child would become a struggling reader in grade 4 was small (.12). Thus, there was compelling evidence that poor first-grade readers struggle throughout their schooling experience. However, Juel (1988) suggested if there was not a lag between the time of recognizing the struggles and providing extra instruction, then there would be a greater chance at rectifying the reading difficulties.

Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach (1985) examined the relationship between the reading instruction that students received in remedial classes and regular classes. The researchers interviewed 30 classroom teachers, 19 reading teachers, 12 supervisors, and 33 students, ranging from first to eighth grade. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions

that addressed aspects of classroom and remedial reading instruction and programs. The researchers specifically analyzed the congruence between the two instructional settings and the students' perceptions of their instruction. After analyzing descriptions of the instructional materials used with the target students, they found that only 10 of the students worked on curricular materials that were the same in both settings. The authors reported that there were varying degrees of disparity between the materials used with the other 23 students, which suggested that students had to learn different reading strategies in the two separate environments and practiced their reading skills on contrasting sets of words and syntactic structures. To assess other aspects of congruence, teachers were asked to explain their goals with the instructional programs they were implementing. The congruence of goals was determined by independent rating of teacher goal statements in which the authors reported interrater agreements of .90, .90, and .93. They found that remedial reading teachers tended to report a greater emphasis on comprehension skills and strategies, whereas decoding skills were the emphasis of classroom teachers. Further, the classroom teacher and the remedial teacher often indicated differing instructional goals for the same student on the same day. Remedial teachers generally reported that the emphasis was silent reading with less emphasis on oral reading, whereas classroom teachers claimed to emphasize both approaches. However, when the researchers sought the students' perspective, the students' judgments did not corroborate these instructional claims. From the students' perceptions of the instructional focus, they reported that students appeared to read more in the regular classroom than in the remedial classroom. Additionally, there were substantial differences between the perceptions of teachers and students of how the students spent their time. In the regular classrooms, while teachers claimed most of the instructional time was spent on reading, students reported time spent on workbooks and worksheets, which may

reflect the respondents' various definitions of reading. Some students even claimed to spend most of the time playing games, which was not reported by any teachers. However, although the students interpreted playing SCRABBLE as game playing, the teacher interpreted the activity as vocabulary development. In summary, the authors reported that they found a frequent lack of congruency between the regular class and remedial class settings through different goals, instructional approaches, and lack of communication between teachers and students. Further, Johnston, Allington, and Afflerbach reported, "When reading instruction in the regular and remedial settings is different, instruction in one setting subverts instruction in the other by making it difficult for readers to apply newly learned skills; indeed the skills can be prevented from working" (p. 475).

### **Preventative Approaches**

In response to the *wait to fail* approach to remediation, the 1980s marked a shift in philosophies to a preventative, early intervention model for struggling readers. Pianta (1990) extended Caplan's (1964) three-level model as a framework for placing special education into a preventative continuum. Primary prevention, which would be regular classroom instruction, was provided to everyone and served as the first line of prevention against subsequent problems (Askew, Kaye, Frasier, Mobasher, Anderson & Rodriguez, 2003; Pianta, 1990). Primary prevention as conceptualized by Holdaway (1978) included the following measures to prevent reading difficulties: sensitive observation of reading behaviors, timely intervention as problems arise, growing independence in the learner, and early use of multi-disciplinary teamwork when learners are having difficulties. However, even with high quality primary preventions, classroom instruction alone does not work for all students, as it might not always address the distinctive differences in all students (Askew et al., 2003).

Consequently, secondary prevention is provided to a select group of the students who have been identified as having a greater chance of developing problems with reading. Clay (1991) suggested:

If we can detect the process of learning to read 'going wrong' within a year of school entry then it would be folly to wait several years before providing children with extra help. An earlier offer of effective help to the child might reduce the magnitude of reading problems in later schooling. (p. 13)

Further, secondary prevention is selective and includes an early diagnosis and treatment of reading problems before they extend into further learning difficulties (Keogh, Wilcoxon, & Bernheimer, 1986). At the third level of prevention, the tertiary level, the focus shifts from preventing problems to remediating them in order to reduce the effect of the reading problems as much as possible with programs such as Title I remedial and special education classes (Pianta, 1990).

Early intervention programs, such as Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) and Success for All (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, Dolan, 1990) ushered in a wave of preventative interventions in the form of tutoring and small group programs designed to provide the extra scaffolding and feedback that encourages growth in struggling readers. Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) was designed to be short-term literacy tutoring programs for the struggling readers in first grade. There is mounting evidence that intervening early prevents difficulties and provides promising results for the early readers (e.g., Clay 1979; Juel, 1996; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, & Dolan, 1990). For example, in a longitudinal study of children who received tutoring in first grade (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1998) 67.1% of struggling readers who participated in daily one-to-one tutoring in

reading for one semester scored within the average or above average range on standardized tests of reading achievement. The authors reported that their study also found that early, labor-intensive interventions were effective in distinguishing between children who were classified as learning disabled and those who did not need to be classified when provided with adequate reading instructional interventions. In summary, although prevention does not replace all remedial programs and special education programs, it does lower the stress on such programs and reserves them for children with more severe problems. Currently, a similar three-level approach (i.e., Response to Intervention) is being implemented in adhering to the reauthorization of IDEA (2004).

### **Response to Intervention**

Special education legislation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004) introduced Response to Intervention (RTI) as a new model to promote preventative, evidence-based instruction combined with continual student progress monitoring. This model also addresses the potential to reduce the number of students referred to special education and the misidentification of minority students in special education programs. RTI promotes a systematic use of a data-driven decision process with a goal of enhancing outcomes for all children (Burns & VanDerHeyden, 2006). The RTI model integrates a multi-tier preventive instructional system and is composed of three tiers of instructional planning. Integrating the preventive model (Pianta, 1990), Tier 1 provides research-based instruction in the general education classroom. Tier II provides Tier I instruction plus intensive assistance usually in the format of small groups. Tier III provides special education services as well as the services of Tier I and II (Rinaldi & Samson, 2008). Proponents of the RTI model assert that it creates a preventative model for the instruction of at-risk students and forces schools to examine their

instructional practices and data from regular progress monitoring before moving students into the special education referral process. Consequently, the implemented model should help reduce inappropriate referrals to special education (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2004; Johnston, 2010).

### **Struggling Readers and Individual Differences**

According to Allington (2002), one solution that is recommended by policy makers as the *quick fix* for America's reading problems is the wider use of scripted curriculum materials and a "one size fits all" mentality among the textbook publishers. However, the problem with this fix is that effective teaching is not standardized and cannot be scripted (Allington & Johnston, 2001; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999), and struggling readers cannot be looked at as a single group or population of students that should receive one single type of instruction or that have one type of problem. Even though students fall below standards on state reading assessments, a monolithic approach of one single method of instruction cannot *fix* these students because reading is multifaceted and they may lack different skills within the broad category of reading.

For instance, Buly & Valenci (2002) looked at the scores of students who had scored low on the state reading assessments to analyze what reading abilities contributed to students' poor performances on state assessments and if there were patterns of performances that distinguished various groups of students. The study for the sample included 108 students who had scored below proficiency on the state assessments. To deconstruct students' poor performance on the assessment, the researchers used multiple measures that assessed word identification, phonemic awareness, comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary. These measures included the following assessments: Letter-Word Identification and Word Attack from the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised, Qualitative Reading Inventory II, phoneme segmentation and phoneme deletion sections of the Comprehensive Test of Phonological

Processing, WASL 4<sup>th</sup> grade selection, and Peabody Picture Vocabulary – R. The researchers conducted exploratory factor analysis to reduce the data and to identify variables with common constructs. The authors reported that three clear factors emerged, accounting for 78% of the variance on the WASL scale scores. These factors were word identification, fluency, and meaning. Among these factors, the authors discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each student and categorized the students and common themes into categories. The following categories were found to classify the students' reading abilities: 18% were word callers (i.e., read words quickly, but failed to make meaning), 15% were struggling word callers (i.e., difficulty with word identification but stronger in fluency than meaning), 18% were word stumblers (i.e., stronger in meaning, lacked word identification skills), 24% were slow and steady comprehenders (i.e., read slowly, but their word identification and comprehension abilities were strong), 17% were slow word callers (i.e., not automatic, lacked fluency, struggled with meaning) , and 9% were disabled readers (i.e., lacked basic skills, low in all areas, needed in-depth intervention). In summary, the authors found that students exhibited distinctive patterns of reading performance that influenced their poor results on the state reading assessment. The authors concluded that “reading failure is multifaceted and it is individual. In short, beneath each failing score is a pattern of performance that holds the key to improved reading instruction and, consequently, improved reading ability” (p. 232). Thus, even with the shifting philosophies of how to assist struggling readers, no single approach, method, or intervention can be used with all struggling readers. Buly and Valencia contended, “We must remember that ‘below the bar’ are individual children with different needs...” (p. 235).

## Reading Attitudes, Motivation, and Self-Perception

Reading researchers and educators recognize that the affective domain of learning influences students' reading behaviors and academic achievements (Alexander & Filler, 1976; Alvermann & Guthrie, 1993; Athey, 1985). In the following section, I focus on three affective dimensions in reading: attitude, motivation, and self-perception.

### Reading Attitudes

Alexander and Filler (1976) defined reading attitude as, "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (p. 1). Further, Cooter and Alexander, (1984) operationalized reading attitudes as the feelings about reading that lead to the approach of or avoidance of reading behaviors. Reading researchers and educators recognize that reading attitude can play an influential role in children's reading behaviors, growth, and development (Alexander & Filler, 1976; Athey, 1985; Estes, 1971; Mathewson, 1994; McKenna & Kear, 1990). Three concepts are fundamental to current understandings of attitude and theories about attitude. These concepts include: the *beliefs* an individual has in relation to an object, the *behavioral intentions* that concern an object, and the *feelings* an individual experiences because of the object (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). There appears to be a common consensus about these three concepts in attitudinal models whether they are viewed as components of attitude (e.g., Mathewson, 1994; Rajecki, 1990) or whether they are contributing factors of attitude (e.g., Liska, 1984; McKenna, 1994). In regard to reading, Mathewson (1994) proposed a model of how attitude influences reading and the act of learning to read. For instance, attitude is one of a set of contributors influencing an individual's intention to read. However, the results of a given reading encounter or experience connect back to impact attitude. In his model, the major factors, which he referred to as *cornerstone concepts* included personal



values, goals, self-concepts, and persuasive communications. Persuasive communications are the messages received about reading and the reading process, which can be received either directly or peripherally. In his tripartite model, attitude encompasses feelings, action readiness, and beliefs. Two other components that are contributors to the decisions to read are external motivators and the individual's emotional state (Mathewson, 1994).

In an effort to formulate a model more conducive to considering the long-term development of reading attitudes, McKenna (1994) amalgamated the work of Mathewson (1994) and his predecessors and adapted Liska's (1984) revision of earlier attitudinal models to fit the reading domain. Rather than promoting the tripartite view of attitude, the McKenna model adopted the view that "attitude is largely affective in nature and that beliefs are causally related to it" (p. 938). The model identified three influential factors contributing to attitudinal changes: (a) beliefs about the outcomes of reading in light of the judged desirability of those outcomes, (b) beliefs about the expectations of others (i.e., teachers, parents, peers) in light of one's motivation to conform to those expectations, and (c) the outcomes of specific incidents and experiences of reading. McKenna contended that a joint effect of intention, attitude, and subjective norms all affect a decision to read. Further, because reading is an ongoing process rather than a single act, feedback from the metacognitive state and the subjective norms, intent, and attitude all combine to determine whether the reading process will continue. Thus, in summary, the McKenna model postulated that an individual's reading attitude will develop over time as a result of normative beliefs, beliefs about the outcomes of reading, and specific reading experiences.

**Students' attitudes toward reading.** In an attempt to gain insight into the role of reading attitudes, researchers have focused on examining reading attitudes and the relationship they have with students' reading growth and development. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth

(1995) investigated the reading attitudes of a stratified national sample of 18,185 U.S. children ranging from first grade to sixth grade. Using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, or ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), the researchers asked the following research questions: What are the overall developmental trends in recreational and academic reading attitude across the elementary grades? What is the developmental relationship between recreational and academic reading attitude, on the one hand, and (a) reading ability, (b) gender, and (c) ethnicity, on the other? What effects on reading attitude can be ascribed to the use of basal reading materials? This national survey analysis suggested that social factors in combination with teacher and/or student expectations shape student attitudes toward reading over time.

The authors analyzed the overall developmental trends in attitude by two separate one-way ANOVA designs for recreational and academic reading attitude by grade level. They found that with the exception of attitudes from second to third grade in the recreational scale, the decline in students' attitudes over successive grade levels was statistically significant. In summary, student attitudes about reading become more negative gradually, but steadily over the elementary school years.

McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) used similar factorial designs to analyze the four components of the second research questions (attitudes related to ability, gender, and ethnicity). They explored the relationship of attitude to reading ability and to ethnicity by 3 X 6 designs, and its relationship to gender by means of 2 X 6 designs. In regard to their second research question, the authors reported the following summary findings from the surveys: (a) a trend toward more negative recreational attitudes was clearly related to ability and was the most evident for least able readers; (b) the gap among ability widened with age; however, for academic reading attitude the negative trend was similar regardless of ability; (c) regardless of

ability, females reported more positive attitudes toward reading than males; and (d) ethnicity played little role in the results.

In response to the third research question, teachers reported whether they used a basal reading series and, if so, to what extent. Teachers of 14,831 students responded that the basal was their chief tool; teachers of 2,168 students reported supplemented forms of basal use; and teachers of 662 students reported that they taught in a basal-free school. After data analysis, the authors found no statistically significant effects; therefore, the extent of a teacher's reliance on the basal reader did not appear to relate to reading attitude.

Corcoran and Mamalakis (2009) conducted a study in an attempt to determine intermediate level students' attitudes toward reading and their perceptions of teaching techniques that relate to encouraging reading motivation. The authors administered self-developed surveys to 26 fifth-grade students from two single-gender classrooms. The survey questions asked students about their thoughts on the following topics: frequency of the teacher reading aloud to the class, teacher modeling an interest in reading by sharing information on books he or she personally had read, importance of choice in reading materials, motivational questions about how students feel toward reading, and questions asked to elicit information about the value students place in reading. Based on the answers to the survey, the authors concluded that the majority of the 26 students identified reading as being important, but few of the students expressed reading as being something they enjoyed. The students indicated that reading was a boring way to spend time. Based on the perspectives of the students in their study, Corcoran and Mamalakis suggest that all intermediate teachers need to "explicitly dedicate time for read-alouds, discussions, choice, and exploration of literature to motivate students to become life-long readers" (p. 4).

Research about children's attitudes toward reading suggests that teachers can positively influence students' attitudes about reading through specific interventions and techniques such as metacognitive training (Payne & Manning, 1992), using high quality literature during time of instruction and free reading (Morrow, 1983), reading aloud to students (Herrold, Stanchfield, & Serabian, 1989), and using questions to activate prior knowledge (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987).

**Reading attitude by ability and gender.** Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008) conducted a study to examine multiple factors relating to reading attitude. Their primary goal was to investigate if calculated reading ability and reading attitude could demonstrate a significant causal relationship to reading achievement on school-wide and statewide formal reading assessments. In addition, they investigated gender differences and reading attitudes in relation to reading ability. Hence, this study addressed the following research concerns: (a) Gender differences in attitudes toward reading, (b) Differences in the reading attitudes of good versus poor readers, (c) The relation among reading attitudes and reading achievement in Year 1 of the study and the degree in which a causal relation emerged across the study in Year 2, and (d) the degree to which reading attitude and reading skill could predict reading achievement 4 months later. Participants were 76 fourth-grade students (48 girls and 28 boys) from a third-fifth grade elementary school in the Midwest. The researchers used the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) to measure participants' attitudes toward reading. The students' achievement was assessed three times using scores on a reading Curriculum-Based Measurement (R-CBM) task. This task involved each student reading aloud a fluency passage for one minute to calculate the number of words read correctly in one minute. Three passages were administered to each student and the median score was recorded. Further, in the fall of the

following school year (4 months later) participants completed a high-stakes statewide reading assessment, Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+).

Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell (2008) reported that when compared to the boys in the study, the girls reported more positive reading attitudes. This finding is consistent with previous findings suggesting that girls tend to possess more positive reading attitudes than boys (see e.g., Anderson, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 1985; Shapiro, 1980; & Smith, 1990). Swalander & Taube (2007) assessed 4,000 eighth grade students and comparisons were drawn about affective influences such as attitude, motivation, self-regulation, and self-concept on reading ability. Their testing results indicated that girls have significantly more positive attitudes toward reading compared to the boys. In addition, Worrell and colleagues (2007) administered the ERAS to a sample of 575 gifted students in grades 3-7. They also reported that the females had a more favorable and positive attitude toward reading compared to their male peers. Further, from their ethnographic study of high school students' literacy practices, Luttrell and Parker (2001) explained that boys indicated that they believed that "reading and writing were 'girl' activities (p. 237). Hence, a societal belief may attribute to the suggestion that girls tend to foster more positive reading attitudes than boys (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

The second finding in Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell's (2008) study was that there were no significant differences in reading attitudes reported by good (i.e., students that passed or passed+ on ISEP+) and poor readers (i.e., did not pass). Both types of readers reported comparatively similar positive attitudes toward reading. While a number of researchers have investigated the relations between reading attitudes and reading achievement, the results have been inconsistent. Similar to Martinez and colleagues (2008), Lazarus and Callahan (2000) also suggested that the positive reading attitudes among good readers and poor readers were

comparable. However, other researchers have reported that better readers had a more positive attitude toward reading compared to poor readers (Lipsky, 1983; Martin, 1984; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). Other contradictory findings suggested that some high achievers reported poor attitudes toward reading (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy, 2003) whereas other low achievers reported positive attitudes toward reading (Russ, 1989). According to the McKenna attitude model (1994), because attitudes are formed in part on the basis of beliefs about the outcomes of reading, McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth (1995) suggested that “it is natural to predict that poorer readers, who have reason to expect frustrating outcomes, will tend to harbor more negative attitudes than better readers” (p. 941). However, some struggling readers may not recognize that their outcome is negative or due to their ability, and may simply attribute their lack of success to luck or other outside sources (Wilson & Trainin, 2007) allowing them to maintain a positive reading attitude. Thus, educators and researchers cannot assume that struggling readers have a negative attitude toward reading. This relationship may vary according to the individual’s experiences, awareness, and personality.

The main purpose of Martinez, Aricak, and Jewell’s (2008) study was to test the temporal interaction hypothesis by investigating how reading attitudes and reading skill in fourth grade contributed to scores on a standardized reading achievement test in fifth grade. A path analysis performed using Amos 6.0 (Arbuckle, 2005) revealed that both reading ability and reading attitude significantly predicted reading achievement on the standardized reading test four months later. The authors reported that when reading attitude increased by one standard deviation, ISTEP+ increased by .22 standard deviations. In addition, when reading attitude increased 1 point, ISTEP+ scores increased 2.35 points. Although previous reading skills were a stronger predictor of reading performance on the achievement test, the influence (direct effect size) of

reading attitude in fourth grade on achievement in fifth grade was 2.35 ( $p < .05$ ). Reading attitude in fourth grade accounted for 22% of the variance in reading achievement 4 months later, supporting the temporal interactive effect.

### **Reading Motivation**

In identifying evidence-based best practices, authors Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) first recommendation was to “create a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation” (p. 19). Further, they suggested that the most basic goal of any literacy program should be not only the growth and development of readers who *can read*, but also readers who *choose to read*. They contended, “Teachers can provide instruction in the most essential literacy skills, but if our students are not motivated to read, they will never reach their full literacy potential” (p. 19). Motivation often makes the difference between learning that is shallow and superficial versus learning that is deep, internalized, and lasting (Gambrell, 1996). Comparable to reading attitudes, motivation to read can be an influential factor in the growth and development of students’ reading abilities and behaviors. Ford’s (1992) motivational systems theory posited that people will attempt to accomplish goals they value and perceive as a realistic possibility to achieve. Likewise, Winne (1985) suggested that the *idealized reader* is one who feels competent and places a personal value and importance on reading. Within this motivational framework, Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni (1996) asserted that, “...reading motivation is defined by an individual’s self-concept and the value an individual places on reading” (p. 519). Guthrie (1996) suggested that if students are motivated to read, they will generate their own learning opportunities and invest in their growth as readers. In a national poll in 1992, teachers ranked motivating students and creating an interest in reading as their top priority (O’ Flahaven, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl, Baumann, & Alvermann, 1992). Consequently, researchers and

educators continue to expand the knowledge base of reading motivation and seek to understand the relationship of reading motivation to a wide array of reading related concepts.

**Students' motivation to read.** Motivational theories and past research indicated a positive correlation between motivation and academic achievement (Ford, 1992; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Gambrell et al. (1996) also conducted a study to explore the relationship between motivation and reading achievement. The Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996) was administered to 330 third- and fifth-grade students from 27 classrooms in four schools from districts in an eastern U.S. state. The participants' teachers categorized the students as displaying low, average, or high reading achievement. The authors reported that there were statistically significant differences among the mean scores on the self-concept measure for the low, middle, and high achievement groups. Hence, motivational scores were positively associated with the level of reading achievement. Further, they also found statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the third- and fifth-grade students on the value measure. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., McKenna & Kear, 1990), the younger students scored more positively on the instrument than the older students, reflecting a decline in reading motivation as the students got older and progressed through the school years (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996).

In Oldfather's (1993) eight-month ethnographic study, she examined the perceptions of learning and motivation in a whole language classroom setting from fourteen fifth- and sixth-grade students. She used observations and 41 open-ended in-depth interviews to gain insights into why students in a particular classroom were highly motivated to achieve literacy success. She contended that when students have literacy choices, these choices provide them a sense of empowerment over their learning. Oldfather described an example of a classroom that



demonstrated how the classroom teacher shared control and responsibility with her students in regard to literacy choices. From Oldfather's data, she suggested that the reasons these students were so engaged in their learning stemmed from "a deep responsiveness to students' self-expression – to their ideas, opinions, feelings, needs, interests, hopes, and dreams – and an emphasis on the students' construction of meaning" (p. 3). In other words, Oldfather attributed the students' high motivation to a "learner-centered classroom that honored students' voices and emphasized students' making sense of things together" (p. 3). The findings from this study point to the importance of allowing struggling readers to have choices in their learning and demonstrated the motivational value of a positive relationship between the teacher and students. Oldfather challenged educators by stating that "responsive teachers do not relinquish power; they share power and responsibility, providing a continually evolving balance between choice and structure" (p. 12).

Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) also focused on the motivational aspect of reading in their examination of reading motivational factors from fourth-graders' perspectives. The authors explained that, "Because we heard so many negative comments about reading and there has been very little research in this area, we decided to go to the source: we asked our students what motivated them to read" (p. 415). Teachers placed 91 fourth-grade students into the following categories: Motivated Above-Grade Level, Motivated On-Grade Level, Motivated Below-Grade Level, Unmotivated Above-Grade Level, Unmotivated On-Grade Level, Unmotivated Below Grade Level. With the exception of the Unmotivated Above-Grade level (due to availability), three students were randomly selected from each category. Each child was interviewed using the Conversational Interview portion of the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). Using the constant comparative data analysis method, the authors placed

their patterns into the following six categories: (a) factors that got children excited about reading narrative text (personal interests, characteristics of books, and choice), (b) factors that got children excited about reading expository text (knowledge gained, choice, and personal interests), (c) factors that got children excited about reading in general (characteristics of books and knowledge gained), (d) sources of book referrals (school library, teachers, family members, and peers) (e) sources of reading motivation (family members, teachers, and themselves), and (f) actions of those who motivate students to read (buying or giving books, reading to students, and sharing books). After their data analysis process, Edmunds and Bauserman offered five recommendations to teachers for motivating students in the classroom based on the fourth-graders' responses. They suggested the following recommendations for increasing children's reading desires: self-selection, attention to characteristics of books, personal interests, access to books and active involvement of others (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006).

Wilson & Trainin (2007) asserted that, "One underlying factor that moderates students' academic performance is children's developing achievement motivation" (p. 259). Past studies of achievement and reading motivation have indicated that reading motivation, along with prior achievement and experiences, contributed to the prediction of future reading and academic achievements (e.g. Anderman, Anderman, & Griesinger, 1999; Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003).

### **Reading Self-Perception**

Self-perceptions are a person's own beliefs or predictions concerning their abilities and performances (Harter, 1982). Constructs such as self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-evaluation have had a long history within the field of psychology. However, in the past thirty years there has been a renewal of interest in the areas of the self and self-descriptions within the field of education (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Harter, 1982; Stipek, 1981). Recently, within

the field of reading, researchers and educators have not only taken a special interest in how motivation and attitudes affect reading, but they have also analyzed how students' perceptions, efficacy, and evaluations of themselves as readers contribute to the reading process and interest.

Although readers' motivation and attitudes are thoughts or feeling directed toward the tasks of or the actual reading process, readers' self-perception, self-competence, and self-efficacy are inward evaluations and judgments of themselves as readers and their abilities to achieve success at reading tasks. Valencia (1990) referred to the notion of reader self-evaluation as a perception of self as a reader. Further, she contended that reader self-perception is an important concept to include in individual and statewide portfolio assessment contexts.

**Students' self-perceptions as readers.** Student's perceptions of reading are linked in some ways with their abilities in the activities pursued. That is, good readers and struggling readers tend to think of reading as a different process and have different understandings about the nature and purposes of reading (e.g., Bondy, 1990; Johns, 1974; Medwell, 1991). Although some students' reading self-perceptions stem from the reality of their academic abilities and their perceptions match with their actual reading performance, for other students this is not necessarily the case. Hattie (1992) reviewed results from 128 studies where academic self-concept and academic achievement were compared. After analyzing 1,136 correlations, she found that 944 were positive, 22 were zero and 170 were negative. With the average correlation being  $r = .21$ , the relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance was shown to be weak.

Academic self-perceptions situated in a school setting are not only about actual ability; they also depend on the perceived thoughts and views of teachers and peers (Pitkanen & Nunes,

2000; Stipek & Lupita, 1984). In the 1970s, using questionnaires and one-on-one interviews, Nash designed a study to investigate 7-and 8-year-old students' self-perceptions of their reading abilities in relation to their peers' reading abilities. He set out to discover if the students could determine if their peers were better or worse readers than they and if the students could place their peers in a rank order of perceived reading ability. Nash reported that the students were well aware of their position in class and their self-perceptions affected how they rated and portrayed themselves. For example, the students who were recognized to be *good* at schoolwork put themselves forward as *clever* and *not clever* with the students who were seen to be *not good* at schoolwork (Nash, 1976). Pitkanen and Nunes (2000) extended Nash's study by replacing his methodology with observations in the classrooms along with rankings of classmates by students and teachers. The authors investigated the students' self-perceptions of their reading and math abilities during two one-to-one interviews. The students were asked to sort pictures of their classmates into three different piles: (a) he/she is better than me, (b) he/she is as good as me, or (c) he/she is not as good as me. The students also took standardized IQ, reading, spelling, and math tests to assess their actual academic abilities. In addition, teachers' ranked their perceptions of their students' abilities for learning, for reading, and for math on three occasions one week apart. Pitkanen and Nunes compared the results from the teacher rankings and the students' actual academic performance along with the students' ranking and their actual academic performance. Then they applied regression analysis to the data from students' self-perceptions related to their actual performance and the teachers' perceptions of the academic performance. The results indicated that children's perceptions of themselves did not significantly relate to their academic performance. However, their self-perceptions as learners significantly related to the perceptions of the academic perceptions reported by the teacher and by their peers. Hence, while

children's self-perceptions of their reading may or may not correlate with their academic performances (or realistic abilities), teachers and peers have an influential role in how students' reading self-constructs shape, form, and/or change over their schooling experiences (Pitkanen & Nunes, 2000). Further, Nicholls (1978) explained that the ability of students to rank their academic ability accurately depended on their ability to see their position from a viewpoint of outside observers, which might also connect to their age level.

In an attempt to measure academic self-efficacy, self-competence, and/or self-perceptions, instruments have been created to assess this domain (Boersma, Chapman, & MacGuire, 1979; Mitman & Lash, 1988). However, in the 1990s, researchers began to develop instruments to assess self-influences specifically within the reading domain. Perceptions of reading competence are beliefs about reading abilities and proficiency within reading domain-centered tasks (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995). Chapman and Tunmer (1993) developed the Reader Self-Concept Scale; an instrument that measures children's ability to describe themselves as readers. The authors accounted solid internal reliability for the scale by reporting .85 at 5 years, .84 at 6 years, and .85 at 7 years.

The items on the scale are designed to assess a range of self-perceptions and evaluations of children as readers. There are 10 questions in a practice section to help the students situate themselves with the format. The main part of the evaluation consists of 30 questions in a mix-order design. The 30 questions are geared to assess the students' evaluation of themselves in the following areas: (a) Competence in Reading (beliefs regarding their own reading abilities and strengths), (b) Difficulties in Reading (beliefs that reading activities are hard or problematic), and (c) Attitude toward Reading (feelings toward reading). These components originated from the reading area of Marsh & Shavelson's (1985) academic self-concept model. Thus, the Reader

Self-Concept Scale is an instrument that can provide insight into how a child describes his/herself as a reader (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995).

Chapman and Tunmer (1995; 2000) conducted a longitudinal study investigating the development of the relationship between reading competence and reading comprehension by measuring attitudes toward reading, perceptions of competence, and perceptions of difficulty of reading by using the Reading Self-Concept Scale. Further, they examined the extent to which young students make differentiations within the domain of reading self-concept. The authors reported in their findings that young students made differentiations in their reading self-perceptions by the age of five. The children were able to differentiate between success and failure in their perceptions of reading academic competence. In addition, the authors reported that the “children’s initially very positive attitudes toward reading declined during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years...and by Year 5, there was a significant relationship between attitudes toward reading and reading performance” (p. 165). This finding is consistent with previous studies on motivation and attitude (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996; McKenna & Kear 1990). The authors also suggested that with age and experience in school, the students’ perceptions of competence and difficulties correlate more with their actual reading performance levels. For instance, at the Year 1 level, relations between competence and difficulty perceptions and reading-related performance were weak to negligible. However, by Years 4 and 5, the relationships showed up much stronger in the data. Thus, students’ awareness and evaluations of their reading competence and difficulties begin to play a larger role in their reading perceptions and self-concept as they progressed through school.

Wilson and Trainin (2007) developed the Early Literacy Motivation Survey (ELMS) to examine the relationship between self-influence constructs and the reading, writing, and spelling

achievement of primary grade students. The ELMS specifically examines: (a) self-influences about the level of skill one needs to be successful at a future literacy task (the child's self-efficacy and perceptions of competence); (b) the attributes a child may assign as the cause for either failure or success at a previous reading or spelling task in school; and (c) the reading, spelling, and compositional writing achievement of young students. The authors reported that care was given to make the ELMS a developmentally appropriate measure for students in kindergarten to second grade. For instance, the instrument uses scenarios and short tasks to contextualize the questions for young participants. Students also use a visual aid with happy and sad faces to support their responses to the questions. Self-influences scales measured perceived competence (7 items), self-efficacy (6 items), and attributions (10 items). There were three versions of the ELMS and within each subscale (perceived competence, self-efficacy, and attribution); literacy tasks were presented in a randomized order. The reliability (internal consistency) of the measure was assessed and the authors reported that the scale was in the acceptable range for experimental measures (.87). The internal consistency coefficients for the individual factors were also in the acceptable range (self-efficacy = .77; self-perceptions of competence = .69; attributions = .76). In summary, the authors contended that although the reliabilities are in a low but acceptable range, they are typical in motivational research (Wilson and Trainin, 2007).

Wilson and Trainin (2007) extended the findings of Chapman and Tunmer (1995) by conducting a study to not only examine how well primary students differentiate among their self-efficacy for reading tasks, but also for writing, and spelling tasks. The authors also examined other research questions in relation to developing the ELMS (Wilson and Trainin, 2007). However, for the purposes of this literature review, only the question regarding students' self-

efficacy will be addressed. A team of doctoral students administered the ELMS (perceived competence: 7 items; self-efficacy: 6 items; and attributions: 10 items) to 198 first-grade students through one-on-one interviews during the winter academic quarter. The authors hypothesized that first grade students would be able to differentiate self-efficacy for various literacy tasks as they read, spell, and write. After a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted, their findings supported the idea that first-grade students were able to differentiate literacy self-efficacy among reading, spelling, and writing tasks. Their self-efficacy for writing (mean scale of 6.79) was significantly greater than for spelling (mean score 6.2). The lowest rating of the three types of literacy tasks was for reading (mean score of 5.86). The authors contended that their results fit the social self-interaction model (Schunk, 1999). This model suggested that as students receive teacher feedback and compare themselves with their peers, they develop a more realistic sense of self-efficacy for domain specific literacy tasks. Wilson and Trainin suggested that in the case of their results, students received the most concrete oral feedback during reading. These experiences of feedback and social comparisons developed a lower reading self-efficacy, reflecting a more insightful and realistic judgment of their abilities. Likewise, spelling received less oral feedback than reading, but still preserved a distinct sense of successes and failures. Writing in most first-grade classrooms tended to provide very little feedback offered in a group setting, therefore limiting social comparison opportunities (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). In summary, this study indicated that students as young as first grade can differentiate self-efficacy for various literacy tasks. The authors concluded that “One advantage of having this information is that the results offer teachers a window of opportunity to make a concerted effort to increase emerging literacy skills in their students who are at risk of reading failure” (p. 278).



Stipek and MacIver (1989) contended that young students tended to rate their academic competence high when asked generally worded questions. However, the global perceptions began to change as students progress through third grade and above. The authors suggested that by third grade, students seemed to be more equipped to evaluate the level and difficulty of academic tasks. Thus, by third grade, students demonstrated a more precise evaluation of their abilities to complete reading tasks and activities.

Nicholls (1978) conducted a study with eight boys and eight girls of each age, 5 through 13 years to investigate the development of causal schemes for effort and ability with the use of showing films and conducting interviews on the students' responses. In the process of examining his primary research questions, Nicholls also examined the development of self-concept of attainment by investigating students' perceptions of their own school attainment relative to the attainment of their classmates. By using an instrument with schematic faces representing the students in the participants' classroom, additional tests were administered to the students that asked them to compare their reading abilities to their classmates. Nicholls suggested that it was not until approximately third grade that significant correlations between students' self-evaluations and teacher ratings or achievement scores begin to emerge. The author asserted that these changes are due to students' emerging awareness and academic understanding of what academic ability means. Further, it is not until approximately 8 years of age that children begin to develop a more logically consistent view that experiencing ongoing difficulty is inconsistent with positive self-perceptions of ability and competence (Nicholls & Miller, 1984). Therefore, by third grade, students are also beginning to demonstrate a more precise evaluation of not only their abilities, but also of their self-perceptions as students and their academic achievements in content areas such as reading. These perceptions begin to align more with academic reality.

Attributions are the reasons individuals use to understand or explain past successes or failures in task completion. For instance, individuals may attribute past successes to ability, luck, effort, help from others, and/or task difficulty. Within the reading domain, students who struggle may attribute their performance to external sources such as difficulty of the words, lack of help from the teacher, or the difficulty of the story rather than their personal effort (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). For example, Heibert, Winograd, and Danner (1984) examined the effects of developmental status and achievement on how students in third and sixth grade attributed or perceived their successes and failures for reading. Low-achieving third-grade students attributed their outcomes to luck more than high-achieving third-graders, who perceived their successes and failures as a result of internal factors such as effort. This finding is similar to the results of Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Connell (1998) who found that 8-year-old children tended to ascribe their level of performance success to external causes such as powerful others and unknown factors. Further, the third-graders who were less confident of their ability and their internal means of control (effort) also demonstrated less engagement in tasks than some of the higher-achieving students who perceived they were able to control the learning situation through their efforts and abilities (internal sources).

The research on self-perception demonstrates that third-grade students were able to make distinctions in attributions for academic successes and failures. However, lower achieving students tended to attribute their failures to outside sources where as higher achieving students tended to understand that their performances stem from internal sources such as the amount of effort they give on particular tasks. In addition, reading self-perceptions may not correlate with actual reading abilities. Rather, reading self-perceptions seemed to be formed based on influential factors such as reading experiences and teacher and peer perspectives.

Reading attitudes, motivation, and self-perceptions are aspects of the affective domain of a reader. Reading educators and researchers have shown renewed interest in how affective factors influence children's reading achievements and behaviors (Alvermann & Guthrie, 1993).

Researchers recognize that attitudes, values, beliefs, desires, motivations, and self-constructs exert a powerful impact on literacy learning. For instance, Eccles, Adler, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, and Midgley (1983) advanced an "expectancy-value" theory of motivation. This theory stated that motivation is strongly influenced by one's expectations of failure or success at a task. The expectancy component is supported by research studies that suggest that students who evaluate themselves and believe they are capable of being competent readers are more likely to outperform those who do not hold such beliefs (Bandura, 1993; Paris & Oka, 1986; Schunk, 1985). In addition, Henk and Melnick (1995) stated that, "how an individual feels about herself/himself as a reader could clearly influence whether reading would be sought or avoided – and how persistently comprehension would be pursued" (p. 472). Wixson and Lipson (1991) contended that students' attitudes, thoughts, and motivation toward reading are central factors that affect their reading performance and achievement. Thus, understanding reading affect is pivotal in exploring how struggling readers experience reading instruction.

### **Students' Perspectives on Reading**

Wray and Medwell (2006) suggested that learners are "continually involved in socially constructing the reality of their classroom experience" (p. 205). Thus, they advocated, "the perceptions and views of the major participants in learning, the learners themselves, are of crucial importance in understanding the nature of the experienced curriculum in classrooms" (p. 205). Further, students' thoughts and feeling about literacy tasks are not always the same as those perceived by adults (Wray & Medwell, 2006).

Although somewhat small in number, some studies have been conducted to gain students' perspective on various aspects of reading. In the following section, I review research that focused on student perspectives in relation to: (a) definitions and purposes of reading and (b) reading instruction.

### **Definitions and Purposes of Reading**

Wray and Medwell (2006) investigated English students' perceptions of the literacy hour; a national initiative in 1997, with the aim of raising literacy standards in England's primary schools. A mixture of survey and case study methods were used to gather data from 297 boys and girls of various abilities aged between 7 and 11. Based on the collected data, the authors proposed that the perspectives students had about their participation, enjoyment, and achievement in literacy were different from the beliefs held by teachers. While the teachers were fairly confident that their students were enjoying the experience of the literacy hour, based on the interviews, classroom observations, and surveys, 30-40% of the pupils demonstrated that they did not seem to enjoy the literacy hour. Wray and Medwell (2006) explained, "Significant numbers of our pupils were not participating in an active way in literacy lessons, and did not wish to, and this was particularly the case with below-average learners" (p. 209). This finding demonstrated that teachers might have misconceptions about the effects implemented literacy approaches have on their students. Thus, as the authors contended:

Such insights cannot be gained unless we all, teachers and researchers, start taking much more account of the views about literacy teachers held by those we teach. Pupils' perceptions matter, and we need to take much more seriously the business of finding out what they are. (Wray & Medwell, 2006, p. 209)

Bondy (1990) explored how first-grade students of different reading abilities viewed reading and understood the purposes of reading. During a four-month time-period, she spent 150 hours observing and interviewing six students that were in a low reading group and nine students that were in a high reading group. Bondy contended that the students constructed and used six definitions of reading in the classroom:

The first three definitions of reading – reading is saying words correctly, reading is schoolwork, and reading is a source of status – were common among low-group children... The next three definitions – reading is a way to learn things, reading is a private pleasure, reading is a social activity – were used almost exclusively by the high group girls. (Bondy, 1990, p. 35)

Notably, the definitions that were common among the low-group children show that for the most part, they lacked the knowledge and experiences that helped them understand that reading has higher purposes than basic word call.

Bondy (1990) concluded that the various perspectives and concepts that the students had about reading were “the result of prior knowledge about reading and the reading experiences they had in the classroom” (p. 33). She suggested that the formed perceptions reflected the focus of the reading instruction for the different groups. For instance, the low-group children experienced a large dose of words-based experiences. With their restricted understandings about print and reading, these children adopted the simplistic definitions of reading stressed in their reading group (e.g., saying words correct, by schoolwork, and a source of status). Further, the impact of their definitions seemed to affect how they interacted with reading. Because these students defined reading as “saying the words,” they avoided the opportunities to spend free time reading books unless they saw an opportunity “to garner social status” (p. 39). On the other

hand, the teacher did portray other definitions and purposes of reading to students (e.g., a way to learn things, a private pleasure, a social activity), but the students who constructed these meanings were the ones involved in the higher reading groups where activities took place that fostered these definitions.

Medwell (1991) investigated 8-year-old primary students' beliefs about reading. Their teachers categorized the students as good readers, average readers, or poor readers. Medwell interviewed each student about reading using the following three questions: (a) What is reading, (b) What do you do when you read, and (c) If you knew someone who didn't know how to read, what would you tell them they needed to know? Responses to these questions were placed into 5 categories:

1. Meaningless or vague responses (e.g., you move your lips)
2. Focuses on classroom practices (e.g., you have to read out loud to Mrs. James)
3. Decoding or word recognition (e.g., looking at words and splitting them up)
4. Reading involves understanding of meaning (e.g., learning things)
5. Both decoding/word recognition and understanding (e.g., it's about interesting things and you have to know lots of words).

A trend observed across the group was that stronger readers provided more responses in categories 3, 4, and 5, whereas the struggling readers only gave responses in categories 1, 2, and 3.

Medwell (1991) also carried out a miscue analysis on students' oral reading, classifying their substitutions as semantic, graphophonic, or both. She found that the poorer readers were more likely to utilize only graphophonic cues. Similar to Bondy (1990), Medwell suggested that the poorer readers appeared to have a very narrow concept of reading and understandings of the

purposes for reading. In contrast, stronger readers had more balanced perceptions of reading and were more focused on gaining meaning when they read.

McCray, Vaughn, & Neal (2001) also offered insight into how struggling readers viewed reading and understood the purposes of reading. Their study highlighted the voices and perspectives of 20 middle school students (grades 6-8) identified as having reading-related learning disabilities. By analyzing the data collected from transcribed student interviews, they found that most of the students thought about reading purposes in terms of word recognition, decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension rather than reading for enjoyment, entertainment, and social purposes. The authors relayed that a majority of the participants recognized and indicated that they had difficulty in some aspect of basic reading functioning skills (i.e., fluency, decoding, comprehension) and identified themselves as poor readers. Even though the students identified themselves as struggling readers, the authors contended that it was evident from all 20 students' comments that "they were aware of the need to read proficiently both within and outside the classroom" (p. 25). The authors suggested that not only did the students recognize the importance of reading, but also many of them were hopeful that they could learn to read well enough to be successful in school and in their future. Even though these students had enough awareness to recognize the importance of reading and a hopefulness to be stronger readers, their definitions of reading were still quite similar to the definitions of the students in Bondy's (1990) and Medwell's (1991) studies.

Struggling readers ranging from first grade, third grade, to middle school constructed very different definitions and purposes of reading than higher readers. Their definitions of reading were very narrow and simplistic and related to the process of reading (i.e., decoding words, school work, reading fluency) rather than the higher purposes of reading (i.e., ways to

learn, private pleasures, social activities). This insight from students' perspectives indicated that how struggling readers experience reading instruction may be different from how higher-achieving readers experience enacted curriculum.

### **Reading Instruction**

This section of the literature review will discuss research conducted to gain student perceptions on various aspects of reading instruction. For example, (a) how students perceive specific reading strategies and which ones they find effective and engaging, (b) students' perspectives on the format of reading instruction, such as preferences for mixed-ability and mixed-gender grouping, (c) perceptions of students who have experienced different instructional approaches such as skills-based and whole-language methods, and who have been participants of reading reform policies, and (d) case studies of struggling readers to gain in-depth information of their perceptions.

**Perceptions of reading strategies.** In addition to examining students' definitions of reading, McCray, Vaughn, and Neal (2001) also sought to describe the views middle school students with reading-related LD held about previous and current efforts to teach them to read. That is, the researchers examined both the students' literacy experiences at home and at school and their perspectives on the usefulness of the reading instruction. The focus in this review will be the students' experiences in a classroom setting, rather than their home experiences. The researchers asked the students questions such as "Can you describe the kinds of lessons your reading/English teacher used to help you to learn to read?" (p. 24). In response to questions such as the example one, the authors explained that a majority of the students "could not identify aspects of their instructional support in reading in a manner descriptive of systematic, intensive, and explicit teaching for students with such severe reading disabilities" (p. 25). For instance, the



authors provided examples of students' explanations where they attempted to describe reading games, decoding rules, and could recall strategies for comprehension, but not how to use the strategies. Further, McCray et al. (2001) explained that the students' responses might not necessarily mean that their teachers were not attempting to provide sound instruction, rather, "the participants' difficulty articulating their reading instruction may suggest that these students lack understanding of why and how their present instruction will lead to improved reading" (p. 25). However, the authors also asserted that it was possible that the students simply "have not been provided with a systematic and consistent approach to reading instruction that they are able to describe in even the most cursory way" (p. 28). If observations would have been included in their methodology, the researcher may have been able to make that determination. Regardless, this study conducted on reading instruction from the students' perspectives provided an example of struggling readers who were confused by the experienced instruction. Thus, it is a powerful suggestion that teachers need to tailor their approaches to provide explicit, detailed reading instruction to the struggling students and to provide explanations and/or communications to struggling readers as to why they are participating in the learning tasks. An important implication from this study for educators and researchers is that "with respect to practice, there is mounting evidence that many students, including many in special education, are not receiving the instruction they need in reading" (p.29). Alternatively, if the participants were receiving explicit instruction, then the students' actual experiences differed from the teachers' intended instructional experiences, which may be a common instructional problem as suggested by Wray & Medwell (2006).

Pflaum and Bishop (2004) also sought to understand how 20 middle school students from four schools in different Vermont communities perceived school reading experiences. The

authors combined drawings and interviews to examine the way these students perceived the reading instruction. They began by asking the students to describe a typical day and then draw one time when they were engaged in learning and another when they were not engaged in learning. Further, they asked the participants to describe some of the different ways they read, in reading class and in other subjects. The drawings were the igniting source for the conversations that followed. For instance, one example of a prompt was for the students to draw about a time when he/she was deeply engaged versus a time when he/she was detached from a learning experience. Pflaum and Bishop included an example of this type of drawing, along with the conversations exchanged, and the student demonstrated a clear preference for collaborative reading experiences compared to textbook reading experiences. In the conversations, the student shared how she was able to learn much more by talking and interacting with her peers than attempting to read a text that was too difficult for her to understand.

In addition, Pflaum and Bishop (2004) also shared the students' experiences of read-alouds; silent, independent reading; and oral reading. The authors reported that the "students spoke warmly about two kinds of reading: teacher read-alouds and silent, independent reading...these activities...appeared often in the interviews" (p. 206). They suggested overall, that the students seemed to appreciate when their teachers read aloud to them and when there were opportunities for silent reading. Conditions that led to the students' engagement in silent reading were opportunities for self-selection of books, pursuing personal preferences, a quiet atmosphere, and not having to write during this time. However, when discussing oral reading, the students shared that they had concerns about their reading pace and that reading aloud is an obstacle to comprehension. Since these three areas were the main types of reading that were prevalent in the students' answers, the authors reviewed the transcripts to find that "there was

only limited evidence of instruction in strategies” (p. 210). Consequently, the authors reported that “[We] probed for information about strategy use and instruction with all the students and were struck by how little they perceived them as being taught” (p. 210). Some students did talk about answering reading questions and felt that literature groups and small groups were important to their reading experiences. In summary, the authors found the students’ perceptions to reflect a relative frequency of techniques such as teacher read alouds; independent, silent reading; answering questions; oral reading; and literature groups. Conversely, the perceptions also reflected an absence of much representation of direct teaching of reading strategies. This finding is similar to past studies where the researchers observed the frequency of direct reading strategies and comprehension skills being taught (or rather not taught) to the students (Durkin, 1978/1979; McCray, Vaughn, & Neal, 2001). The authors shared that “we mean to highlight the importance of different students’ perceptions, not to generalize these experiences to other students” (p. 205). Hearing about reading instruction from students’ perspectives can shed insight into how the learning experiences either enhance the learning or cause boredom, confusion, and disengagement.

**Perceptions of reading formats.** Not only have researchers attempted to understand how students perceive their reading instruction, but also the format of their reading instruction. Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn (1997) investigated elementary school students’ perceptions of grouping formats for reading instruction. The participants were 549 students from three urban schools in a large southeastern district from third (80 girls, 57 boys), fourth (118 girls, 96 boys), and fifth (98 girls, 100 boys) grades and included 23 students with learning disabilities. Teachers of the participants classified the students as either very good, average, poor, or nonreaders. As a result, 189 students (34% of the total sample) were classified as good readers,

217 (40%) as average readers, 103 (19%) as poor readers, and 17 (3%) as nonreaders. The authors developed their own questionnaire to investigate the students' perceptions concerning grouping practices for reading instruction. The questionnaire contained the following sections: (a) 10 items on grouping formats and practices related to reading instruction (students liking or disliking of grouping formats such as whole-class, mixed-ability, same-ability, pairs, etc), (b) 4 items on grouping formats used by their teachers (frequency), (c) 12 items on the perceptions of same-ability and mixed-ability groups, and (d) 4 items on desirability of same-ability grouping for students of different levels of reading ability (perceived desirability).

Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn (1997) conducted Wilcoxon signed-ranked tests to examine the significance of differences among pairs of different grouping formats. The students gave the highest ratings to mixed-ability groups and mixed-ability pairs and these two formats did not significantly differ from each other. Whole-class instruction received significantly higher ratings than same-ability pairs, which in turn received significantly higher ratings than either same-ability groups or working alone, which did not differ from each other. In regard to the frequency of implemented grouping formats, the authors reported that whole-class instruction and working alone both ranked about equally the highest. Then group formats, which students reported teachers using more frequently than pairs. In response to the four items asking whether students of different reading abilities should be in same-ability groups for reading, the following percentages represented the thoughts of students of different reading abilities: 72% of students classified as good readers responded negatively, 73% of average readers, 83% for poor readers, and 11% for nonreaders. Hence, the majority of students perceived that mixed-ability grouping was desirable except for the nonreaders who preferred same-ability grouping. Participants shared that in mixed-ability formats students get more help from classmates, work more

cooperatively, and make more progress in reading than in same-ability groups. On the open-ended comments, many of the students remarked that mixed-ability groups were good for poor readers because they would benefit from being with more-able readers. Likewise, the higher readers would get the opportunity to help other students. However, some students did comment that mixed-ability groups might not be fair to poor readers because they might get confused or not understand what to do. In opposition, some students noted that for the same-ability groups, poor readers would be stuck at their level and not have opportunities to make progress. In regard to nonreaders, students suggested that they should get help from the teacher rather than their peers. Likewise, the nonreaders were not in favor of working with students of varying reading abilities. Rather, they would prefer to work with other nonreaders. Overall, one implication of this study was that this population of students had distinct opinions about how they learn and what instructional practices they perceived as benefiting them the most (mixed-ability groups). Nevertheless, even though the students preferred the mixed-ability grouping, the enacted instruction format differed from the students' desires.

Evans (2002) also investigated fifth-grade students' perceptions of groups, but she examined their perceptions of their experiences participating in peer-led literature discussion groups. The yearlong study took place in a fifth-grade classroom of 11 girls and 11 boys with a broad range of reading abilities. The author conducted the study and gathered her data sources during the students' regular classroom time devoted to *Literature Study*. The primary data sources consisted of the transcribed literature discussions and the transcriptions of the groups' reflections on their discussions. Secondary sources were field notes taken daily, student work samples such as literature journals, written reflections, minilesson assignments, and end-of-book projects, and an end-of-the year sociometric measure that asked the students to list the names of

three students they would most like to have as literature group members and the reason why they chose each student. Evans used research memos, constant comparison methods of analysis, and member checks to analyze the data. Evans contended, “The process of continually taking my emerging analyses back to the students through the reflection discussions helped to ensure that I was accurately interpreting their perspectives and allowed the focus of the study to remain on the students’ perceptions, rather than on my independent interpretation of them” (p. 53). Further, the author shared that in order for her to keep a theme from her data, there had to be confirming evidence from multiple data sources as well as evidence from different points of time during the school year.

Stemming from the data sources, Evans (2002) chose three themes to characterize how the participants perceived their literature discussion groups. The first theme was that the students had a “clear notion of conditions conducive to effective discussions” (p. 54). The students identified the following five conditions that they perceived as being influential to an effective time of discussion: (a) basic requirements (the need to read the book, participate, write in their journals, etc), (b) respect issues (not interrupting, treating each other fairly, etc), (c) people you can work with or get along with, (d) task structure assigned by the teacher (specific topics assigned versus free discussions), and (e) text being read (interesting text, appropriate reading level). The students recognized that these conditions influenced how they acted in and experienced their discussions. The second theme was that the students thought that the gender makeup of their group was an influential factor in how they experienced the discussions. For instance, Evans reported that “regardless of the actual reason for the difficulties, the students were quick to “blame” the other gender for the group’s problems” (p. 60). Further, the students reported that they preferred same-gender groups due to low levels of comfort with the opposite

gender, able to express each other in an easier manner, and believed they were better able to enact the conditions discussed in the first theme. The third theme was that the students found that the presence of a bossy group member affected their experiences. The students were able to distinguish between a bossy group member and a leader and noted that the presence of a bossy group member had a negative influence on their discussion time (Evans, 2002). Consequently, learning from the students about their discussion experiences and the conditions they perceived as being conducive to productive interactions provide teachers with insightful information when implementing social aspects of literacy. While the instructional intent was to focus on literacy, this study is an example of how the experienced curriculum from the students' perspectives often involves complexities other than the content area such as gender relationships, power struggles, group dynamics, teacher authority, and so forth.

**Perceptions of approaches and reforms.** Dahl and Freppon (1995) sought to learn how students experienced reading instruction in classrooms that implemented two different methodological approaches. They completed a two-year ethnographic study that examined the perceptions of urban elementary students about their instruction in two different instructional contexts: a skills-based reading curriculum and a whole language approach to learn to read and write. This cross-curricular comparison was a two-step process; the authors investigated each curricular approach separately, and then the authors conducted an overall comparison. The focus of the study was on similarities and differences of inner-city children's literacy experiences and knowledge, and their sense making across the contrasting curricula. The researchers used qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures to gather data from the participants. There were two skills-based sites and two whole-language sites and from each study, there were 24 kindergartener learners, totaling 48 children. From each study, there were also focal students

that the authors collected extensive qualitative data over a two-year period such as field notes, interviews, observations, and document and artifact collections. In addition, learners wore a remote microphone during the observation time so utterances could be captured. Students completed an array of six tasks assessing various aspects of written language for qualitative data. The findings from this cross-curricular comparison spanned three general areas: the patterns of learner sense making, written language knowledge measures, and contrast among reading processes and writing events. Although the authors offered a wealth of insights from their study, the students' sense making of their literacy experiences will be the focus of this literature review (Dahl and Freppon, 1995).

The qualitative findings of Dahl and Freppon's study focused on interpretations that the learners made of their literacy instructional experiences. In both the skills-based and whole-language investigations, the authors took the patterns of behaviors as indicators of learner assumptions about reading and writing. Comparisons across both studies revealed five areas in which there were prominent patterns of behaviors. The first pattern dealt with accuracy. In both studies, most focal learners were concerned about their accuracy or "getting it right" (p. 60) and the behaviors were evident in learners with all levels of skills in reading and writing. The authors reported this pattern interesting to them because the demand for a production of correct written responses contrasted in the different approaches; whole language accepts errors as being potentially productive in the learning process while skills-based places high value on correct responses. The second pattern deals with phonics growth. While an overall progression toward understanding of letter-sound relations took place among participants in both studies, analysis revealed different strategies for using letter-sound knowledge. The focal learners from the whole-language study used strategies that demonstrated an application of their letter-sound



knowledge, where as with the skill-based approach of using worksheets, the focal students' perspectives "appeared that it needed to be completed to please the teacher" (p. 62). Further, the authors reported that, "often these children [skills-based group] did not put their phonics skills to use when reading" (p. 62). This data, similar to other studies (e. g., Bondy, 1990) supplied evidence that suggested students' learning and perceptions imitated and developed based on the particular reading strategies and approaches valued by the classroom teacher. The third pattern that emerged from the study was the students' responses to literature. Although learners in both studies demonstrated an enjoyment for literature, the authors reported that there were considerable differences in the students' responses to literature and the hypotheses the children held about trade books. Children in the whole-language classrooms demonstrated a wide range of insights from their reading experiences; these patterns were not evident among learners in skill-based classrooms. For instance, three categories of interpretation were evident among the whole-language participants: learning storybook language, gathering intertextual knowledge, and adopting a critical stance with the literature. Consequently, this example demonstrated how students' literacy experiences shaped their reading perceptions and developing skills. Pattern four dealt with coping strategies of learners that experienced difficulties with literacy activities. In both groups, the least proficient readers and writers developed various ways in dealing with teacher expectations and instructional demands. While these behavior patterns were similar in some ways, such as students showing gains after one-on-one teacher/student conferences, the cross-study shows significant differences in the coping behaviors between the two groups. The greatest difference in coping behaviors occurred when the learners worked on reading or writing tasks on their own. In the skills-based group, when the students struggled, their behaviors indicated that they were not making sense of what they were doing. For instance, they would

stare off for periods of time, copy from others, mark random answers, or simply sit there until a teacher would come to help. However, the coping behaviors of comparable children in the whole-language classrooms were shaped by the social contexts and environment of their classrooms. Rather than act passively with their lack of understanding, they would attempt to get help from their peers, tag along with other, try to read and write with their peers and so forth. Hence, the peer interactions indicated an attempt to produce some meaning with the activity. The final pattern of learner sense making was the emerging sense of self as readers/writers and persistence to accomplish literacy tasks. Dahl and Freppon reported that in nearly every classroom observation, the whole-language learners demonstrated perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. These students were interested in their progress as readers and writers and they would sustain their attention on literacy tasks, such as elaborate writing projects. The skills-based classrooms also showed these patterns of a sense of self and persistence, but “the patterns were restricted to the most proficient readers and writers” (p. 65). In summary, Dahl and Freppon conducted this study to capture learners’ interpretations and perceptions of beginning reading and writing instruction across the first 2 years of schooling in two different curricular settings: skills-based classrooms and whole-language classrooms. This study indicated that different literacy approaches developed differences in the participants’ fundamental understandings about literacy, the purposes of literacy, and about themselves as readers.

Some researchers recognize that students are important stakeholders in decisions made about literacy instruction and value their perceptions. While examining the effects of a school-wide literacy reform effort, Chapman, Greenfield, and Rinaldi (2011) took into account how the reform affected the children by investigating the students’ perceptions of their reading instruction within the Response to Intervention instructional model (IDEA, 2004). Specifically, the

researchers stated that their focus was on the students' perceptions of learning how to read in a school implementing an RTI model and how the actual implementation compares to the intended implication of the reform. The authors investigated the students' perceptions by analyzing the drawings of 210 students in grades first through fifth that attended an urban elementary school. Students were given the prompt "Think about all the ways your teachers help you to learn. Draw a picture of what a camera would see when your teachers are helping you to learn to read" (p. 118). After using emergent analytic coding and Cohen's Kappa to measure interjudge agreement, the following six main categories emerged from the drawings: instructional delivery (i.e., small group, one-on-one, whole group), number of instructors, type of instruction (i.e., reading aloud, strategy instruction, etc.), student-teacher instructional interaction, student affect, and the presence of books. As far as instructional delivery, 75% of students drew pictures that included their teachers working with them in small groups and one-on-one; only 8% of students drew reading instruction being delivered to the whole class. The majority of students (88%) drew only one teacher in their drawings during reading time. In regard to type of instruction, which examined the location of the teacher during reading instruction, 62% of the drawings depicted a teacher either standing or sitting near them within close proximity. In 12% of the drawings, teachers were depicted standing in the front of the classroom and in 9% of the drawings teachers were reading the class a book in a read-aloud setting. The instructional interaction category assessed dialogue and reading strategies either as part of the dialogue or posted in the classroom. Strategies appeared in about 6% of the drawings and the little dialogue that was represented was presented in a positive manner. Student affect was noted by examining the facial expressions of the students; 77% of students depicted positive facial expressions and only 2% drew negative facial expressions (i.e., a frown). Chapman, Greenfield, and Rinaldi

suggested that books are an important part of the classroom environment and their presence can shed insight as to whether students viewed themselves as readers. They found that 80% of the drawings had at least one book present in the picture. Overall, the authors suggested that in their study the “students depict[ed] their teachers teaching them to read in individualized, interactive ways, which may reflect the implantation of the RTI” (p. 125). Further, in this study, the school had set a reform goal to increase students’ reading performance by implementing more direct, center-based reading instruction in order to enhance engagement in smaller groups. The authors reported that the drawings suggested that 75% of the students viewed their teacher’s reading instruction as one-on-one or in small groups, which supported that “the perceptions of students matched the goal to provide center-based reading instruction in the context of the school reform effort” (p. 126). Finally, the authors reported that the most important aspect of their study was the evidence that monitoring students’ perceptions through drawings provided a deeper understanding of their learning experiences with reading instruction (Chapman, Greenfield, & Rinaldi, 2011).

### **Case Studies of Struggling Readers**

Hall (2005) conducted a year-long descriptive case study that examined how three struggling readers in a sixth-grade social studies class, a seventh-grade mathematics class, and an eighth-grade science class carried out the reading responsibilities of their homeroom classrooms. She collected data through bi-weekly field observations, questionnaires, interviews, student comprehension assessments, and a collection of each student’s work. She had an average of 52 observations, 50 minutes each, per student. Acting as a non-participant observer, Hall reported that “the ways in which each participant transacted with the reading task demands of her classroom was influenced by how she saw herself as a reader” (p. 9). Although each student

attempted to engage in the text and wanted to understand the readings and the class content, the students' perception of themselves as readers affected how they interacted with the text. For example, the students were more likely to engage with the text if they thought they could understand and comprehend it. Further, the participants showed that they would rather not "understand a text rather than risk revealing their perceived inabilities to their teacher and/or peers." (p.9). Similar to the assertions of McCray et al. (2001), she suggested that the students were motivated to read and learn, but one component was that the students were concerned about being embarrassed in front of their peers and/or teacher. In fact, when attempting to protect their identity, the students chose to relinquish understanding the story rather than risk a chance of their classmates viewing them negatively. Overall, her three case studies suggested that there are many complexities from struggling readers' perspectives that teachers may not recognize when seeking to implement instruction. Hall's challenge to teachers and researchers was to "find ways to understand the connections between identity and instruction" (p.1) because reading identity did affect the way a struggling reader approached reading tasks. Halls' study also asserted that students' perceived abilities affected the way they read and interacted with instruction in content area reading.

Nes Ferrara (2005) explored the self-efficacy and fluency of a sixth-grade, female struggling reader. She examined reading fluency within the context of a paired reading instructional intervention, the reader's self-perception, and the nature of the lived experience of being a less-skilled reader. To assess the student's reading self-efficacy, Nes Ferrara administered the Reader Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) prior to the beginning of the reading sessions, at the midpoint of the study, and at the end of the study. She conducted informal interviews, or reading conversations, and assessed them for reoccurring themes to

explore the students' experiences as being a struggling reader. During the reading conversations, Nes Ferrara explored the student's personal experiences by asking questions that focused on perceptions, feelings, home and school experiences, personal history, and future expectations. As a participant observer, she also kept a daily log of field notes and reflections. The author used a constant comparative strategy to analyze the reading conversation data and transcripts.

At the end of an 11-week intensive session of paired reading fluency work, the final assessment probe represents an increase of 44 words per minute from the baseline mean at the beginning of the study. Nes Ferrara also reported that according to the Progress Scale component of the RSPS (Henk & Melnick, 1995), her participant recognized her fluency growth by reporting that her reading abilities were improving. When discussing the implications of the study, the author addressed that goal-setting and concrete evidence of progress played a role in the successful outcome for her participant. Since goal attainment was central to self-efficacy, Nes Ferrara suggested that, "meeting these proximal goals enhanced Sally's perception of competence and sense of mastery (self-efficacy)" (p. 228). She also discussed how the participant felt a sense of empowerment when she understood her goals and how to achieve them, and this led to increased motivation. Additional implications included recognizing the importance of guiding students in setting personal academic goals and how helping the students achieve those goals can lead to feelings of empowerment and motivation. Nes Ferrara suggested that future research should "focus on reading fluency and the reader self-efficacy with many more struggling readers to help determine the best methods and contexts for reading instruction, so that the end result may be many more efficient and satisfied adult readers" (p.230).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, researchers have mapped out important aspects of student perceptions of various facets of reading. Their studies offer valuable insights into student constructed definitions and purposes of reading, perceptions of reading strategies and approaches, thoughts about the format of reading instruction (e.g., mixed-gender groups), and how contrasting instructional approaches lead to different fundamental understandings of reading. Further, their findings point to the influential role teachers, peers, and the environment play in students' perspectives of reading. Researchers advocate the importance of goal setting, communication, and intensive explicit instruction to struggling readers. In addition, researchers recognize that social complexities such as gender, group dynamics, and reading identities affect the reading instructional experiences and are conscious of the role that motivation, choice, and empowerment play in learning. Finally, researchers have put forth the importance of self-perceptions and the effect they can have on struggling readers and their understandings of themselves as readers and of the reading process itself.

While these studies offer great insights, they analyzed student perspectives about specific components or approaches of reading. That is, the studies did not address how struggling readers experience reading instruction from a holistic view. While some studies addressed how students experienced reading instruction, they were conducted with middle-school students, or students with learning disabilities, or within a particular framework such as the RTI model. In contrast, my study addressed a gap in research by focusing on third-grade students and investigating how they experienced reading instruction in a holistic manner through a case study design. Although researchers have conducted a few studies with third-grade students (e.g., Medwell, 1991) the focus of the studies were on other aspects of reading such as students' beliefs about reading. In addition, since self-constructs shape the perspectives and experiences of students, my study also

addressed another research gap by combining the affective domain of the constructs of self-efficacy (attitudes, motivation, and self-perceptions) with the instructional aspects of reading. Thus, the purpose of my study was to understand how struggling readers in third grade view themselves as readers and how they experience reading instruction in the classroom. This holistic approach allowed for themes and patterns to become evident without the constrictions of specific topics. In addressing the study in this manner, other aspects of reading that have already been studied may also become relevant such as their definitions of reading, their reading identities, perceptions of strategies, and how the role of the teacher and environment play in their reading experiences. Consequently, my study not only addressed a gap in the research, but also extended the research of existing implications already provided from students' perceptions of reading self-perceptions and reading instruction.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The purpose of this study, to gain a deeper understanding of how third-grade struggling readers view themselves as readers and how they experience reading instruction in their classroom setting, derives from and is consistent with the set of assumptions within the qualitative research paradigm. The qualitative researcher seeks to describe, understand, and interpret rather than predict, control, and generalize (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) explained that one aspect of qualitative research is an attempt to “understand the meaning people have constructed, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Further, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) stated, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). A qualitative research design allowed me to observe the participants in their natural learning environment (i.e., the classroom) to better understand how they made meaning of their reading experiences.

In order for me to grasp the experiences of struggling readers, it was essential that I was able to interact and question the students to gain access to their thoughts and perceptions. A qualitative approach allowed for close and personal contact with the participants of the study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Also, a flexible research design accommodated any possible shifts in the direction of the study as behaviors, findings, themes, and/or patterns emerged. Boeije (2010) explained that both characteristics, close contact with the subjects and flexible emergent designs, are characteristics of the qualitative paradigm. In addition, Boeije’s (2010) notion that “The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (p. 11) framed the design of this study.

### **Research Questions**

Specifically, this study was guided by the following two research questions:

1. How do struggling readers view themselves as readers?
2. How do struggling readers experience reading instruction in a classroom setting?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The overarching theoretical framework that guided this research study was constructivism. A basic notion of constructivism is that people assemble their own knowledge through their active participation in their learning (Schunk, 2008). Moreover, since a core belief of constructivism is the need to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1994) this framework guided my understanding of the lived experiences of reading instruction from the lens of the students. Yet, equally important, is the notion that individuals actively construct knowledge and reality within their social environments (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, more specifically, social constructivist theory informed this study by situating the participants in the social, thereby providing insight into their interactions, perceptions, and experiences.

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that human intelligence originates in our society, or culture, and individual cognitive growth occurs first through personal interaction with the social environment (the classroom), then internalization of the experiences take place (within the self of the reader). Applying this to the reading domain, the social environment, which has been formed by culture and history, shapes the internal processes of reading during reading instruction. Interactions with people in a learner's environment stimulate developmental reading processes and promote cognitive growth. The way that readers interact with their world and the people and objects in it transform their thinking. Thus, the classroom environment is considered critical in

learning and reading development, as knowledge is co-constructed between two or more people and these social interactions transform learning experiences and learning structures or reading schemas (Schunk, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Further, context and tasks are key aspects that influence internalization (Ingleby, 1986). McCarthey (1998) purported that “viewing students as subjects who construct themselves and are constructed in different ways in different contexts can provide the opportunity to transform current literacy practices” (p. 126).

One of the most fundamental concepts of social constructivism theory is that the human mind is mediated. That is, humans rely on symbolic tools, signs, language, and other significant symbols to mediate our learning and regulate our relationships with others, with ourselves, with our environments and, overall, our reading experiences. Moreover, Vygotsky understood the mind to be a functional system in which the brain is organized into a higher, or culturally shaped, mind through the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking. Higher mental activities include voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thought and problem solving, learning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of these processes (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1986). Activity theory, which addresses Vygotsky’s original ideas on the nature of human behavior, suggests that human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity. Activity theory, which is a derivative of social constructivist theory, helped guide the observations of the students in their classrooms, their learning environment. As Lantolf (2000) applied this theory to classroom experiences, he explained that even if students in the same class participate in the same task, they may not be engaged in the same activity. That is, students with different reading motives often have different reading goals as the object of their actions, despite the intentions of the classroom teacher. Thus, students play a major role in shaping the goal and the ultimate outcomes of reading tasks. Consequently, from

the perspective of activity theory, what ultimately matters is how individual struggling readers decide to engage with the reading tasks as an activity in their classroom environments.

In addition to experiences in the classroom environment and the interactions during reading tasks, language mediates experiences, transforming the mental functions of reading. Social constructivist theory argues that while thinking and speaking are separate functions, they are tightly interrelated in a dialectic unity where speech completes privately initiated thoughts. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) proposed that words and their personal meanings emerge from a particular way people organize words in mediating their mental activities. Therefore, as struggling readers talked and interacted with their social environment and discussed their experiences during interviews, an attempt was made to capture their thoughts to determine their interior reading processes and schemas.

From a Vygotskian perspective (1986), literacy is a tool for the development of the mind, and it is in the development of the mind that the self comes into being. Hence, a socially constructed understanding of how struggling readers experience reading and view themselves as readers is grounded in self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994; Schunk, 2008). Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy “as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behavior” (p.71). Self-efficacy influences a student’s academic motivation, achievement, and learning (Schunk, 2008), which, in turn, affect academic achievement by influencing an individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure, and goal persistence (Bandura, 1982). Thus, self-efficacy in the reading domain is influential in the very essence of how students experience the reading process and reading instruction as well as how they view themselves as readers. Self-efficacy comprises

many attributes; however, building on existing research in reading, the foci for this study included reading attitude, reading motivation, and reader self-perception.

Although attitude, motivation, and self-perception could be viewed as internal traits, from a social constructivist lens, they are better characterized as subjectivities (McCarthy, 1998). “The term ‘subject’ encourages us to think of ourselves and our realities as constructions: the products of signifying or meaning-making activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious (Orner, 1992, p. 79; as cited in McCarthy, 1998, p.129). Further, subjectivities vary across and within social interactions and are constructed within particular practices (McCarthy, 1998). Thus, attitude, motivation, and self-perception are viewed as socially situated, fluid, and flexible constructions shaped by context and experience.

McKenna and Kear (1990) postulated that an individual’s reading attitude will develop over time as a result of normative beliefs, beliefs about the outcomes of reading, and specific reading experiences. Reading researchers and educators recognize that reading attitude, a construct of reading self-efficacy, can play an influential role in children’s reading behaviors, growth, and development (Alexander & Filler, 1976; Athey, 1985; Estes, 1971; Mathewson, 1994; McKenna & Kear, 1990).

Comparable to reading attitudes, motivation to read can be an influential factor in the growth and development of students’ reading abilities and behaviors. Ford’s (1992) motivational systems theory posited that people attempt to accomplish goals they value and perceive as a realistic possibility to achieve. Likewise, Winne (1985) suggested that the *idealized reader* is one who feels competent and places a personal value and importance on reading. Within this motivational framework, Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni (1996) asserted that, “...reading motivation is defined by an individual’s self-concept and the value an individual

places on reading” (p. 519). Guthrie (1996) suggested that if students are motivated to read, they generate their own learning opportunities and invest in their growth as readers. Thus, along with reading attitude, reading motivation is also shaped through experience.

Reading self-perception refers to individuals’ thoughts and evaluation of how they think they can achieve a reading task. The type of feedback and encouragement students have received, along with previous experiences of similar reading tasks, often influence their self-perceptions (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Individuals take their progress, observational comparisons, social feedback, and physiological states into account when estimating their capabilities as readers (Bandura 1982; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1985). Progress includes past successes, the amount of effort necessary to succeed at a given task, task difficulty, task persistence, and belief in the effectiveness of instruction. Observational comparisons encompass how children perceive their reading performances compared with their peers and classmates. Social feedback is the direct or indirect input about reading from people in the child’s life such as family, classmates, and teachers. Finally, the physiological state refers to internal feelings that the child has or experiences during reading activities (Henk & Melnick, 1995). When developing reader self-perceptions, children may value one or more sources over the other and much of this valuing process will “be related to the social context in which the literacy learning occurs” (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 472). Hence, the classroom, the home, and any other environment that reading occurs represent contexts for learning about oneself as a reader and shaping the reader self-perception.

In summary, throughout this study, to help answer how struggling readers experience reading instruction, I observed how the students interacted with their environment: their classroom teacher, their peers, their textbooks and other academic materials and overall, their

surroundings. In addition, since readers' affective constructs are influential in how they interact, perceive, and relate to their surroundings, I examined the participants' reading attitudes, motivations, and self-perceptions.

### **Pilot Study**

During the spring semester of 2011, I conducted a pilot study, which investigated how two third-grade struggling readers perceived themselves and their classroom reading instruction. The pilot study afforded me the opportunity to experience the processes of interviewing students and teachers, transcribing interviews, and analyzing data. In addition, the pilot study informed decisions made for this dissertation study. For example, before the pilot study, I had an interest in reading self-constructs, but did not know how to define or measure them, or if I would even see evidence of affective constructs in the students. From the experience of the pilot study, I discovered valid and reliable affective instruments (e.g., RSPS, ERAS), which provided revealing data about the students' perceptions. Even in the short data collection period, I was able to observe that reading self-perceptions did exist and seemed to shape both participants' experiences. Further, during the pilot study, when I investigated how the students experienced reading instruction, it was fascinating for me to observe the struggling readers in their classroom environments. I found it interesting to observe how the students interacted with the classroom teacher, each other, and their time on task during reading activities. The initial findings from this study of how the two students' self-perceptions shaped their reading goals, definitions, and experiences in such a different way from each other helped formulate the research questions. For instance, one student's perceptions of his reading skills and abilities were totally opposite from his academic reality and performance. I was surprised by his perceptions and was encouraged to understand more about student students' reading perceptions. In addition, the other student's

construction of how she defined reading and purposes of reading appeared to derive from the activities that the classroom teacher deemed important. For instance, the classroom teacher put emphasis on reading speed and Accelerated Reading levels and much of the student's reading focus was to attempt to increase her "number of words" read and her AR color. Consequently, these experiences and insights encouraged me to continue with this topic of study for a longer time-period of data collection and a more intensive study of three additional students.

### **Position of the Researcher**

Peshkin (2001) stated that, "researchers should be meaningfully attentive to their own subjectivity" (p. 455) and that, "whatever the substance of one's persuasions at a given point, one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our life" (p. 455). In considering my subjectivity, I am currently a Title I teacher and have been a third-grade classroom teacher. Consequently, I have background knowledge of why the classroom teacher attempted to implement certain reading activities. At times, it was difficult not to draw conclusions about how the students were behaving and why they were behaving as they were, but rather attempt to look at the instruction and activities from their eyes and seeing the experiences as they saw them. I was a non-participant observer in that I did not participate in any of the reading activities, but observed their behaviors and interactions while taking notes. My role was to learn from the students, not to persuade their opinions of reading or their perceptions of themselves. I did not provide any feedback or encouragement throughout the study, but rather asked questions in an attempt to understand their thoughts. I attempted to follow Peshkin's (2001) recommendation of what he does when he is aware that his subjectivity is interfering:



In short, I felt that I had to identify my subjectivity. I had to monitor myself in order to sense how I was feeling. When I sensed that my feeling were aroused, and thus that my subjectivity has been evoked, I wrote a note on a five-by-eight card, the researchers friend...I preferred to record my sensations I was experiencing then, a matter of personal taste, as is so much of field work procedure. (p. 456)

In order to address my subjectivity during observations, I included a side column where I wrote down my feelings and/or personal thoughts along with what was actually taking place. This way, when I analyzed the data and I was away from the direct situation, I could assess my feelings at the time and attempt to separate them from what I observed.

### **Research Design**

Within the qualitative research perspective, I used a case study design. Case study research generally answers one or more questions that begin with *how* or *why*. Researchers use the case study method for description and explanation as well as exploration. Researchers most often use this approach when he/she has no control over the studied behaviors, such as behaviors of children (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1988) described a case study as a research design that is non-experimental and very descriptive. A critical characteristic of case study research is that it is a study of a bounded system. The bounded system could be a child, a teacher, or a classroom (Barone, 2011; Yin, 2009). The bounded system in my design was three individual children who met set criteria that classified him/her as a struggling reader in their academic setting.

Patton (2002) discussed the need for purposeful sampling in case study research. Further, he highlighted the importance of selecting of “information-rich cases” (p. 46), in which the researcher can learn a great deal from about the specific research question and/or topic. I selected three third-grade students, as I perceived them as being “information-rich” cases that

were accessible and available for participation in this study. I viewed them as being information-rich because they could shed insight into the daily experiences and realities of being a struggling reader because that was their educational reality.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding rather than probability sampling that purports to be generalizable (Patton, 2002). Thus, the case study design informed my research questions because it allowed me to purposefully choose a small selection of information-rich cases to gain a deeper understanding of the broad phenomenon of struggling readers, which is a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context (Yin, 2009). Specifically, these three cases provided insight into how struggling readers may view themselves as readers and experience reading instruction in their classroom setting and provoked thought about some of our current reading instructional practices.

### **Setting and Participants**

I conducted the study at JMW (pseudonym) Elementary School located in a small Midwestern town. I am currently the third-grade Title I teacher at this school, which provided me access to the site, along with access to the Title I class list and assessment scores to help select the participants. An administration consent form provided me with permission to use the class lists and student assessments for the purposes of recruiting the participants and conducting the study. I also received classroom teacher consent, parent consent, and student assent before I began the study. In addition, to prohibit any feelings of pressure on the students' part, my dissertation advisor was the one that introduced the study to the students and received their assent rather than myself. Further, my Title I interactions with the students did not affect their classroom reading grades.

I interacted with the Title 1 students for thirty minutes each day, so I had already established a positive rapport with the potential participants and I was aware of their strengths and weaknesses as readers which assisted in the selection process. The setting for this study was in their homeroom classroom, which during this time my role was a non-participant observer, rather than the role of their teacher. That is, I limited my interactions with the participants by not offering guidance, instruction, or encouragement. Rather, I simply watched the participants and wrote down my observations to better understand how they were experiencing the instruction and perceiving the reading activities. During the reading conversations, I asked questions to understand their thoughts and again did not offer any suggestions or feedback.

In accordance with the RTI model (IDEA, 2004) JMW elementary school conducted school-wide assessments three times a year on reading fluency rate through ISteep, a progress monitoring assessment system. The fluency assessments were grade-level probes that students read for one minute; then their correct words per minute were calculated to determine a snapshot of their reading rate. Once all of the students completed the assessments, classroom teachers inputted their scores into the assessment program. This assessment program ranked reading test scores by grade, from the highest scoring percentage to the lowest scoring percentage; with the lowest 16% of the grade level being targeted for interventions. Although there are many characteristics of a struggling reader, for the purposes of this study, I selected participants considered low in the context of his or her grade level by falling within the lowest 16% range on the grade-level assessment. In addition, I selected students considered universally low by demonstrating he/she was reading below grade level on the STAR testing. STAR testing is a computer-based assessment system that, depending on students' correct answers, provides a report determining their reading grade-level equivalence. Further, the potential participants were

students identified as having a need for intensive reading instruction and were currently receiving reading interventions in a Title I reading class. Additional criteria for potential participant selection were teacher recommendations and no noted behavior problems. Since behavioral factors can contribute to the lack of reading growth, I chose students with no noted behavioral problems so discipline issues were not a major influential factor in their learning struggles. In summary, the criteria for the participant selection included students who were: (a) within the lowest 16% on the grade-level reading rate testing, (b) below third-grade reading level on the STAR test, (c) currently receiving Title I reading services, (d) without noted behavior problems, (e) recommended by teachers as good candidates for the study, (f) not demonstrating growth in the Title I reading class (progress monitoring assisted with this decision), and (g) not receiving any special educational services. There were approximately eight students that met the above criteria in the third grade. In order to observe students in a similar classroom setting and gain insight into struggling readers' experiences when receiving the same instruction, I selected three students in the same third-grade classroom. The three students and their parents provided the necessary permission to participate in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Yin (2009) described that one way to determine the quality of case study research is with the use of multiple sources of evidence. Likewise, Denzin (1989) discussed the importance of triangulating, or using multiple methods to gather the data, to strengthen a study. He explained, "By combining methods... in the same study, observers can partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigator or one method" (p. 319). Patton (2002) posited, "By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings" (p. 306). Further, Merriam (1988)

suggested that credibility for a case study comes from the amount of time at your research site collecting data. Data were collected from January 2012 through May 2012. Data sources included: (a) documents, (b) affective reading measures, (c) participant and teacher interviews, and (d) classroom observations.

**Documents.** For each participant, I collected both student-generated documents and school records or existing documents, related to their school reading experiences. If the students were assigned class work while I was observing, I collected copies of their work samples. In addition, students were asked to generate work as part of the study. Similar to Chapman, Greenfield, and Rinaldi (2010) and Pflaum and Bishop (2004), students participated in student drawings, as these drawings can serve as a window of perceptions. Students responded to the following prompts: (a) Draw a time when you were not engaged in a reading lesson or what is it that you like the least about reading time? and (b) Draw a time when you were engaged with the lesson or what is your favorite time about a reading lesson? (adapted from Pflaum & Bishop's prompts, 2004). We did have a conversation about the meaning of the words engaged, most, and least from the prompt. Students were reassured that the interest was in their thinking, not their artistry. For each participant, I also collected school records, which included their reading grades and scores from their RTI progress monitoring, which were administered every two weeks.

**Affective Measures.** In order to gain knowledge and insight into the constructs of the students' reading self-efficacy, I administered: (a) The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990) to measure the students' attitudes toward reading, (b) The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP; Gambrell et al., 1996) to measure the students' reading motivation, and (c) The Reader Self Perception Scale (RSPS; Henk and Melnick, 1995) to measure self-perceptions or self-efficacy that is specific to the dimension of reading. I

administered each assessment one-on-one with all three students in a quiet location. The ERAS was administered in early January as one of my first data sources. The other two assessments were administered in early February approximately one week apart. Each assessment was administered in its entirety with follow-up questions reserved for another session rather than asked throughout the assessment.

*Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.* The ERAS consists of 40 questions that measure students' attitudes toward recreational reading and academic reading. Each item begins with: *How do you feel....* and the students respond by circling a pictorial representation of their feelings. The representations are pictures of the Garfield comic strip character with his expressions ranging from very happy to very upset. McKenna and Kear (1990) established reliability and validity for the instrument using a stratified national sample of 18, 138 U.S. children in Grades 1-6. The researchers drew the participants from 95 school districts in 38 U.S. states. Their sample included only five more boys than girls, and the ethnic distribution of the sample approximated the U.S. population at that time. The proportion of African Americans (9.5%) was within the 3% of the national populations and the proportion of Hispanics (6.2%) was within 2%. In terms of reliability, Cronbach's alpha, a statistic developed primarily to measure the internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951), was calculated at each grade level (1-6) for both of the subscales (recreational and academic) and for the composite score. With the exceptions of the recreational subscale at Grades 1 and 2, coefficients were .80 or higher.

McKenna and Kear (1990) used multiple techniques to establish the instrument's construct validity. For the recreational subscale, they examined differences in scores as predicted by outside variable (e.g., library cardholders, checked out library book, and television watching). McKenna and Kear found statistically significant differences in the predicted direction in all

three comparisons. Similarly, for the academic subscale they analyzed the relationship of scores with the predicted outside variable of reading ability, in which they found significant differences. A second technique they used in establishing construct validity was to examine the relationship between the two subscales. The inter-subscale correlation coefficient was .64, with just 41% of the variation in one set of scores accounted for by the other set of scores. Accordingly, the authors reported that although the two subscales were related, they also reflected dissimilar factors, which was the desired outcome. They also conducted two factor analyses. The first analysis, using an eigenvalue greater than one, resulted in three factors. However, nine of the ten items on the academic subscale loaded together as did seven of the ten items on the recreational scale. In the second analysis, using a two-factor limit, the 10 items on the academic scale loaded together and 9 of the 10 items in the recreational scale loaded together. Taken together, the findings from the three different analyses support the claim that the two subscales reflected discrete aspects of reading attitude.

***Motivation to Read Profile.*** The MRP combines quantitative and qualitative approaches for assessing two components of motivation suggested by the motivational theory: self-concept and task value. The instrument consists of two main sections: the Reading Survey and the Conversational Interview. On the Reading Survey portion, there are 20 items (i.e., 10 for self concept as a reader and 10 for value of reading) and it uses a four point response scale. The Conversational Interview consists of three sections: (a) three questions that probe motivational factors related to the reading of narrative text, (b) three questions that elicits information about information reading, and (c) eight questions that are general factors related to reading motivation.

Gambrell et al. (1996) took numerous steps to ensure both portions of the test's validity. An initial pool of survey items was developed for the Reading Survey portion. Three experienced classroom teachers, who were also graduate students in reading, evaluated over 100 items for their construct validity in assessing students' value of reading or self-concept. The authors compiled the questions that received 100% agreement among the three graduate students. In addition, four classroom teachers then sorted the agreed upon items into three categories: measures self-concept, measures value of reading, not sure or questionable. The final version included the items that received 100% trait agreement. This version was administered to 330 third- and fifth-grade students. Factor analyses using the unweighted least square method and a varimax rotation was conducted to determine whether the traits measured by the Reading Survey (reading self-concept and value of reading) corresponded to the two subscales. Only items that loaded cleanly on the two traits were included in the final measure. Further, Cronbach's (1951) alpha statistic was calculated to assess the internal consistency and each subscale received a moderately high reliability (self-concept = .75; value = .82). In addition, pre- and posttest reliability coefficients were calculated for the subscales (self-concept = .68; value = .70), which confirmed the moderately high reliability of the Reading Survey portion of the instrument.

In regard to the Conversational Interview portion of the instrument, approximately 60 open-ended questions were in the initial pool of interview items. These items were field-tested with a stratified random sample of 24 third graders and 24 fifth graders ranked by classroom teachers in regard to their reading ability and motivational level (highly motivated readers and least motivated readers). Two graduate students, who were former classroom teachers, analyzed the 48 student protocols and selected 14 questions that revealed the most insightful information about the students' reading motivation. These 14 questions comprise the final version of the



Conversational Interview portion of the instrument (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996).

The researchers took additional measures to ensure validity of the final version of the MRP. When two independent raters compared the responses on both the survey and interview portion, there was an interrater agreement of .87. Further, there was supporting information in the interview responses for approximately 70% of the information from the survey instrument. This data supports the notion that the students responded consistently on the MRP. Hence, the Motivation to Read Profile offers a valid and reliable tool for educators and researchers to explore reading motivation.

***Reader Self Perception Scale.*** Henk and Melnick (1995) developed an instrument to measure self-perceptions or self-efficacy that is specific to the dimension of reading. Their instrument measures how children feel about themselves as readers. The RSPS incorporates the notion that reading is socially situated and is influenced by others. Thus, the scale includes questions that measure how students feel that others perceive their reading abilities. The RSPS is based on Bandura's (1977, 1982) theory of perceived self-efficacy. Henk and Melnick utilized the self-efficacy model, (Bandura, 1977,1982; Schunk, 1985) which suggests that children use the following four factors to make reader self-perception judgments: Progress (how one's perception of present reading performance compares with past performance), Observational Comparison (how a child perceives his or her reading performance compared with the performance of classmates), Social Feedback (direct or indirect input about reading from teachers, classmates, and people in the child's family), and Physiological States (internal feelings that the child experiences during reading).

The RSPS consists of 1 general item and 32 subsequent items that represent the four factors. The statements address overall reading ability as well as components of word recognition, word analysis, fluency, and comprehension. To establish validity of the instrument, it was administered to 625 students. Based on the initial pilot data, the authors made revisions and then administered the instrument to an additional 1,479 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students in a variety of school districts. Additional reliability analyses indicated scale alphas ranging from .81 to .84 with all items contributing to the overall scale reliability (Progress .84, Observation Comparison, .82, Social Feedback, .81, and Physiological States .84). Moreover, the mean scores and standard deviations for each scale were extremely similar across grade levels, and the corresponding standard errors were low, as desired.

**Interviews.** Informal interviews, which I refer to as reading conversations (Nes Ferrara, 2005) were used to gather information about how the students experienced their reading instruction. In respect of the students' instructional time and their free time (e.g., lunch recess, snack time) the conversations were conducted over small periods of time. For instance, the participants willingly came in during part of their lunch recess to share their thoughts. Rather than them miss their entire recess, if there were still ideas we needed to discuss, I brought us to a logical stopping point and the conversation would be extended until the next time we could meet.

In these conversations, I explored the participants' personal reading experiences by asking questions that focused on perceptions, feelings, personal reading history, future reading expectations, and experiences with the classroom reading instruction. Some reading conversations took place in response to student drawings (see document section), in response to questions from the administered affective assessments, and others took place after classroom observations. Directly after the students produced their drawings, in the same interview session,

I asked them to explain what they drew and asked additional clarification questions to understand their thoughts. After I administered each affective assessment, I analyzed the scores and answers to look for patterns of stronger feelings in particular areas. This type of analysis guided my thought process in what follow-up questions I selected to ask for each student to further explain his/her thoughts on the three different assessments (e.g., Follow-up for #7 from the RSPS - Why don't (or do) you think your classmates like to listen to you read?). After classroom observation sessions, I had a reading conversation with the students about aspects of the lesson they perceived as hard or easy, boring or engaging, confusing, and so forth to gain insight into their perceptions of the instruction. These conversations either took place a few minutes in the hallway right after the lesson when the other students were taking a restroom break or getting out snacks, or later during the day for a few minutes of their lunch recess. I discussed the students' thoughts with them individually so only their thoughts, ideas, and perceptions would be shared with me and not influenced by the other participants. Additional informal interview questions were questions similar to the Burke Reading Interview questions (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987). I did not follow the format of the Burke instrument or utilize it as an entire instrument. To do so would have been redundant as some of the questions we had already addressed as a result of discussing the other affective instruments. However, I did ask some of the questions as they fit the topic of our discussions to bring about new information in other reading conversations.

I also interviewed the classroom teacher to gain her perspectives on how she perceived the students' understanding and/or interactions during classroom instruction along with her perceptions of the three students as readers (see Appendix B).

**Observations.** Another portion of my data came from observing the students during their reading instructional time. I documented everything I could about the students and how they interacted, behaved, and responded so I could later analyze their behaviors and interactions with their teacher, peers, and environment. While I observed the broad spectrum of the events taking place in the classroom, my focus was on the students and how they responded to the instruction, interacted with their peers, teacher, and materials, and spent their reading instruction time. I noted aspects such as their time on task, their body language, and their involvement during the lesson. Some observations had a specific focus or direction based on conversations or answers the students gave on the affective measures. For instance, all three students shared their dislike and discomfort with reading aloud. So during activities where the students were instructed to read orally, I would pay special attention to their behaviors, interactions, and body language to see if they were consistent with the verbal information they shared with me during our reading conversations. With all three students in one classroom, I was able to observe all of them during each observation. I observed the three participants on a weekly basis for at least one hour per week. The 60-minute time structure for reading in the classroom varied, with 3 reading lessons for 20 minutes each, 2 reading lessons for 30 minutes, or a full hour of a longer reading activities. The minimum observation time for each week was one hour, but if my schedule allowed, which it did most weeks, I spent more than an hour per week. The teacher was very flexible with her scheduling. If I had a canceled class and knew I was able to spend more time observing, but it was at a different time during the day, she would simply swap her subjects and teach reading while I was visiting. This flexible scheduling did not seem unusual to the students, as the classroom teacher made other scheduling changes as needed. For example, if the students

had an assembly, took longer on an activity than planned, or had a longer computer lab time, she would just switch the schedule as needed.

### **Data Analysis**

All of the interviews and reading conversations were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I included as much non-verbal communications as possible in the transcription. I also transcribed all of the interviews myself because as Patton (2002) suggested, it “provides an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights” (p. 441). The participants were given pseudonyms, and they were identified by their pseudonyms across all data sources.

Data were analyzed for each of the three cases separately using Boeije’s (2010) Spiral of Analysis model. This model is cyclical in nature. Boeije refers to the role of analysis as the *input* of analysis and the temporary results of the research as the *output* of the analysis. As represented in this model, and suggested by qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) I analyzed data while simultaneously collecting data. In addition, in the final level of analysis, I analyzed the data for each case holistically.

Boeije refers to the role of the analytical activities of the researcher, the integration of data collection with data analysis, as coding. Coding is essential in data analysis as it is used to segment and reassemble data (Boeije, 2010; Gibbs, 2007). Further, as Gibbs (2007) suggested, “coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about...[it] is a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it” (p. 38).

The Spiral of Analysis model (Boeije, 2010) incorporates three types of coding, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2007), all of which are guided by the principles of constant comparison (Boeije, 2010). That is, each time new data are gathered,

data collection is temporarily on hold. The researcher analyzes the data by comparing new ideas and new codes to previously developed codes. The content of an existing category might change and new codes may form.

***Open Coding.*** My initial round of data included the scores from ERAS, follow up reading conversations about items on the ERAS, field notes from classroom observations, and reading conversations about the observations. The first step of data analysis was to segment these initial data sources from each case into fragments and assign codes, or “a summarizing phrase for a piece of text which expresses the meaning of the fragment” (Boeije, 2010, p 96). Strauss and Corbin defined open coding the process of, “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (p. 61). My open coding began with reading back through everything I had written down and attempting to describe what I saw in basic phrases such as *on* or *off* task. For instance, if I had recorded in my notes that Suzie was looking around rather than writing, I began coding those types of activities as *off task*. I also wrote codes about their body language such as if they were laughing, I simply wrote *positive* next to my comments. I also looked at the transcriptions and began taking notes on their attitudes and perceptions such as if they marked that they did not like to read at home, then I wrote the code of *negative perception of recreation reading*. Hence, the coding was open and broad as I attempted to make sense of my initial observations and my initial readings of the transcriptions. In congruence with this design, I hand-coded or coded relevant text in the margins of a Microsoft Word document (rather than a computer coding program) or in my notebook and assigned a code. I read and re-read the data, asked questions about the data, compared data with data, and assigned codes to meaningful data fragments to create a list of codes of the students’ perceptions and experiences.

***Axial Coding.*** Strauss and Corbin (2007) defined the next stage of coding as axial coding which refers to “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories” (p. 96). As more of an abstract process than open coding, axial coding consists of coding around several single categories or *axes* (Boeije, 2010; Gibbs, 2007). Consistent with the analysis design, while in this phase of continual analysis, I gathered more data where I generated new ideas and materials. My next round of data collection included administering and scoring the RSPS and the MRP and conducting follow-up conversations with the students. The students also participated in the drawings and conversations about the drawings that revealed what they liked the most and least about reading instruction. In the meantime, I continued to conduct classroom observations and analyzed my notes to attempt to place my old data and newly gathered data into codes and select a number of key codes that kept reoccurring. Hence, I compared the codes from the first phase with the new gathered data to see if the original codes were relevant or if there were new ideas / codes.

For example, in this round of analysis, I added the new code *bored*. As I was reading through the new data, I noticed that all three students were using that word, or a variation of the word, repeatedly. Damon’s perspective on reading his reading stories was that they were “boring” and he got tired of “rereading the same stories over” throughout the week. In a conversational interview after an observation on partner reading a story to find a fact and an opinion, Anthony shared that he was “bored because I already read the story.” Suzie selected that she thought that people who read a lot were *boring*, and explained that she thought they were boring because “all they want to do is read.” I then reread the data previously coded to see if *bored* was an idea I didn’t originally notice. I discovered that *bored* was a frequent idea in the data. For example, in explaining his choice on the ERAS about how he felt about starting a new

book, Anthony said, “Um I really like the first book and if it gets boring I go on to another one and I have to keep on reading it and its like boring and I don’t want to have to do this book anymore and I put it back in its place and I am like oh, there we go, a new book and I keep trying till I find one that is not boring.” In recoding, I assigned the code *bored*.

In addition, I attempted to figure out the relationships between the codes and what they meant. In line with the purpose of axial coding, I determined which codes in the data were the dominant ones and which were the less important ones. Then I reduced and reorganized the data within each case by eliminating redundant codes and choosing the best representative code. Moreover, I used these codes to assess what area of data need I needed to collect to explain or understand gaps in how the students perceive themselves as readers and experience reading instruction (Boeije, 2010; Gibbs, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 2007). I began taking key words and placing them into categories. For example, for Anthony’s case, my simple phrases of *off task*, and *boring* became categories with specific codes under the categories that I was beginning to observe or read in my transcripts. Some example *categories*, and codes within, are as follows: *feelings* – negative (frustrated, bored, anxious, pressure), positive (enjoyment, content, comfortable, fun); *engagement* - off task (talking, playing, out of seat, other) on task (reading, writing, listening, other); *meaning and definitions* – (words, understanding, fun, work, and other); and *body language* – tapping (pencil, hands, feet), facial gestures (smiling, frowning, other (describe)). I used these codes and others to make sense of his behaviors in the classroom and classify his thoughts that he shared through our reading conversations. Additional codes were combined to create categories for all three students.

***Selective Coding.*** The third type of coding in the Spiral of Analysis model is selective coding. Selective coding is used to integrate the earlier coding efforts by reassembling the data,



also known as synthesizing, structuring, integrating, or recombining the data to answer the research question. Boeije (2010) explained, “Reassembling refers to looking for patterns, searching for relationships between the distinguished parts, and finding explanations for what is observed (p. 76). Further, it “requires continuous consideration of the data, of the evolving relationships between the categories, and of the credibility of those relationships” (p.79). I looked for connections between the categories in order to make sense of how the students perceived themselves as readers and experienced the reading tasks and processes. I determined core concepts, the relationships between these concepts, interpreted the concepts, and situated them in the existing literature. I analyzed all of the data for each student holistically by highlighting the more dominant categories and codes within those categories (e.g., *meanings and definitions*: hard words) that were weaved throughout the data and discarding weaker or less relevant ones (e.g., *feelings*: positive body language). I then analyzed the categories, and the codes within each category, to look at how they were connected to each other. Based on these connections, I collapsed and combined the data into broader themes. Using Anthony again for an example, I found that the ideas of *feelings* - negative (pressure), *off task* (talking rather than reading), and how he exhibited certain *body language* facial gestures (frowning / scowling) in response to reading with a partner were interconnected through a social dimension. Thus, these codes were collapsed and combined into the theme: *social realm*.

During this analysis, I realized that in some instances I was looking at the data from a teacher’s perspective, which focused more on how they received instruction rather than how they experienced instruction. For example, one of the original themes for Anthony and Suzie was *missed opportunities*, which comprised several codes within the categories of *off-task* and *engagement*. I realized this was my perception of their experiences. That is, as a teacher, I was

observing that students missed out on instructional opportunities. However, as a researcher, I had to step back to reassemble and analyze the data from the lenses of the students. That is, I attempted to focus on their words and language rather than my own. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) proposed that language mediates experiences, transforming the mental functions of reading. Social constructivist theory argues that while thinking and speaking are separate functions, they are tightly interrelated in a dialectic unity where speech completes privately initiated thoughts. By listening to the students' words, it was my attempt to capture their inner thoughts about their experiences. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) also suggested that words and their personal meanings emerge from a particular way people organize words in mediating their mental activities. Therefore, as the students discussed their experiences during interviews, I made the attempt to listen to their language to capture their thoughts to determine their interior reading processes and schemas. Hence I shifted my focus by framing the codes and results using their words, rather than mine, to portray their experiences and realities.

Following are examples of how I restructured my thoughts and analysis to use their voices to capture their experiences rather than adult language and interpretation. In my first analysis, a theme within the selective coding for Suzie was that *third-grade work was overwhelming for her*, which derived from combining and collapsing codes such as: hard words, length of stories, and length of assignments. However, the idea that third-grade work was overwhelming for her reflected my interpretation of what Suzie articulated. Thus, in the final selective coding, I reexamined the themes by listening to their voices, thinking about what the students were telling me, and I attempted to truly capture *their* perceptions, voices, and thoughts. For Suzie, the theme of *third-grade work was overwhelming for her* shifted to her voice, "It's too hard!" Similarly, for Anthony, instead of focusing on what he wasn't doing, I contextualized

codes within the categories of *off-task* and *engagement* with what he was saying (e.g., “hard words, figuring out words, decoding words, trying to read words, and dislike of reading aloud due to words”) and from Anthony’s perspective, it seemed that *Reading was About Words* and that *Words are Difficult*.

After completing the individual case analyses, I began the cross case analysis. Similar to the selective coding, I read and analyzed the three cases, while thinking about the connectedness of the themes within each case. The perspective that, *reading meant hard words* was one that all three of students shared. Yet, while it was a commonality, the ways in which they perceived the idea of *hard words* varied. The other themes within the cross case analysis reflect the *internal struggles* that the students experienced during reading and a heightened *sensitivity to the social*. Again, these themes reflect a commonality in how the students experienced the instruction, yet the types of internal struggles (e.g., pressure, rushed, shy) varied within each case and the ways they demonstrated an awareness or sensitivity to the social world around them varied (e.g., fear of reading aloud, worry over other students’ perspectives, comparison of reading grades). Consequently, the intent in the cross case analysis was to capture the commonalities of how the struggling readers perceived themselves and their experiences. In turn, their experiences were situated in existing literature and framed in implications of what we can learn from these three students.

### **Limitations**

It was my intent to capture the voices and experiences of the struggling readers as they shared their reading perspectives with me through all of the collected data sources. Even though data triangulation took place to strengthen the findings of the students’ perceptions, the perceptions were filtered through another person (myself). At that, the perceptions were filtered

through a classroom teacher, who has distinctive ideas about student behaviors and literacy instruction. While the intent was there to accurately represent another, as Boeije (2010) expressed, “qualitative data are not exact representations of life [reading] experiences” because the researcher has to “effectively communicate what they perceive through language” (p.58). Further, the students are best equipped to reveal their own reading experiences and perceptions. The truth value of participants’ statements during the interview and reading conversations cannot and were not validated. Thus, how participants chose to re-construct their experiences in the interview portion was part of the interpretation (Randall & Phoenix, 2009).

Although there were benefits for studying students that were in my building that I interacted with daily, there were also some limitations. I knew the implemented professional development and understood many of the rationales for the implemented instruction. Thus, although I cautioned against it, along with this recognition, also came some assumptions from teacher interviews that would not necessarily happen in other research locations.

The teacher/student power dynamic may have persuaded the answers the students gave on their assessments and interviews. Although I stressed to the students that there were no right or wrong answers with what they shared, there is a possibility that the students may have responded as they believed I wanted them to, rather than their honest thoughts and opinions. Data triangulation was used to help counteract this limitation.

As with anytime observations take place, the observations themselves may have altered the classroom teacher’s behaviors. Since the classroom teacher was aware of the topic of my study, she may have interacted differently with the struggling readers while I was observing them. However, this limitation cannot be determined because I did not know their interactions without observing them.

Finally, all three students received instruction from one teacher. Hence, what may have been a frustration for these three students, such as missing library time and reading center time, may not be a challenge for other struggling readers in a different classroom, under a different teacher who would restructure the schedule so the students would not miss library time. However, the purpose of this study is not to generalize to all struggling readers, yet gain insights into the perceptions of these three particular students.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

Throughout the study, I conceptualized the students as three separate cases. Thus, I will provide the results in a case study format. Each case contains: (a) a brief description of the participating student and his/her reading assessment scores, (b) how each student viewed himself/herself as a reader based on the affective measures given, and (c) how each student experienced reading instruction in his/her classroom. The final section includes the results of a cross analysis of all three cases. In order to provide insight into the context of the study, I first provide a brief overview of the classroom teacher and the climate and structure of the classroom where the students received their reading instruction. Next, I explain background information on the types of screening that the school used in order to offer insight into the reading scores I provide on each student.

#### **Classroom Context**

Ms. Holman, a sweet-spirited, third-grade teacher with a quiet, gentle voice was in her second year of teaching during the time of this study. Ms. Holman described her class for the year as “a very challenging group.” The class dynamic of approximately 25 students was much different for her than the year before with more lower-ability students and a few behavioral problems. Ms. Holman was very organized, yet flexible, and stayed late after school hours to complete her work.

The bright classroom had a carpeted area lined with large cubbies that contained the students’ school books and notebooks. Along one wall was a row of lockers where the students placed their bags and coats. The students sat at six tables arranged in three groups of two around the classroom. The teacher’s desk was located at the back of the classroom with a teacher

computer hooked up to a Document Camera and to a mounted Multi-Media Projector. Ms. Holman utilized these technological tools in some capacity several times during observations. Along the walls were student artwork and posters of reading and math strategies for the students to refer to throughout the day. The shelves were lined with baskets of books organized according to the Accelerated Reading color. Overall, the classroom was very neat, tidy, and welcoming.

During the majority of Ms. Holman's reading block, there was a regular, structured schedule of whole-group instructional activities that the students followed on a weekly basis. As with all of the third-grade classes, the students participated in the same activities on a weekly basis, but with a different reading story from the Basal series. Ms. Holman described the weekly activities that she implemented in her classroom. On Mondays, they did a variety of activities to introduce the new vocabulary words for the week such as make vocabulary cards, cut and sort the words, or just go over the list and take them home to study. After the vocabulary work, they either listened to the story on a tape or Ms. Holman read the story out loud. She stressed that she read it to them or they heard for the first time without them actually reading it by themselves. On Tuesdays, they usually read it out loud as a group, listened to it on tape, or read it with a partner. On Wednesdays, they did activities for the skill of the week that came from the reading series. Then they would read the story with a partner again. Every Thursday they had a vocabulary quiz after they reviewed the words out loud together as a class. Depending on the schedule for the week, they would also complete comprehension questions or a comprehension scavenger hunt either on Wednesday or Thursday. Every Friday, the students would complete their reading test over the story of the week. They had the option of using their reading books to assist with answering the questions (Interview Transcription with Teacher).

Another component to Ms. Holman's reading instructional time was her guided reading/center block. During this time, Ms. Holman conducted guided reading sessions with one group while the rest of the class was split into small groups participating in literacy stations (e.g., readers' notebooks, partner story writing, magnetic letters, and basket reading). However, as Ms. Holman explained, "That is all during my lowest students' Title time, so they don't get to experience it that often. Whenever they don't have Title, which doesn't happen very much at all, they can join in, but this is not a daily thing they get to do." Library time was also scheduled for one day a week during the center time. Due to the tight scheduling, the Title I students would occasionally miss library time or get about 5-10 minutes while the rest of the class got approximately 30 minutes (teacher interview). All three students that participated in this study went to a Tutor and Title I instruction for 30 minutes a day. Thus, they missed the reading center time and majority of weekly library time. Further, all observations were conducted during the whole group instructional time since the three students did not experience the guided reading/center time.

### **School Screenings**

The school conducted two reading assessments three times a year. These assessments were referred to as the Universal Screenings since they were administered to each student in kindergarten through fourth grade, varying by grade-level appropriateness. The first assessment was a one-minute fluency probe used to measure how many words the students could accurately read in one minute on a fresh reading passage. The second assessment was a sentence maze taken on the computer where the students had three minutes to read sentences and select which word (out of three words) made the most sense in the sentence. The sentence maze was given to students in grades two through four. In the results of each case, I provide each student's scores



for both assessments from all three screenings along with the suggested grade-level benchmarks. Further, to situate the participants' scores with his/her grade level, the charts show their percentile rank among the entire third grade which consisted of approximately 175 students. The final chart shown for each student is the progress monitoring chart from the Title I instruction. Progress monitoring was conducted approximately every two weeks. These scores represent how many words they accurately read in one minute on a reading probe they have never read before.

### **Anthony Thomas**

Anthony is a white, male third-grade student that participated in this study. His classroom teacher described him as a student who “wants everything to be so fair for everybody.” She offered examples of how he would speak out if he believed that something was not fair for someone in the class. In regard to Ms. Holman’s perspective of his reading abilities, she explained that he usually averaged a B grade in reading because “he has very good comprehension, so he is higher [than the other two participants].” However she continued to express, “He will read very slowly at times and then other times I will see him try to read a little bit faster. I don’t know if he is capable right now of reading as fast as he wants to be reading.” Having had the opportunity to work with Anthony in Title I class, I will provide additional background information concerning his reading abilities. Based on the results of the DRA, Anthony’s reading instructional level was approximately at the beginning of a second-grade reading level. Anthony had difficulty decoding words and he would often say the wrong words. His reading pace was slow. In turn, although he could answer basic literal comprehension questions such as questions relating to the setting or characters, Anthony had difficulties with higher level reading skills such as understanding the main ideas, summarizing, connecting, inferring, drawing conclusions and other third-grade level expectations. When he was asked to

discuss the higher level reading concepts, he would often miss the main ideas and begin discussing movies or other off subject ideas rather than making meaning from the text.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of his reading scores from the Universal Screenings. Anthony's scores demonstrated growth, and that he was within an instructional range on the April assessment. However, he remained in the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and below the end of the year mastery benchmark goal on both measures.

Table 1

*Anthony's Universal Screening Scores*

Assessment	Grade	Date	Score	Mastery Level	Percentile Rank
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	4/25/2012	26	Instructional	25%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	12/5/2011	19	Frustrational	11%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	8/24/2011	15	Frustrational	11%
Class-wide Fluency	Read Third	4/26/2012	83	Instructional	9%
Class-wide Fluency	Read Third	12/8/2011	66	Frustrational	5%
Class-wide Fluency	Read Third	8/25/2011	59	Frustrational	16%

Anthony's progress monitoring reading fluency scores, which were charted monthly through the Title I program, are displayed in Figure 1. His monthly scores were below the goal set for him and he did not reach 120 words per minute benchmark for the end of third grade.

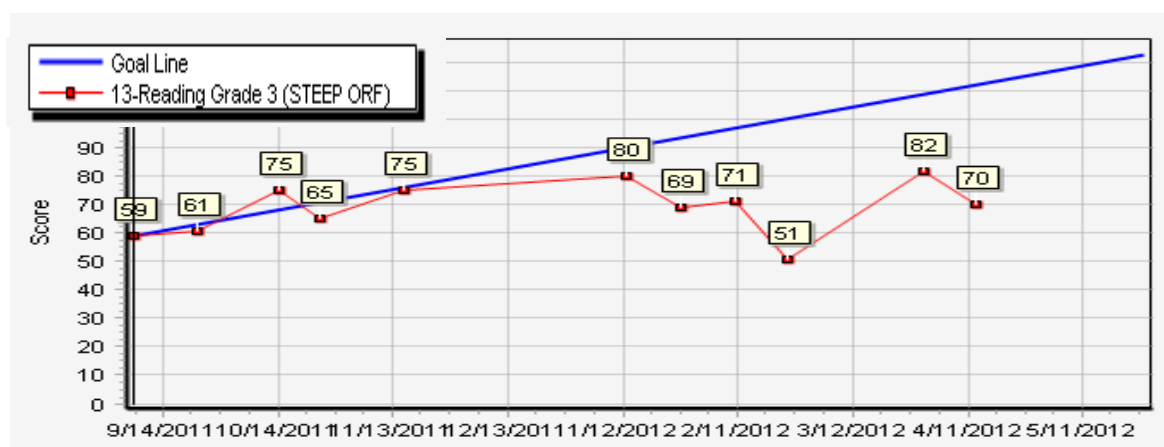


Figure 1. Anthony's Progress Monitoring Scores.

### **Perceptions: Attitude, Motivation, and Self-Perception**

In exploring how Anthony viewed himself as a reader, I analyzed Anthony's data from his Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), and The Reader's Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995).

**Reading Attitude.** When given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Anthony's score placed him in the 34<sup>th</sup> percentile for the third-grade norms. Breaking down the assessment further, Anthony indicated that he preferred academic reading activities over recreational activities. His score for recreational reading placed him in the 21<sup>st</sup> percentile; while his score for academic reading placed him in the 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile. Through conversations, he indicated on multiple occasions that he would rather spend his free time at home doing other activities rather than reading a book. For instance, when discussing why he marked the slightly grumpy Garfield for how he felt about reading for fun at home, he explained he would "rather play video games." When I asked about why he put the grumpiest Garfield on a question that asked how he felt about reading instead of playing, he replied laughing, "I don't want to waste my playing time, I want to play." He further explained that he would "rather go to the pool" than read during summer vacation. Thus, reading was not a recreational activity that Anthony indicated he participated in much on his own free time. However, he did say that he would spend time at home reading "only if I have book log and get pizza tickets." Hence, Anthony seemed more motivated to read at home with external rewards.

Anthony marked the happiest Garfield on three questions out of twenty. The three questions were as follows: (1) *How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?* (2) *How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?* and (3) *How do you feel about stories you read in*

*reading class?* After further questioning, Anthony indicated that he liked to read new books on the topics of fighting, myths, and action books. Anthony also indicated that he enjoyed reading time in school; however, he would still choose to do other activities during his free time in school. He explained that, “[I] make sure we don’t do any other activities, then I will go read a book.” Although he might not choose to read over other activities, when he did have to read, he enjoyed books on topics of his choice. Further, he indicated that he liked reading time in class because “sometimes we have stories that I haven’t read yet and I read them and they are pretty good.” In addition, he explained that, “I like reading a book that’s new every time.”

***Reading Motivation.*** I administered the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) to Anthony. This profile uses 10 items to measure self-concept as a reader, specifically, self-perceived competence and self-perceived performance related to peers. It is also designed to assess the value a student places on reading tasks and activities particularly in terms of frequency of engagement and reading-related activities with 10 items. On the self-concept section Anthony scored 24 out of 40 (60%) and a 26 out of 40 (65%) on the value section. His total combined score was 50 out of 80 (62%). A higher score represents a higher reading self-concept and value placed on reading. Anthony marked answers that suggested that he was not highly motivated to read, yet he is willing to perform the tasks. For example, he marked many neutral answers such as that he is an *ok* reader rather than a *good* reader or *poor* reader. Also, he marked *I think reading is an ok way to spend time* rather than an *interesting* way or a *boring* way. Likewise, *reading a book is something I like to do sometimes* rather than not very often or often. The majority of his answers were neutral such as the examples above.

***Self-Competence.*** Relating to his self-perceived performance, similar to the answers he selected on the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Anthony’s answers indicated that he was aware

of his strengths and weaknesses as a reader. For instance, when I questioned him about why he marked that when he came to a word he doesn't know that he can *sometimes* figure it out, rather than *never* or *all the time*, he replied, "because the words that I don't know that much she doesn't explain, I have to sound it out but it doesn't make sense and so I figure it out hey, I can undo it a little bit, but sometimes they are not doable." Hence, a strategy Anthony was aware of was a phonics-based approach where he attempted to sound out or break apart the word. He recognized that on some words this approach does not work, therefore, he was unable to figure out the word. In regard to his reading comprehension, Anthony marked that when he was reading by himself, he understood *some* of what he read rather than *all* of what he read or *none* of what he read. He gave insight by explaining that "sometimes things don't make sense to me in a story." He continued by giving an example about a story where an evil guy started singing and he didn't "get it" why the guy was singing or what was going on.

When questioned about what kind of a reader he was, he marked *ok* rather than *good* or *very good*. He explained, "I feel that I am a good reader, but sometimes my friends say you're ok." When I asked him if they actually said that aloud to him he replied "yes" and explained, "Some of them say you need to work a little bit on those words that I don't know." However, Anthony also said that he "feels ok" with this because "I do have to work on them." Consequently, even though Anthony felt like he was a good reader, he marked that he was ok because he knew that was how his friends felt about his reading, suggesting that his reading identity was shaped by his friends' perspectives and opinions. He marked that he felt he read about the *same* as his friends rather than *not as well*, or *better*, than his friends. He also marked that he worried about what other kids think about his reading *once in a while* instead of *never* demonstrating that social comparisons to his peers' reading did occur.

*Value.* Anthony was neutral on every value statement; while he did not mark that he placed great value on reading tasks and activities, he did mark that they were of some importance. For instance, he marked that knowing how to read well was *important* instead of *very important* or *sort of important*. Further, Anthony thought reading was an *Ok* way to spend time rather than a *boring* way or an *interesting* way to spend time.

*Conversation Portion.* When we completed the conversation portion of the MRP, Anthony was able to talk and elaborate about books he had been reading and that he wanted to read. Again, he discussed reading books on the topics of fighting, dinosaurs, myths and mythical creatures. He was eager to receive three new books that he had ordered from the book order. However, similar to the results of the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) where Anthony indicated he would rather do other activities at home rather than read, Anthony specified that he had read these books at school, not at home because he had been “playing outside” at home and would rather not take the time to read.

Based on the data, it appeared as though Anthony viewed himself as a competent reader who still had areas of weaknesses that he needed to work on such as how fast he read, figuring out hard words and at times understanding the story. He viewed his skills higher than what he felt his peers viewed his abilities, but this social awareness seemed to influence how he perceived his reading competence. Anthony placed some value on reading and related tasks and activities, but indicated he would rather spend his time doing other activities than reading.

*Reading Self-Perception.* I administered the Reading Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) to Anthony which incorporates the notion that reading is socially situated and is influenced by others. Henk and Melnick (1995) suggested when explaining how to interpret the scores that “...scores that are a good deal lower than the scale’s mean would be a cause for

concern” (p.474) meaning that the low scores would indicate low reader self-perceptions.

Anthony scored below the low cut-off score in the Progress and Physiological States sections.

On the general perception statement of *I think I am a good reader*, Anthony’s score was a 4, indicating he *agreed* with that statement. When Anthony and I discussed this statement, he told me, “I think I am great, but some kids don’t, they don’t know I am a great reader.” When I asked him why they didn’t think he was a good reader, he explained, “because they don’t listen to me...” After further discussion, I asked him to explain why he thought he was a good reader, he responded, “I read to myself sometimes and I think I am great.” I asked Anthony to tell me what he does that was great and he explained, “Sometimes I read a book and if a kid wants to learn a word I tell them in the book and they know it.” In this example, his perceptions again centered on his interactions with others; however, unlike the previous examples, his perception that he was great was connected to being able to help his peers with words.

*Progress.* The low-cut off score for Progress is 34 and Anthony scored a 32. The only *strongly agree* that Anthony marked on the entire scale was that *when he reads he does not have to try as hard as he used to*, which is the first statement in the progress category. He explained, “Well, when I learned how to read, I do a math problem and I have to know how to read the words. I didn’t know like add till I was like learning words and it said add and I am like what does add mean and I said oh, I have to put together this number.” I responded by articulating, “So you know more words than what you used to know,” and he said, “uh huh, exactly.” On most of the other progress questions, Anthony marked a U for *undecided*. For instance, when I asked him why he put a U for the statement *I am getting better at reading*, he clarified, “because I don’t know yet because there are big words that I am still learning.” Similarly, for the statement *when I read, I need less help than I used to*, he said, “well no because sometimes my mom helps

me with some of the words.” Likewise, he said that reading is not easier for him than it used to be and that reading is hard for him “sometimes, when it is different stories or different words.” On both of the statements that related to Anthony figuring out more words than he could before or recognizing more words, he marked that he *agreed* with these statements. It seemed as though Anthony realized he knew more words, yet at the same time, recognized that there were still more hard words to learn, which could explain how he perceived his reading progress as somewhat limited according to the scale.

*Observational Comparison.* The low-cut off for observational comparison is 16 while the average cut-off is 21 and Anthony scored 18. When he was asked if *he read more than his classmates* he replied, “No, I get short books that have fighting and dinosaurs in it” and they get “like chapter books with adventures.” He explained that he tried to get longer chapter books, but they were not as interesting. When he compared his reading rate of words, Anthony scored himself lower, but when it came to understanding what he read, he compared himself equal to the skills of his peers. For instance, on a statement such as *I read faster than other kids*, he marked that he disagreed and explained by stating, “Because kids read faster than me, I take my time with words.” Likewise, on a statement such as *when I read, I can figure out words better than other kids* he first marked *D*, then changed it to *U* and explained, “Not sure because some words are kinda long and I have to sound them out.” Anthony further explained why he chose a *U* for the statement *I seem to know more words than other kids when I read* by clarifying, “No because some kids know and some kids don’t know and I am like between like the middle one that knows some of the words.” On the other hand, when the statement dealt with understanding what he read, Anthony marked that he *agreed* that *I understand what I read as well as other kids do*. Below is the dialogue that took place about this question:



A: I agree because some kids know the same words as me and we are like jinks because we know the same words

W: Ok, what about the stories that you read, do you feel like you understand the stories?

A: Yeah, we read them at the same time

W: So is there ever a time when the stories are confusing or you don't understand them?

A: Yeah, sometimes confusing

W: Can you tell me about those times?

A: Um when my mom gives me a chapter book there are different words and I know the lower words like of and it...

W: Uh huh, but the larger words you are not sure about?

A: Some of them I know the larger words, but on some I have to ask myself what the word is (Transcribed Interview Notes)

*Social Feedback.* The middle cut-off score for social feedback is 33 and the low cut-off score is 27. Anthony scored a 31 which is 2 points below the middle cut-off. In regard to feedback from his family and his teacher, Anthony marked that he *agreed* that they felt *positive* about his reading and reading skills. For instance, on the statements such as *My teacher thinks that I am a good reader*, when I asked Anthony what his teacher does to show she thinks that he remarked, "By saying good words [such as] good job Anthony." He provided similar answers to the statements such as *My teacher thinks my reading is fine* and *My teacher likes to listen to me read*. Likewise, it appeared as though Anthony had a positive perception of how his family felt about his reading. For example, he marked that he *agreed* to statements such as *People in my family think I am a good reader*. However, his comments on the statement were somewhat contradictory:

W: Do you read to your mom and dad?

A: Yeah to my dad

W: Does he ever say anything to you

A: Yeah, sometimes like Anthony you need to work better on that book and I am better at it and he is like work better and I am like are you kidding me?

W: What about your mom?

A: She is ok, dad wants me to do the harder version like get the words down, don't stop at the periods and the commas. I read them slowly, he just says Anthony read faster and in my head I am like uuhhh ok I don't want to make him blow. (Interview Transcription)

Thus, while Anthony may believe that his family thinks he reads fine, his comments suggested that his dad would prefer him to read at a faster pace although it is unclear why his interactions with his dad differed from those with his mom.

In regard to the social feedback from Anthony's peers, he was *unsure* about how they felt about his reading. On every peer related statement such as *My classmates like to listen to me read* or *My classmates think I read pretty well*, he selected the U for undecided. When further questioned, Anthony clarified,

Some of my classmates I know [like to listen to me read], but I don't think the other classmates want to listen to me read...because most of them are like, want to listen to me read, and they are like see you later Anthony and I go to the next person and ask if they want to listen to me read and only my friends want to listen to me read. (Interview transcription)

Hence, it appeared as though Anthony did not receive much reassuring feedback from his peers in regard to his reading abilities and strengths. However, he felt positive about the social feedback from his classroom teacher, mom, and friends.

*Physiological States.* Anthony scored 23 in this section which is below the low cut-off score of 25. Anthony experienced some internal struggles and uncomfortable feelings when it came to reading, especially when reading aloud. The only *strongly disagree* that he marked on the entire scale was in response to the statement, *I like to read aloud*. Anthony illustrated his internal struggle by sharing how he felt when asked to read aloud, “Nervously, don’t want to. I read aloud like once yesterday and I was like nervous and I was like do not shake Anthony, do not stop on words. Sometimes I had to stop on words to rethink them again, I get all nervous and sweaty... [laughing] but I keep my sweat to myself.” Clearly, Anthony felt pressure when he was reading aloud not to make mistakes, enough that his body had the physical responses of perspiring and shaking.

On statements that related to how Anthony felt about reading, he marked a *U* on each of them with the exception of if he felt calm and he marked he *agreed* but explained that was as long as he was not reading in front of anyone. On the statement, *I feel good inside when I read*, Anthony articulated, “I am not sure I don’t feel it because sometimes I am like this is interesting and sometimes I am like this is boring.” With further explanation, he clarified that it depended on the topic. If it was a topic of interest, such as fighting, then he felt good inside. He had a similar response to *if reading made him feel happy*, some stories did while others did not. He did not like sad stories or stories that ended badly.

## **Reading Instruction Experiences**

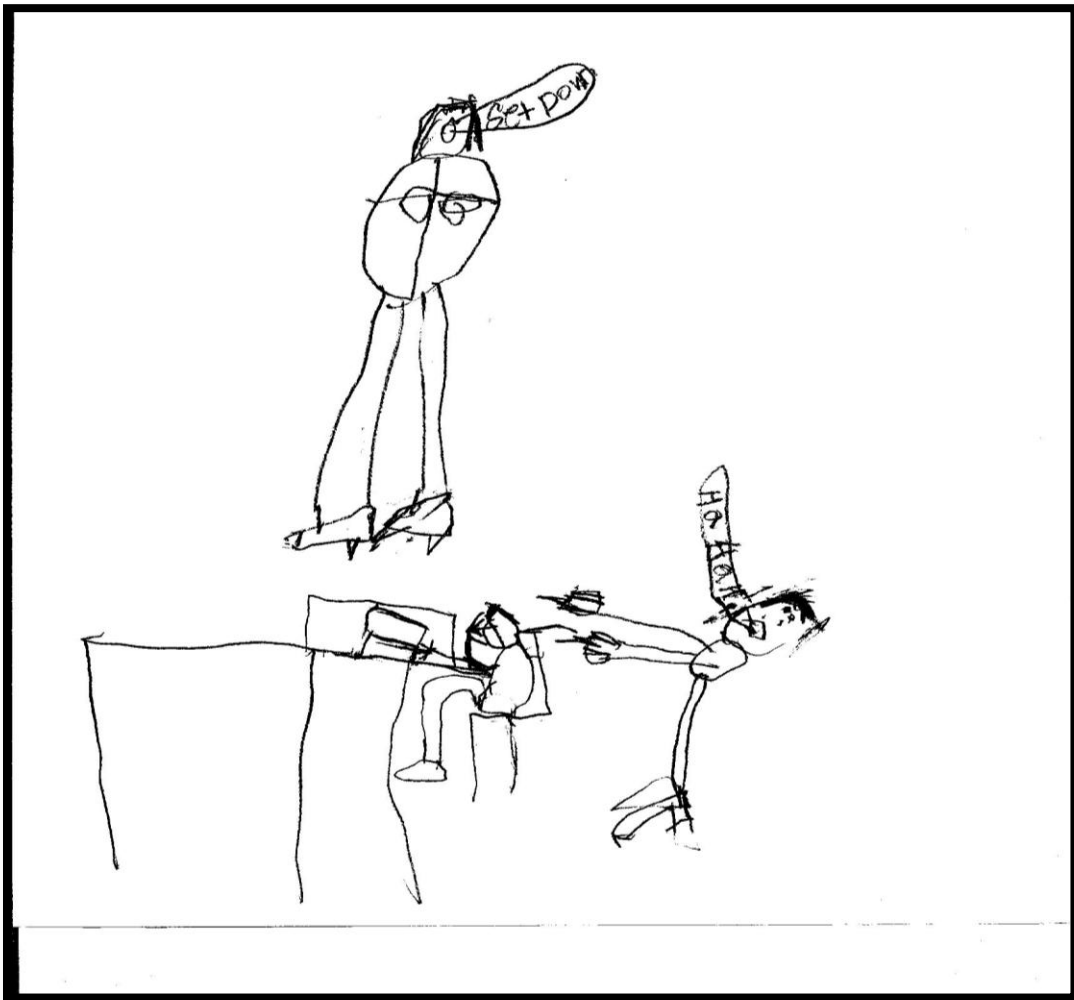
In an attempt to gain an understanding of how Anthony experienced reading instruction in his classroom, based on all sources of my data, three aspects of how he viewed reading instruction were continually prevalent. From Anthony Thomas' perspective: (a) reading was pressure (b) reading meant difficult words, and (c) reading instruction was boring.

### **Reading is Pressure**

One aspect of how Anthony experienced reading instruction seemed to be the amount of pressure that he continually appeared to feel. Anthony's slower reading pace seemed to influence how he experienced reading and reading instruction. The slower reading pace appeared to affect the amount of time that it took Anthony to complete his school work in class. Ms. Holman explained her perspective by stating, "Anthony will do all of the work, but he is a little bit slower at it, he gets distracted a little bit...but he will still get the work done and he usually gets the work done well." Further she described, "Anthony requires extra time [on assignments], but he doesn't require any help from me, he just requires extra time on the assignments." When I observed a fact and opinion lesson, students were instructed to write a fact and an opinion on an index card and tape it on the white board in front of the classroom. Once they were finished they were supposed to sit on the carpet and wait until everyone was finished. After about ten minutes, Anthony was the only student left sitting at the tables, everyone else was on the carpet. I noticed as he watched people get up from their seats, he began tapping his leg in a nervous manner as if under pressure as he was realizing he was the only one not done with the activity. Finally, the classroom teacher bent down and talked with him then he took his cards up to the board (Observation Notes). Ms. Holman explained that he asked for help on how to spell some words. During other observations, there were similar

situations where Anthony was the last one completing an assignment or a task, especially when it involved writing.

During one of our reading conversations, I asked Anthony to respond to the following prompt adapted from Pflaum and Bishop (2004): Draw a time when you were not engaged in a reading lesson or what is it that you like the least about reading time? Anthony drew the scene in Figure 2 representing a student in his class laughing at him because he did not have his work completed when other students did.



*Figure 2.* Anthony's Drawing of What he Likes Least in Reading Class.

Anthony expressed, “I don’t get my work done sometimes because he is laughing at me and doing this and writing at the same time, but it is hard to see like this (with his hands over his face)...the teacher yells sit down but he keeps on laughing, she has to get in front of him and yell at him.” Anthony shared that it takes him longer to get his work done than others and while attempting to complete his, it seems he is aware that others are getting done faster because he said, “I seen them reading their books or their folders are gone.” Thus, he noticed what was taking place around him while he was attempting to finish his work, which seemed to cause additional pressure. Anthony’s perception of why it took him longer was “because I write longer, like the whole sentence and do it better to erase some of the bad stuff and do it good.” He also acknowledged that some of the words were difficult to read and it took him longer because he was trying to figure them out. Anthony’s drawing indicated that other students were aware that he was often the last one finished with the assignments and this brought on some teasing and pressure by others in his class.

Along with feeling pressure to complete his work in a timely manner, Anthony also indicated many times throughout the study how uncomfortable he was with reading text aloud in front of his peers. Even though Ms. Holman stated from her perspective that, “he doesn’t seem so shy like the other two [participants in the study] about reading aloud,” Anthony indicated that he would rather not. Ms. Holman clarified that students rarely had to read out loud in front of the class by themselves unless they chose to or if they were presenting a project. When the students read aloud, they either read with other students or by themselves to the teacher only (Interview Transcriptions). During our reading conversation about the questions on the ERAS, I asked Anthony how he felt when he read out loud in class. Similar to other responses he had about reading aloud, he described, “Nervous...because I get stage fright...like a whole entire

crowd of singing that's not getting me nervous, only if I am reading aloud I get all sweaty...because I have a book and sometimes when I get nervous I sweat and my hands get sweaty and I look up at everybody and then I look down and then I am like yeah (making a scared face)." He further clarified that he has a hard time on the words in front of a crowd and he would never volunteer to read out loud, but he would volunteer to do other things like run an errand. He also confirmed that Ms. Holman never calls on him to read out loud by himself and "that's a good thing." After observing a lesson where Ms. Holman guided the students in choral reading activities, I asked Anthony how he felt about reading together as a whole class and he replied, "good, because no one was looking at me." When asked if he would rather read out loud with a partner or read in his head he responded, "read in my head...because I read in my head fast so I be quicker done." Anthony shared that he was even nervous about reading in front of his class when he had time to practice the script beforehand on projects such as a state report where he had to share the facts with his classmates.

Partner reading was an approach that was regularly implemented in the classroom. When Anthony and I were discussing a statement on the RSPS (Henk & Melnick, 1995) about why he felt some kids did not listen to him read he clarified, "because they have their own partners and sometimes we change partners and the teacher gives me a different partner every time but it is the same two people and we get to choose and I pick just the two people and that's it." I responded by asking, "So do you choose the two people in the classroom that are your friends to read with?" Anthony followed with, "yeah, but when I say to a person they say no and then they say yes, but they walk away." Consequently, there appeared to be pressure for Anthony even when attempting to select a reading partner.

On the MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996) Anthony was asked that if when he was in a group talking about stories if he talked about his ideas, and he marked *sometimes*. When further questioned about this, he replied, “because it is hard to think about them, I can’t think about them and the next thing I know – raise my hand – teacher calls on them and I have to listen to it and it is correct.” When I asked him if he thought that it took a little while longer to answer some of the questions than it did the other students, he said “yeah” and it took him a little while to think through them. Hence, Anthony was still processing the question and answer when it was time to go to the next question creating a sense of pressure even when attempting to process the discussions.

During another conversation, Anthony explained what he liked doing the most out of all the reading activities was “when you get to sit down and everything is quiet and you get to read in your head and it is quiet.” From my perspective, I would say that Anthony enjoys this time because there is limited pressure and he is not expect to perform, but simply enjoy reading the story by himself.

### **Word, Words, Words**

When attempting to understand how Anthony experienced reading instruction, it appeared that Anthony equated reading to figuring out words. How fast to read the words, that he did not know certain words, he needed to know more words to be a better reader, and other ideas about how he felt about words reoccurred over and over during our reading conversations. During one particular reading conversation, when I asked Anthony to describe someone who was a really good reader, he replied, “uhh they’d help me on words...good at writing stories... because they can know the words and write them down and they can read it out without messing up.” Anthony viewed a good reader as someone who could quickly spell, write, and read the

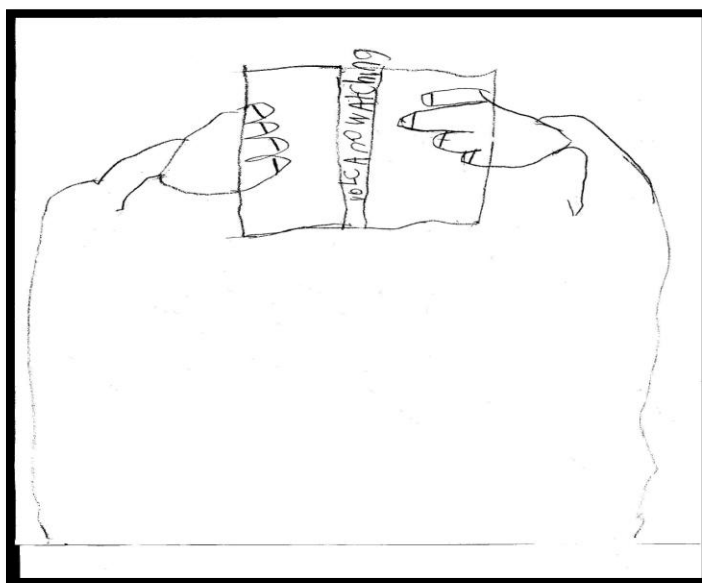


words. When Anthony was asked what activity that he would rather not do, he replied, “I would rather not do writing...you write and then you lose interest of writing stuff and ahhhh.” When I asked Anthony to describe an area that he would like to be better at reading he explained, “[I would] read medium so you don’t mess up, if I go medium I know the words already.” I asked if he wanted to do this so he could read faster, and he responded, “yeah, but if I hit the fast mark then I mess up on words and lose my spot, I skip lines when I read fast... I am like that is jumping.” When asked about losing his spot, he clarified, “sometimes, but I find it easy when I read back slow.” He further explained that when he read fast, it did not matter if he was reading in his head or out loud, he would still skip lines and “some words I mess up when I go fast in my head and read out loud fast.”

After an observation of Anthony taking a reading assessment, I had a follow-up conversation with him about his thoughts. We discussed how he liked that Ms. Holman read the test aloud to the entire class. Rather than the students completing the test independently, Ms. Holman would place the test under the document camera so it was in front of the class. She proceeded to read aloud the question and the answer choices to the entire class. Ms. Holman articulated she did this “as part of a modification for a few students and the other students were not taking their time so this approach makes them slow down and helps others keep with the pace...I read those aloud...otherwise we would have a lot of hands in the air asking what the words say.” While providing his answer of why he liked her approach, it came down to the difficulty of the words on the test and how Anthony said he would have a hard time reading them on his own because “they’re like strange, some of the words I haven’t learned yet so they are hard.” During the conversation about the reading assessment, it was not a discussion about how that approach helped him understand the questions better, but it again came back to the words on

the test and how he needed help with reading them. In a follow-up reading conversation with Anthony he explained that he liked how she read the tests aloud because “if she doesn’t done it then I am like ok I don’t know where I am at because I have tons of pages and I am like I don’t know.” Further, he clarified that it was confusing because “I write one down and there are like tons of answers and there’s like tons of them and I read them but I get mixed up because like they are messing around and my eyes are getting like uuhhhh I know the word, but now what’s my questions?” So the four page test format was visually overwhelming for Anthony and he got confused and found the words difficult to read without the accommodation of Ms. Holman reading the test aloud to him.

In order to understand what Anthony liked the best about reading time, he participated in a drawing prompt adapted from Pflaum and Bishop’s (2004) drawing prompts. After a discussion led by Anthony about all of the reading activities he did in his class, he responded by drawing an answer to the following prompt: Draw a time when you were engaged with the lesson. The image in Figure 3 is what Anthony drew.



*Figure 3. Anthony’s Drawing Reading Engagement.*

He explained, “I am sitting down getting ready to read a book and we listen to the author first...if the author reads it first then we learn the words and that gives us a heads of how to read.” He further described, “I drew like me looking in the volcano watch book and it looked pretty cool and that was the end of the story in our reading book...I am picking up the book, getting ready to read it.” Thus, Anthony enjoyed the first time of listening to a new story on tape. However, he did explain that some stories were boring, but this particular one he really liked. Ms. Holman explained that from her perspective, “Anthony is really good at following along with the story, but will sometimes get distracted during it.” When I observed in the classroom, during this instructional time, Anthony had his eyes on the text and turned the pages at the appropriate times so it appeared that he was on task and enjoyed the activity (Observation Notes). However, based on Anthony’s explanation, it seems as though he felt the benefit of this activity was to learn new words and that the author could help him learn the words if he listened to the story read on tape before he had to try to read the words.

On Tuesdays, Ms. Holman would rotate having the students reread the story with a partner or they would participate in choral reading activities where she would have all the girls read a page aloud, then all the boys would read a page, then the red table, and so forth until they had worked through the story. On at least three separate occasions while observing Anthony during the choral reading activities, I made notes that when it was his turn to read he was moving his mouth, but they did not match up with the words in the story that other students were reading aloud (Observation Notes). During one particular observation, he appeared to attempt to read along at times, but the group would read faster than he said the words. Once he finished reading the page that was his turn, he did not turn the page when it was time to, but rather tap his leg or look around. When it rotated back to him and was his turn to read again, he quickly looked

around and flipped to the page he was supposed to read aloud. The rest of the group began without him and he did not read the first few sentences as he was trying to locate the reading place. This happened at least three times during the course of him reading the story (Observation notes). It appeared as though the focus for this activity for Anthony was just to try to read aloud the words that he was assigned to read.

On the Reading Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) there is a section that attempts to gain insights into the reader's perception of his/her progress. When Anthony attempted to explain why he felt like he did not have to try as hard as he used to on reading, I checked for my understanding by articulating, "So you know more words than what you used to know," and he said, "uh huh, exactly." When I asked him why he selected *undecided* for the question *I am getting better at reading*, he clarified, "because I don't know yet because there are big words that I am still learning." Similarly, for the statement *when I read, I need less help than I used to*, he said, "well no because sometimes my mom helps me with some of the words." Likewise, he said that reading is not easier for him than it used to be and that reading is hard for him "sometimes, when it is different stories or different words." Hence, it appeared that to Anthony that progress in becoming a better reader all related to the words.

Anthony was aware that he was a slower reader; he expressed to me, "I take my time and I am like, I like this...I don't want to read faster and I read faster in here" (pointing to his head). When asked if he could read faster if he wanted to, he said that first he would "need to learn the words" and that he read slower because he was figuring out the words. In addition, when questioned about what kind of a reader he was on the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), he marked *ok* rather than *good* or *very good*. He explained, "I feel that I am a good reader, but sometimes my friends say you're ok." When I asked him if

they actually said that aloud to him he replied “yes” and explained, “Some of them say you need to work a little bit on those words that I don’t know.” However, Anthony also said that he “feels ok” with this because “I do have to work on them.” So, it appears as though he equated the kind of reader he was to how well he knew the words and how many words he knew.

### **It’s Boring**

Another aspect of how Anthony experienced reading instruction is he found parts of it to be boring. Common reading practices that Ms. Holman would instruct the students to participate in were to practice reading the story with a partner and rereading the story in their heads.

However, it appeared that Anthony would lose interest very fast in reading the same text multiple times. Anthony explained that he only liked reading the stories once, in fact he articulated, “I like reading a new book every time.” When Anthony was instructed to reread the reading story for the week in his head, he reached into his tub in the middle of the table and pulled out a different book. Ms. Holman asked him to put away his library book and get out his reading hardback book and begin reading (Observation Notes). He did as Ms. Holman requested. Once he found the first page of the story, it appeared he read that page then he began driving his pencils in the air and making driving noises with his mouth (Observation Notes). During observations when he was asked to find a partner and read, I observed similar patterns of behavior. From one set of observation notes I wrote:

Anthony and his partner are arguing over who is supposed to start first. His partner finally just starts reading. Anthony is flipping through the pages of the story rather than listening and following along with his partner while reading. His partner finally taps Anthony on the leg and says “read”. Anthony flipped back through the story until he got on the correct page. He starts reading the page aloud; his partner appears to be listening

to him read. His partner keeps telling Anthony words that he is missing and stumbling over. Anthony finishes reading the page and is now tying his shoe while his partner starts to read. He is still playing with his shoes. (Observation Notes)

Thus, it seemed as though Anthony tended to lose focus as they participated in rereading activities throughout the week. After a particular lesson where he and a partner had to reread the story to find a fact and an opinion, Anthony shared that he was “bored because I already read the story.”

While observing Anthony take a reading test, Anthony tapped his pencils in between the questions and whispered to himself as if he were discussing the answer with himself (Observation Notes). When asked about the test he said, “I don’t like it and I feel boring and I lose my interest.” Although it appeared as though he wasn’t paying attention during the assessment, Ms. Holman assured that Anthony “usually scores higher” on the test when compared to the rest of the class. However, it was a reading activity that he found boring.

On the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) when I asked him about books he had been reading at school, he said, “I don’t have any library books anymore [because] I went to your class [Title I reading].” Anthony explained that he tried reading his friends’ books in the classroom since he did not have his own library book, but he does not read them that much “cause they are not that interesting.” On the ERAS, when asked about how he felt about starting a new book, he marked the slightly grumpy Garfield explaining “Um I really like the first book and if it gets boring I go on to another one and I have to keep on reading it and its like boring and I don’t want to have to do this book anymore and I put it back in its place and I am like oh, there we go, a new book and I keep trying till I find one that is not boring.” Even when selecting his own books, Anthony had to search for the right ones to hold

his interest in reading them. While discussing answers from the RSPS, on the statement, *I feel good inside when I read*, Anthony articulated, “I am not sure, I don’t feel it because sometimes I am like this is interesting and sometimes I am like this is boring.” With further explanation, he clarified that it depended on the topic of the book he was reading. If it was a topic of interest, such as fighting, then he felt good inside. If it was a sad book, he did not like it and others he felt were boring.

### **Suzie Logan**

Suzie is a white, third-grade female student with a shy smile that participated in this study. Ms. Holman expressed her thoughts by sharing, “I think I would just love for her confidence to build because she has different strengths and different abilities to do things, I just think she needs more confidence.” When describing how she saw Suzie socially, Ms. Holman portrayed, “She likes to talk a lot, she likes to be the little mother of the class. She pays a lot of attention to what other people are doing, making sure they are on task, which can sometimes get her off task of what she is doing.” Ms. Holman further explained that, “Suzie works hard, she is a very hard worker. She will ask questions whenever she doesn’t understand and she is not shy about asking, she makes sure that she gets it.” Suzie maintained a grade of a D average in reading. Being her Title I teacher, I had the opportunity to work with Suzie and therefore will provide additional insights into her skills. Using data from the DRA assessment, Suzie’s reading instructional level was around the beginning of a second-grade reading level. Her reading accuracy, rate, and comprehension skills placed her below grade level. Suzie had limited word attack skills. Rather than attempt to decode or try to figure out the words on her own, she would instantly look to me or others to tell her the word. Ms. Holman shared her perspective on Suzie’s decoding skills, “She is really slow. I think that she wants it to be right every time so she really

takes her time trying to say it rather than sound it out. She almost just waits for me to give it to her rather than try it and get it wrong.” When she did attempt to break the word apart, her sounds were off from the letters or patterns in the words causing her to rarely get the unknown word decoded. Suzie was able to discuss short passages of text and provide answers to literal questions. However, when reading longer passages or stories she had a difficult time remembering the details of the story and was unable to grasp the higher level comprehension skills of summaries, main ideas, problem/solution and so forth. She would often simply say “I don’t know” when trying to get her to discuss her thoughts about stories. When Suzie read text below her grade level, her reading was more fluent.

The charts below provide a snapshot of her reading scores from the Universal Screenings conducted by the school. The first chart represents: (a) how many words she accurately read on a one-minute probe and (b) how many answers she got correct on the computerized sentence maze in three minutes. Although Suzie’s scores demonstrated gains and she fell into the instructional range on the December and April assessments, her scores fell below the end of the year mastery goal for the two assessments.

Table 2

*Suzie’s Universal Screening Scores*

Assessment	Grade	Date	Score	Mastery Level	Percentile Rank
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	4/25/2012	44	Instructional	55%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	12/5/2011	25	Instructional	29%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	8/24/2011	13	Frustrational	7%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	4/26/2012	99	Instructional	21%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	12/8/2011	84	Instructional	16%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	8/25/2011	58	Frustrational	14 %



Figure 4 shows Suzie’s progress monitoring reading fluency scores through the Title I program. Her scores fell below her goal line and below the 120 words per minute mastery benchmark for the end of third grade.

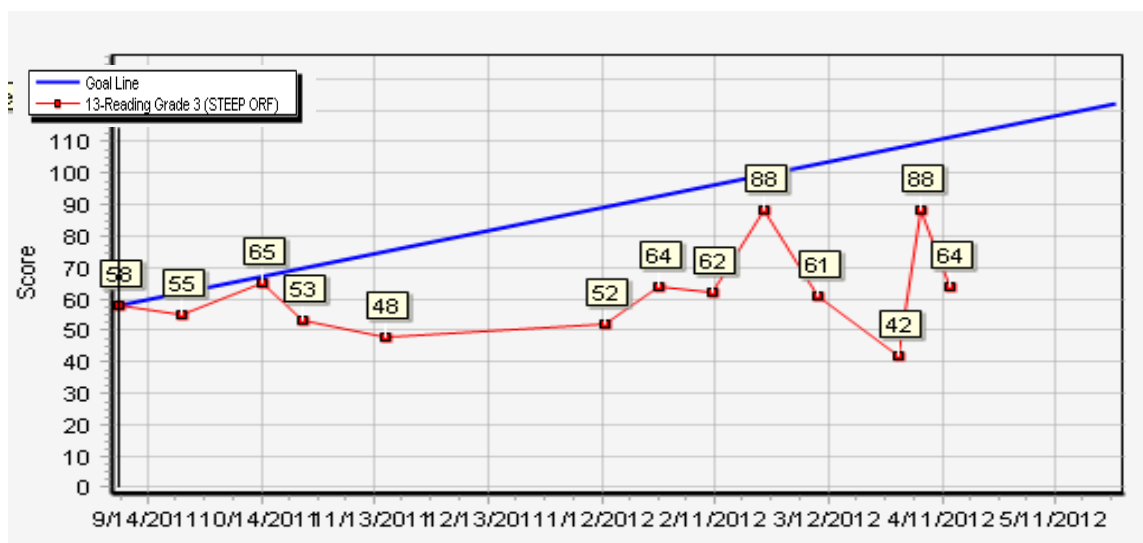


Figure 4. Suzie’s Progress Monitoring Scores

### Perceptions: Attitude, Motivation, and Self-Perception

In an attempt to understand how Suzie viewed herself as a reader, I analyzed her responses from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), and The Reader’s Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995).

**Reading Attitude.** When given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Suzie’s score placed her in the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile for the third-grade norms on the assessment. Analyzing the assessment further, Suzie’s scores suggest that she preferred recreational reading activities over academic activities. Her score for recreational reading placed her in the 45<sup>th</sup> percentile; while her academic score placed her only in the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile for third-grade norms. When asking Suzie about the first question on the assessment she shared, “I don’t really like reading that much...I do a little bit, but I would rather do something else.” Suzie

marked the grumpiest Garfield for the question: *How do you feel about reading for fun at home?* She explained that she “did not like usually bring my books to school and I read it during free time.” She enjoyed starting new books, but would not always finish them; it depended on how long the book was. She marked that reading for fun at home and she would rather not spend her time reading at home. She said an adamant “no” about spending time reading instead of playing. Suzie enjoyed getting a book for a present, but she would not read them at home, she clarified, “I felt happy about going to a bookstore and reading different kinds of books.

Suzie indicated that she had some negative feelings toward aspects of academic reading. When she was asked: *How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?* Suzie responded, “Mad, cause she expects you to get the answer right there, and there’s some words I don’t really know...from the story.” She further shared that she was not sure of the answer at times. When we were discussing why she marked the grumpiest Garfield representing how she felt about reading workbook pages and worksheets, she stated, “I don’t like to read that much on homework and stuff.” She also marked the grumpiest Garfield representing how she felt about taking a reading test. She explained that they were too long, too hard, and she felt rushed when attempting to complete them.

In an effort to explain how she felt about reading in school, Suzie said “I kind of like reading in school, then I don’t.” When I asked her to explain why, Suzie clarified, “Cause there’s like still hard words, and then I don’t really like reading to other people that much.” She explained that she felt nervous about reading aloud in front of others. When I asked her about reading easier text, she said, “I feel a little better, but not so much, I don’t know, I think I’m going to get most of the words wrong.” It appeared that Suzie’s reading abilities and internal perceptions and confidence level impacted her experiences and enjoyment of the reading tasks.

Suzie continued to explain that she did not like reading her school books. She clarified that she enjoyed reading her library books, but she only spent time on reading them at school, not at home. Also, she felt a little better about reading the books in her Title I class “cause they’re a little shorter, and the pages are shorter...[and the words] are not as hard, but at least a little shorter than the ones I got in class.” If she felt the books were difficult for her, she did not like trying to learn from them because she felt that “I have to remember it all,” but she explained “Yeah, I like those books” referring to below grade-level shorter texts she read in Title I class. Again, her reading attitude seemed to reflect her perception of her reading ability as she explained why the grumpy Garfield reflected how she felt when it was time for reading in class, “I don’t really like reading time because the words are so hard.” Suzie felt good about the stories she read in reading class, but articulated that she did not like spending an entire week on a story because it made her feel like it was too long. Thus, her attitude toward academic reading seemed to depend upon the academic reading task.

**Reading Motivation.** I administered the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) to Suzie. On the self-concept section Suzie scored 22 out of 40 (55%) and a 24 out of 40 (60%) on the value section. Her total combined score was 46 out of 80 (58%). Similar to the results of her answers on the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) suggesting that she felt reading was hard and did not like it; Suzie marked answers that demonstrated that reading was difficult for her and not something that she enjoyed. For example, she acknowledged that reading is *kind of hard for me* and reading a book is something I like to do *not very often*.

**Self-Competence.** Relating to her self-perceived performance, Suzie’s answers indicated that she perceived herself as *not a very good reader* especially in comparison to performance of

her peers. For instance, on the statement about how she read in comparison to her friends, she marked I read *not as well as my friends*. After further questioning, she explained that “Me and my friend were, we were looking at the school papers and on the reading test, I couldn’t figure out some of the words...and me and Andrea got different grades.” She continued to explain that her grade was lower than her friends and that happened regularly when she looked at her friends’ papers. Hence, it appeared that in part, her perception of not being a really good reader was shaped by comparing her grades, rather than on the grade itself. In regard to her perceptions of her friends’ thoughts, she marked that my friends think I am *an ok reader* rather than *a poor reader* or *a good reader*. She also selected that she worried about what other kids think of her reading *once in a while*. She clarified that she worried when she was in a big group and she had to read aloud. Suzie marked that reading is *kind of hard for me* and when she came to a word that she did not know, she can *sometimes figure it out* rather than *almost always figure it out*. She explained that “there are a lot of words that I don’t know.” Her other answers regarding her skills were similar in that she felt she was an *ok reader*, and she was an *ok reader* when she read out loud, understood *some of what* she read and *sometimes could think of an answer* when her teacher asked her a question about what she read. She did not mark any answers that represented the highest perceived competence in her reading skills and abilities.

*Value.* Although Suzie marked that knowing how to read well was *important*, she also marked that reading a book was something she liked to do *not very often*. Her answers suggested that she placed little value on reading mainly because she did not find reading to personally be interesting. For instance, she marked that she thought reading was an *OK way to spend time* rather than *an interesting way to spend time* and she marked that people who read a lot were *boring*. She explained she thought they were *boring* because “all they want to do is read” and

that she felt reading was boring. She did not engage in conversations with her friends often about books because her friends thought reading was only *ok* compared to *fun* and she marked *I almost never do this* referring to telling her friends about good books she read. When she grows up and has a choice about whether or not to read, Suzie marked that she will spend *very little* of her time reading. She marked that she would like her teacher to read books out loud to the class *every day* because this is one reading activity that she did enjoy. In addition, she selected that when someone gives her a book for a present, she felt *very happy*. However, it was not necessarily the book that made her *very happy*, it was the idea of a present as she shared that she just liked getting presents. It appeared that Suzie placed little value on reading. However, this was not necessarily because she felt that reading wasn't important and a necessary skill, but because she found it to be a boring way to spend her time.

*Conversation Portion.* When we completed the conversation portion of the MRP, Suzie was able to discuss a few books she had been reading. She liked a book that she had read recently with a friend on the bus because “there were a lot of like little poems in it.” Hence, it was not a story with a lengthy storyline or text, but manageable print for her to read. She shared that when she did read, she enjoyed reading about the topic of animals and horses. Every example book that she shared with me, she had been reading with a friend rather than by herself. Suzie shared that she had a dog book in her backpack that her dad had purchased her from the book order. She received the book three weeks earlier, but had not read it yet. Suzie also told me that Dr. Seuss was her favorite author because “his books are funny.”

Overall, Suzie viewed herself as an ok reader, but she found reading to be a challenging task for her and perceived her reading abilities to be lower than her peers. When she did read, she felt more comfortable reading texts at her reading level, and most of the time when she read

it was a social activity for her rather than an isolated event she enjoyed on her own. She shared she would much rather read with a friend than by herself.

***Reading Self-Perception.*** I administered the Reading Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) to Suzie, which incorporates the notion that reading is socially situated and is influenced by others. Thus, the scale includes questions that measure how students feel that others perceive their reading abilities. Henk and Melnick (1995) articulate when explaining how to interpret the scores that "...scores that are a good deal lower than the scale's mean would be a cause for concern" (p.474) meaning that the low scores would indicate low reader self-perceptions. Suzie scored below the low cut-off score in all of the sections except for Social Feedback which was only one point above the low-cut off score.

On the general perception statement of *I think I am a good reader*, Suzie marked that she was *unsure*. When Suzie and I discussed this question, she shared with me, "Sometimes I can read really good and sometimes I can't... cause usually in books there are big words and there's small words and some of the words I can't really understand." Similar to the results on the other assessments, Suzie shared that reading was hard for her at times and she struggled to figure out hard words.

***Progress.*** The low-cut off score for Progress is 34 and Suzie scored a 32. Suzie marked more *agrees* in this section than any other; she had two questions that pulled her score down. She put that she *strongly disagreed* for *When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to*, and for *When I read, I need less help than I used to*, she marked she *disagreed*. Her responses to both of those statements suggest that she found reading difficult and she still depended on teachers and others to assist her with reading activities. The rest of the progress questions she marked that she *agreed* or *strongly disagreed* suggesting that she felt she was a better reader than

she used to be. For example, she marked that she agreed with statements such as *I am getting better at reading*, *I read faster than I could before*, and *reading is easier for me than is used to be*. Suzie shared, “I think that because I know a little bit more words because I have been reading a little bit more....” She also *agreed* that she was getting better at specific reading skills such as *I understand what I read better than I could before* and *I can figure out words better than I could before*. Overall, although Suzie perceived she was making progress and gains with her reading skills and abilities, she still recognized that it was hard for her and she needed help.

*Observational Comparison.* The low-cut off for observational comparison is 16 and Suzie scored 10, which was the lowest she scored out of all the subscales. Suzie perceived her reading skills to be much lower in comparison to her peers. In fact, she marked that she *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with each comparison statement except for one where she marked *undecided*. When Suzie explained why she marked that she *strongly disagreed* with the statements *I read faster than other kids* and *I read better than other kids in my class*, she shared “When we are reading in our reading book, everyone usually gets done before me.” She further explained that this was when everyone was reading the story in their head so she felt that her peers read faster when silently reading the story and also “a little faster” when they read aloud. She also explained why she felt her peers could figure out words better than she could, “I think that because most of the other kids...they usually say the word out instead of trying to look at it themselves, all they do is say the whole word.” Thus, she recognized that her peers had a reading automaticity that she lacked. In regard to her reading comprehension, Suzie marked that she *disagreed* that she understood what she read as well as other kids do. She clarified, “I usually stop and think and usually I just keep going on with the story and I don’t like know what it is telling us about and I can’t understand anything, I usually stop and look at the front of the book

and see if there are words on the back of it.” So Suzie attempted to use the pictures and chapter summary on the back of chapter books to help her understand what was taking place in the story. She also disagreed that she read as much as other kids and she reasoned, “I don’t read that often, if I am ‘posed to I do or if I am at home and I am bored or something then I do, but that is really it.” Suzie ranked her reading skills and abilities low in comparison to her peers.

*Social Feedback.* The low cut-off score is 27, and Suzie scored a 28 for the social feedback category. Suzie marked *undecided* or *disagree* for all of the questions in this section except for the two regarding the feedback of her teacher, which she marked she *agreed* and *strongly agreed*. For the statements *I can tell that my teacher likes to listen to me read* and *my teacher thinks that my reading is fine*, Suzie referred to Ms. Holman’s body language and positive gestures for why she agreed with these statements. For instance, she explained, “She likes to listen to me read because every time she tells me to read out loud like a paragraph or something, she always smiles when I am done.” Regardless of Suzie’s reading performance, it seemed Ms. Holman’s positive nonverbal gestures and remarks helped form a positive perception of her teacher’s social feedback.

Suzie’s perceptions were not as positive of her peer’s feedback. She was *unsure* if her classmates liked to listen to her read, but she *disagreed* with the statement that her classmates thought she read pretty well. She said a clear “no” because “when I stopped and tried to figure out a word Amanda giggled...and then they just say the whole word.” Social interactions such as these appeared to have led her to believe that her peers did not think she was a good reader. Suzie marked two *undecided* and one *disagree* for the questions relating to feedback from her family. She explained, “I don’t know, I never really read.” When further questioned, she did reply, “All I really read to is my dad...at the end of it he was smiling and said ‘good job’.” So



Suzie felt that her dad thought she was a good reader, but was unsure about the rest of her family due to lack of experiences of reading at home to them. Overall, Suzie perceived positive reading feedback from her teacher and her dad, but not from her peers.

*Physiological States.* In this section, Suzie scored 17, which was below the low-cut off point of 25. Suzie put mostly *disagrees* explaining that “I don’t like to read.” She felt “kinda nervous” when she read aloud and when she read she marked that she did not feel calm, comfortable, or relaxed; all characteristics asked about on the assessment. She further explained, “When I am reading out loud to someone I get kinda nervous, when I am reading in my head I don’t get that nervous.” She also explained that she did not feel calm about reading because the stories were long and the tests were difficult for her to complete.

### **Reading Instruction Experiences**

When trying to understand how Suzie experienced reading instruction in her classroom, data from my observations and post-observation reading conversations along with data from the affective instrument and drawings, provided insight into how she perceived reading instruction. From Suzie Logan’s perspective, she perceived that (a) the work was too hard, (b) she felt rushed and did not have enough time to complete her work, and (c) reading instruction was (or ought to be) a social activity.

#### **The work is hard!**

Throughout the study, one aspect of reading that continued to arise was how Suzie found the reading stories to be too long, the words to be too difficult, and the assessments were very challenging for her to complete on her own. When I asked Suzie about what she did not like about reading, one aspect she shared was “the chapter books, they’re so long.” The chapter books she was encouraged to read during quiet reading time were at the beginning of third-grade

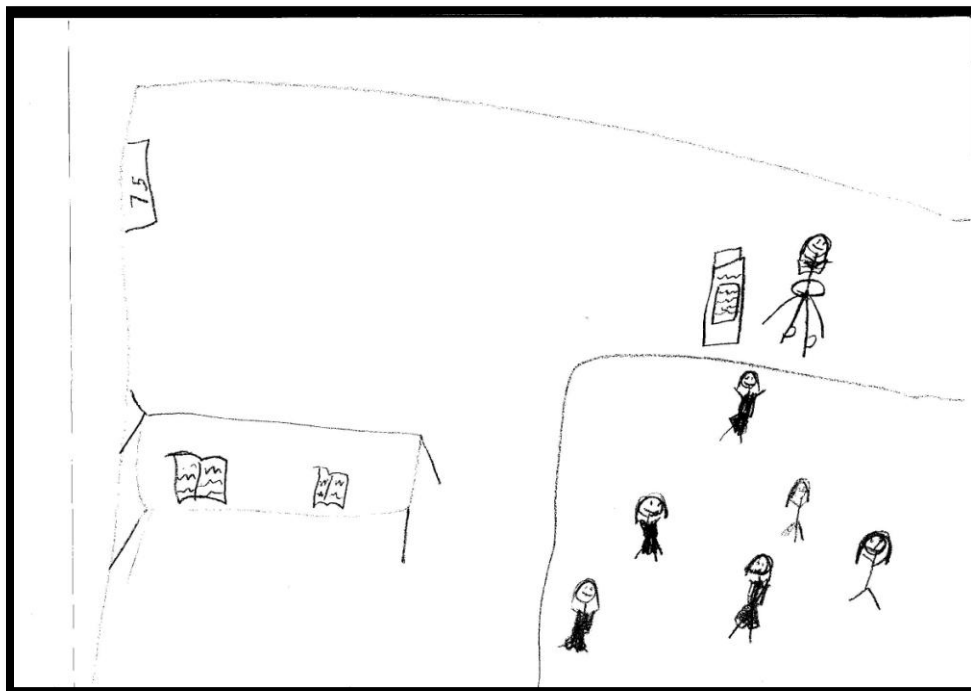
reading level (Teacher Interview and Observation notes). Reading on-grade level chapter books and her reading basal from the curriculum were difficult to her as she shared “the words in chapter books are hard and sometimes I don’t know the words in our reading book either.” When she had a choice, she would choose what she perceived an easier book such as Dr. Seuss. However, even when reading an easier book, she was unsure about trying to read the words. For example, when I asked her if she felt better about reading when reading an easier book that did not have hard words, she verbalized, “I feel a little better, but not so much, I don’t know, I think I’m going to get most of the words wrong.” Ms. Holman shared her perspective on Suzie’s decoding skills, “She is really slow. I think that she wants it to be right every time so she really takes her time trying to say it rather than sound it out. She almost just waits for me to give it to her rather than try it and get it wrong.” Suzie shared that when she got a new book, “I look at the picture” and she may or may not read the words depending on “how long the book is.” In addition, when discussing how she felt about her stories in her reading book, she addressed the length of the text again by articulating, “I feel happy that I am starting a new book and I don’t really like the end of it because it makes me feel like that book is so long because it takes us like a week to do that whole story and then the test.”

In addition to the length of third-grade reading material, Suzie also found the words to be challenging. On a statement on the MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996) she answered that reading was *kind of hard* for her and explained that “there are a lot of words that I don’t know.” During a conversation about completing a worksheet with a partner, she described her experience by stating, “We do groups, and I am usually with Aaron, and the last time I was with Aaron we went kinda slow because there were a few words we couldn’t really get.” She said they made it through it without the teacher’s help because “he kind of helped me and I kind of helped him.”

When I observed Suzie working with a partner, she depended on her partner to show her their work or to tell her a word. For instance, during one observation I wrote “Suzie keeps leaning over and looking at what her partner has written and then she writes her answer. Suzie just said “slow down, I can’t write that fast, tell me again what I should put” (Observation Notes). She had a very dependent role in the partner work in other observations as well. Likewise, when answering a question on the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) she explained that she marked the grumpy Garfield representing how she felt about when it was time for reading in class because “I don’t really like reading time because the words are so hard.” When she was explaining why she marked that she could not decide if she was a good reader or not on the RSPS (Henk & Melnick, 1995), she shared, “Cause usually in books there are big words...and some of the words I can’t really understand.” When discussing why she marked the grumpiest Garfield on the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) when she was asked about reading workbook pages and worksheets, she explained, “I don’t really like it because there is a lot of hard words and the work is kind of hard.” In addition, when she explained why she did not like reading in school she said, “cause there’s like still hard words.” Hence, it appeared that Suzie found the third-grade reading work to be difficult for her to complete and she struggled to decode or figure out the words. She explained that to be a better reader, someone would have to “read more... to know more words.”

Suzie shared that one aspect she enjoyed about reading instruction was when “She [Ms. Holman] goes up to the front and reads our reading story while we follow along.” Also “I like after lunch she usually reads us a book.” Consequently, from my perspective, Suzie got to simply enjoy the story and pictures while not having to attempt to decode hard words or struggle with text. However, the location made a difference to Suzie on how much she enjoyed that activity. For instance, I asked Suzie to respond to the following prompt adapted from Pflaum

and Bishop (2004): Draw a time when you were not engaged in a reading lesson or what is it that you like the least about reading time? The image in Figure 5 is what she drew.



*Figure 5. Suzie's Picture of What she Likes Least About Reading*

Suzie explained her drawing by stating, “We are all at the carpet and the teacher is reading us a book and I don’t really like it when we are at the carpet because most of the time I have to sit off of the carpet because we have so many people and the cubbies and mailboxes that we can’t like get over there by them...” When further questioned about this activity, Suzie indicated that she liked hearing her teacher read a book aloud, but she would rather sit at her seat where she has more room and it is not so crowded. When I asked her about what else she liked the least, she replied “When we have to read it...when we have to read a long thing.” Again, she was referring to the length of the text and the challenge of reading the words herself.

Suzie’s perceptions of the long text and the challenging words seem to make the third-grade reading assessments difficult for her. When Suzie was explaining how she felt about taking

a reading test, she clarified why it was difficult for her by saying, “Yeah, because we have to like try to find it [the answer] in our book, and our book is like four pages long, and you have to read it all.” Thus, she found it difficult to find the answers to the questions again due to the length of the text. In addition, she continued to explain, “there is some hard words in there.” Most of the time, Ms. Holman took an average of the first attempt and the second attempt on the reading test for Suzie’s final test grade. Even with Ms. Holman reading aloud the assessment the first time, Suzie scored a lower grade (Teacher Interview). Figure 6 is an example of a typical averaged reading test grade for Suzie.

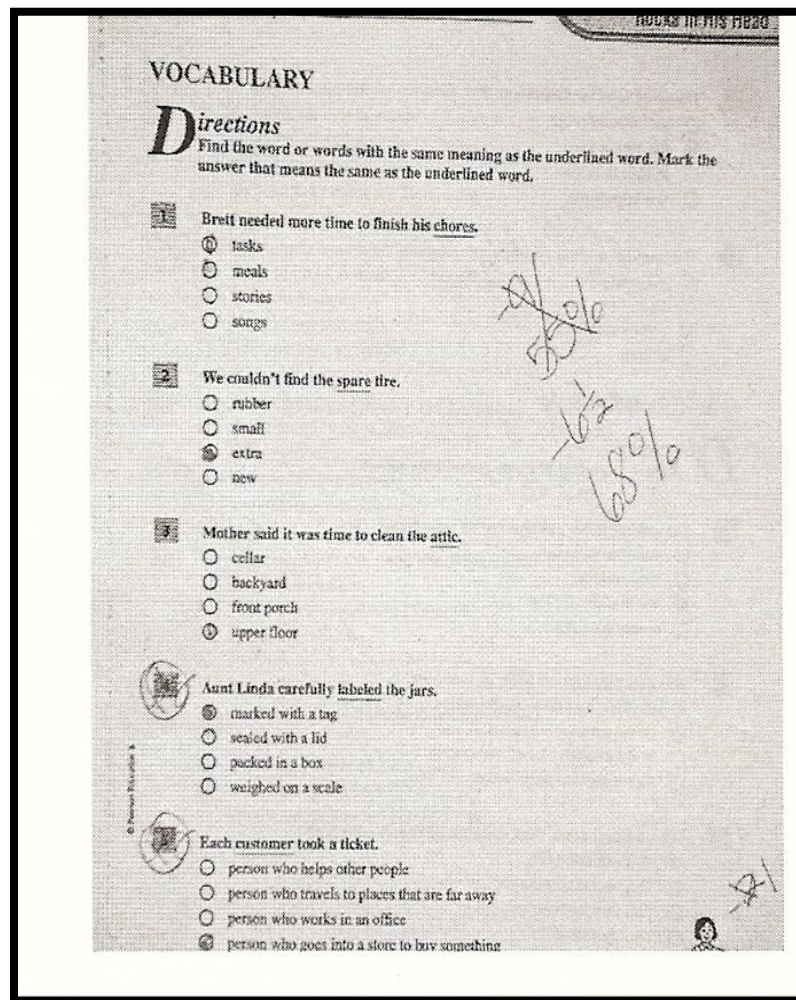


Figure 6. Suzie’s Sample Reading Test.

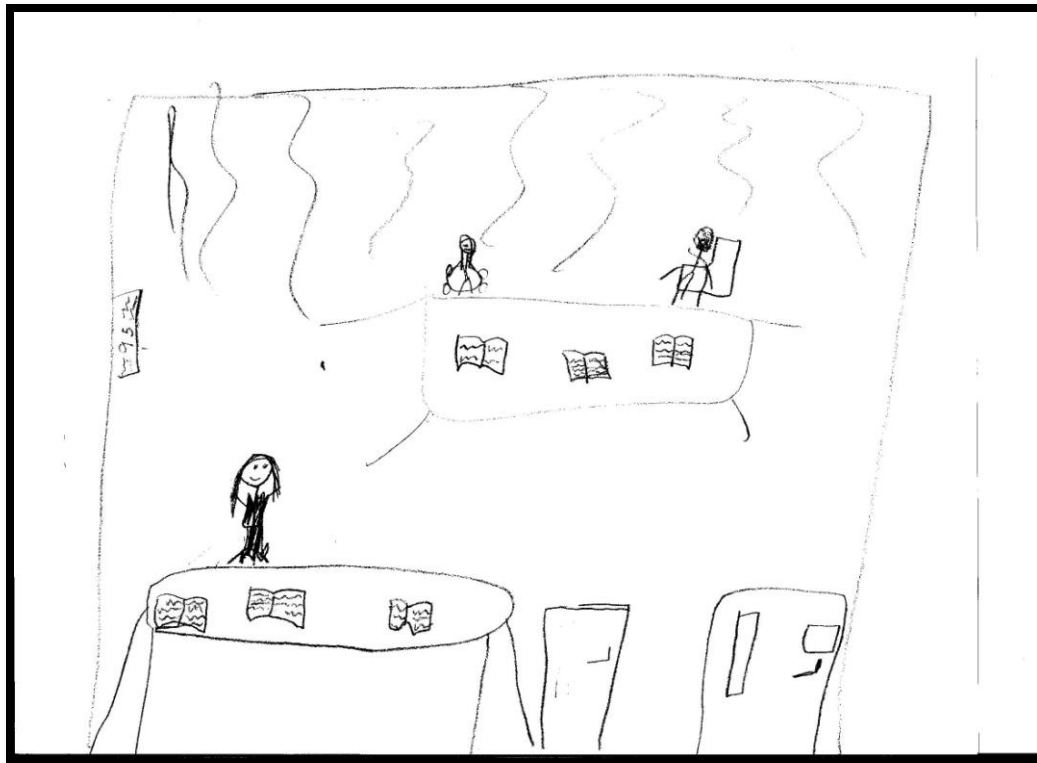
**“I don’t have time to get it done”**

From Suzie’s perspective, she felt like she did not have adequate time to work through her reading work. For example, when we were discussing a strategy she attempted to use when she was asked to respond out loud and did not know the answer, she replied, “I sometimes try to stretch the word out, like then she calls on someone else.” I responded, “While you are trying to figure out the word” and she responded, “Yeah, she will move on to somebody else.” In addition, when discussing the comprehension scavenger hunt worksheets, she indicated that she barely had enough time to complete it by saying, “I don’t have time to get it done...like when they do our scavenger hunt things, we like have to look through all of it and it usually takes a while. And then when we’re barely done she makes us go back to our seats.” Both instances, she felt like she did not have the amount of time she needed to work through the tasks. When we were discussing how she felt about Ms. Holman reading aloud the end of the story reading assessments, Suzie explained why she felt it was a difficult task, “Well, I get started on it, but then she moves on to the next one, and I have to go on to the next one, then after I go on to the next one, I usually look at that other one.” Even though Suzie said she felt that the questions were read too fast, she would still prefer her teacher to read it aloud rather than complete it independently because “some kids, people, um they might not know a lot of the words.” She further clarified that she would not know many of the words if Ms. Holman did not read it aloud to her. During a reading conversation, Suzie also stated, “When we are reading [silently] in our reading book, everyone usually gets done before me and then we have to go on to something else.” Suzie also felt like she was rushed during her library time. She said she would like to read more horse books but “I can’t find any in the library ‘cause every time on Wednesday we have to come here [Title I].” She continued to explain that she only got a few minutes in the library and

she wished she had more time. She also explained that she wished that she could be a part of reading station time, but she had to leave the classroom to either go to a Tutor or Title I time (Reading Conversation).

### **I Wonder What They Are Thinking, Doing, and Reading?**

Since Suzie was a very social student, her reading experiences also focused on the social. During observations, regardless of the activity, Suzie was continually looking around at others (Observation Notes). For example, three short excerpts from my notes from different days are as follows: “Silent reading – Suzie is looking around her table at the books others are reading, she just reached over and pulled her neighbor’s book down and whispered something to her”, “Reading worksheet – Suzie is tapping her pencil and glancing around the room”, “Choral reading – Suzie is moving her mouth, but she is looking at the other girls read and not looking at her book.” There are other similar notes in my observations of Suzie’s social interests. Suzie even stated that one thing she enjoyed most about reading time was to be able to look around to see what others were doing. In order to understand what Suzie liked the best about reading time, she participated in a drawing prompt adapted from Pflaum and Bishop’s (2004) drawing prompts. After a discussion led by Suzie about all of the reading activities she did in her class, she responded by drawing an answer to the following prompt: Draw a time when you were engaged with the lesson. The image in Figure 7 is what Suzie drew.



*Figure 7.* Suzie’s Drawing of Engaged Reading

Suzie explained, “I like when there are other people around and I can look over and see what pages they are on and when I am not doing that I can read by myself because if I am reading with the teacher, she always gives me the word.” Ms. Holman is grading papers and the other students are “just like reading their own books.” One of Suzie’s favorite parts about reading included looking at others to see what they were reading or what activities they were participating in. Likewise, referring to Suzie’s attention span when listening to the story, from Ms. Holman’s perspective, she explained, “Suzie does [follow along] and then she will let up a little bit and then go back to it.” She further explained that often when she was letting up, she was looking around at others (Interview Notes). When Suzie described a time when she felt she was a good reader, she described, “When I am at home and there is no noise around me or



anything, I can understand words a little better because I can sound them out in my head.”

Possibly, the lack of activity around her helped her focus in on the text.

Suzie was also quite sensitive to her social surroundings. Suzie indicated that she felt nervous if she had to read out loud in class. Even though none of her classmates had verbalized any thoughts, Suzie’s just had a feeling that “some of the kids might kinda like see you and think that you are weird.” Even though she did not like to read aloud, Suzie would occasionally volunteer to read out loud depending on “how big the sentences are and stuff like that.” She would attempt to quickly read the text in her head and if she felt like she could read the words, she may volunteer. If she felt they were difficult and she may make a mistake, she would not volunteer (Reading Conversation Notes). In regard to reading aloud, Ms. Holman shared her thoughts, “She gets nervous whenever you ask her to read. I will sometimes walk over to them as they are reading silently to themselves and have them whisper read to me and you can tell that she gets nervous when she has to read aloud.” On the MRP (Gambrell et. al, 1996), Suzie marked that she worried about what other kids thought about her reading *once in a while*. She explained that “when we are in a big group...if I miss a word or something they might laugh.”

Suzie was also aware of how her progress compared with her classmates. She explained during a reading conversation, “When we are reading [silently] in our reading books, everyone usually gets done before me....” Similarly, she articulated why she felt others could read better than her, “Cause the other kids in my class can read faster and when we are reading everybody else is done and they are doing something else and I am still reading the story.”

### **Damon Lewis**

Damon is a multiracial, third-grade, male student who participated in this study. He moved into the study’s school several weeks after third grade began. When describing Damon’s

skills, Ms. Holman shared her perspectives by explaining, “I think he can figure a lot out things out, but sometimes he gets a little shy about it and if he struggles even a lit bit with the reading or answering the questions, he turns it into something funny. He laughs about it and tries to play it off because he doesn’t want to be embarrassed that he doesn’t understand.” Ms. Holman illustrated her thoughts about Damon socially by saying, “He likes to talk a lot, he likes to be up and looking at what other people are looking at and sometimes he will easily get pulled into what other students are doing.” Damon was also described as being willing to do what his teacher asked him to do. For instance, Ms. Holman explained, “...whatever you ask him, if I were to ask him to come over to a table by himself and ask him to work, he can. He will sit and read to me just fine if I ask him to. He goes kinda slowly sometimes.” Having the opportunity to work with Damon in a small group Title I setting, I saw that Damon had difficulties in decoding words. His fluency was very choppy, slow, and had a high percentage level of inaccuracy. When he attempted to read a word he did not know, he was very hesitant to try it on his own and he would laugh at himself if he got it incorrect. His instructional reading level was at the end of a first-grade level due to his reading accuracy and comprehension skills. Damon was hesitant to discuss his ideas about the story unless I asked him specific questions. He could often answer the literal questions correctly, but was rarely able to make connections, locate the main ideas or engage in other higher level reading tasks.

The charts below provide a snapshot of his reading scores from the Universal Screenings conducted by the school. The first chart represents: (a) how many words he accurately read on a one-minute probe and (b) how many answers he got correct on the computerized sentence maze in three minutes. Although Damon’s scores demonstrated personal gains, he fell within the

frustration zone on all assessments except for the spring fluency score, which his scores still fell below the end of the third-grade mastery goal on both assessments.

Table 3

*Damon's Universal Screening Scores*

Assessment	Grade	Date	Score	Mastery Level	Percentile Rank
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	4/25/2012	16	Frustrational	4%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	12/5/2011	11	Frustrational	1%
Sentence Maze	Grade 3	10/24/2011	8	Frustrational	.6%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	4/26/2012	78	Instructional	7%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	12/8/2011	59	Frustrational	4%
Class-wide-Fluency	Read Third	10/25/2011	49	Frustrational	2.3%

Figure 8 shows Damon's progress monitoring reading fluency scores through the Title I program. His scores fell below his goal line and below the 120 words per minute mastery benchmark for the end of third grade.

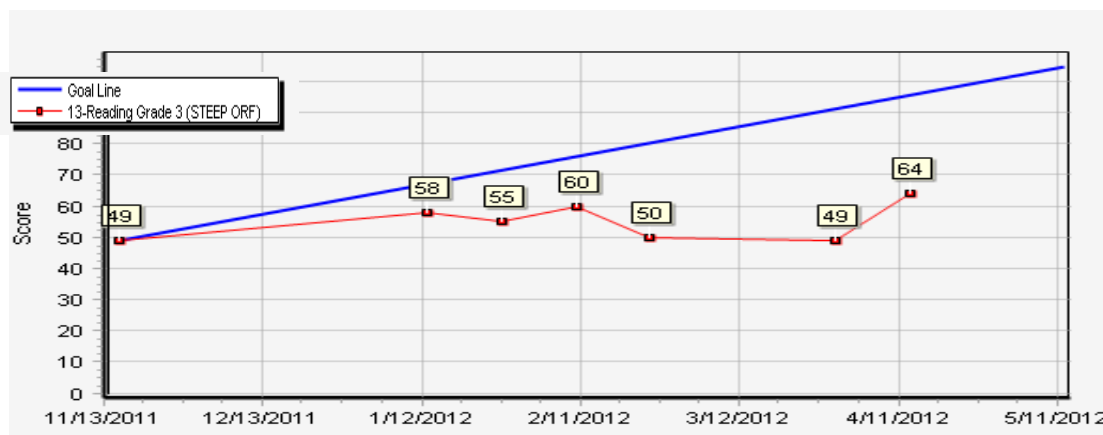


Figure 8. Damon's Progress Monitoring Scores

**Perceptions: Attitude, Motivation, and Self-Perception**

In order to gain insight into Damon's perceptions of himself as a reader, I analyzed his answers and comments from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990),

Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), and The Reader's Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995).

**Reading Attitude.** When given the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Damon's score placed him in the 73<sup>rd</sup> percentile for the third-grade norms on the assessment. However, breaking down the assessment further, Damon indicated that he preferred recreational reading activities over academic activities. His score for recreational reading placed him in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile; while his academic score placed him in the 26<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Damon marked the happiest Garfield on every question under the recreational reading section except for one, which asked him about how he felt about reading instead of playing and he marked the slightly smiling Garfield suggesting that he did not mind reading instead of playing. Overall, Damon appeared to have a positive reading experience at home and it appeared that reading was an encouraged activity. For instance, when Damon shared why he felt good about reading on a rainy Saturday, he explained, "it is a rainy day and I read a book and I make hot chocolate and stuff and read a book." Also, when discussing the types of books he read at home, he shared, "we have all kinds of books in our tub." Hence, it seemed as though his parents provided books at home and encouraged a fun atmosphere such as hot chocolate on a rainy day. He explained that he liked getting books for presents because "my mom gives me rock books and volcanoes and stuff because I like volcanoes a lot." So it seemed that his mom knew his interests and provided reading materials on the particular topics that were engaging to him. Damon explained that he read "by himself" and he read over summer break and also "I read on the weekends." He explained that he enjoyed reading at home, especially "adventure books" and books on the topics of "rocks, volcanoes, baseball, and Cat in the Hat".

While Damon's attitude seemed to be positive toward recreational reading, he shared that did not like aspects of academic reading such as reading aloud, taking reading tests and reading stories from his reading book. When I asked him how he felt when it was time for reading in class, he explained that he put the grumpier Garfield "cause you have to read out loud and I don't like that." He further explained that, "I feel shy to read out loud." While Damon enjoyed reading library books and books from his tub at home, he explained that did not like the stories that he had to read from his reading book. He felt they were "boring" and he got tired of "rereading the same stories over" throughout the week (Conversation Notes). He also perceived that there was not a wide selection of books in his classroom that "the teacher puts up on the shelves and puts in the drawers." While Damon marked that he "like[ed] learning about books", he did not like his school books because "I have to read the same thing over and over again." Damon also felt "not so happy" when Ms. Holman asked him questions about what he read. He did not like to answer questions because he felt if he got them wrong, then he would have to go back and reread the story (Conversation Notes).

Overall, Damon appeared to enjoy reading for recreational purposes, but he did not like to read his school books for academic purposes such as preparing for a reading test or worksheet, or to participate in conversation about the text. He shared that one of the aspects he liked least about reading in his classroom was "when I have to read out loud."

***Reading Motivation.*** I administered the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) to Damon. On the self-concept section, Damon scored 62% and an 80% on the value section. His total combined score was 76%. The higher the percent number the student scores, the higher perceived self-concept and value placed on reading. Similar to the results of his answers on the recreational section of the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Damon

marked answers that suggested that he enjoyed reading for pleasure and found meaning and value in reading.

*Self-Competence.* Relating to his self-perceived performance, Damon had a higher perception of several aspects of his reading skills. For instance, on the statement *When I come to a word I don't know, I can ...* he marked *almost always figure it out* rather than *sometimes, almost never* or *never*. On the statement that asked Damon to describe himself as a reader, he marked that he was a *good reader*. On the statement *when my teacher asks me a question about what I have read*, he also selected that he can *always think of an answer*. Damon did, however, explain why he marked that *when I am reading by myself, I understand some of what I read* by stating, “‘cause when I read something and when I am done with it sometimes I don't understand because I forget.” He thereby attributed his lack of comprehension to forgetfulness. He felt that *reading is... easy for me*. However, when it came to reading aloud he selected both answers of I am an *Ok reader* and *good reader*. When I asked him to clarify his response he explained, “I wasn't sure so I marked both of them... because sometimes I am shy and sometimes I'm not.” He continued to explain that he is not shy “when I read by myself.” Consistent with additional responses, Damon did not like to read aloud in front of his peers. In fact, when responding to why he marked that he *worried about what other kids thought of his reading once in a while* he explained that, “whenever I am doing my partner reading and I feel shy and sometimes I read kinda slow and I wonder if they think I am reading good enough.”

In regard to his self-perceived performance in comparison to his peers, Damon's answers suggested that he did not see his abilities or performances lower than his friends. He marked that he read *about the same as my friends* and *my friends think I am a good reader*. Damon selected that his best friends thought that reading was *no fun at all*. When I asked him to explain his

answer, he told me that his best friend “doesn’t like reading.” However, on the question, *I tell my friends about good books that I read*, he marked that he *does this some of the time* and further clarified that it was just his one best friend that didn’t like to read, a few of his other friends did. Overall, on this particular assessment Damon had a high perception of his reading competence in regard to his performance and in comparison to his friends.

*Value.* Damon’s answers indicated that he enjoyed reading and placed value on reading at home and chose to spend his recreational time reading. For instance, he marked that *I think libraries are a great place to spend time*, which was the most positive response for that statement. He also selected that *reading is a great way to spend time* and to know how to read well is *very important*. He felt that people who read a lot were *interesting* and he would like for his teacher to read books out loud to the class *every day*. Reading a book is something he *likes to do* and when he gets a present for a book he feels *sort of happy* rather than *sort of unhappy* or *unhappy*.

*Conversation Portion.* When we completed the conversation portion of the MRP, Damon was able to recall the name of books that he had been reading, but was unable to elaborate on the details of the books. Damon was not a very verbal student, which could account for some of the lack of conversation. Many of his responses to the questions were *I don’t remember*, *I forgot* or *I don’t know*, similar to responses that he gave on portions of his reading assessments and worksheets. He had a difficult time elaborating on his answers. When I asked if he had read the books at home or at school, he gave me examples of books he had read at both locations, but he was unable to provide details. He did not have a favorite author. He did remark again how much he enjoyed his teacher reading aloud to him and when she did this it got him interested in the book.

**Reading Self-Perception.** I administered the Reading Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) to Damon, which incorporates the notion that reading is socially situated and is influenced by others. Thus, the scale includes questions that measure how students feel that others perceive their reading abilities. Henk and Melnick (1995) articulate when explaining how to interpret the scores that "...scores that are a good deal lower than the scale's mean would be a cause for concern" (p.474) meaning that the low scores would indicate low reader self-perceptions. Damon scored below the low cut-off score in all four sections, indicating a cause for concern regarding his reading self-perception on this assessment, which was quite different than the results regarding his perceptions of his reading competence and performance in comparison to his friends on the MRP (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). However, after closer analysis of the two assessments, on the MRP, all of the comparison statements relate to Damon's friends while the RSPS refer to comparisons of his classmates or other kids. Thus, from my perspective it appeared that Damon had different thoughts of how his friends viewed him as a reader compared to his overall classmates' perceptions. Damon's closest friends in his class, ones he gravitated toward, appeared to not like to read for the most part or were struggling readers themselves (Interview and Observation Notes). For example, Damon marked on the MRP that his best friends thought that reading was *no fun at all*. When I asked him to explain his response, he told me that his best friend "doesn't like reading." Hence, it is possible that they would have viewed him as a good reader since he enjoyed reading and they did not. However, other students in the class may have had a different perspective and saw Damon's reading skills and abilities closer to his actual academic performance, which was lower than most students in his class.



On the general perception statement of *I think I am a good reader*, Damon marked that he *strongly disagreed*. However, the *A* for *agree* had an erased circle mark. When Damon and I discussed this statement, he told me, “Every time I read to someone I think they feel like I am not a good reader...they stare at me in a weird way.” When I asked him who he was referring to, he listed several students’ names and “my mom does a little bit.” When I asked him about Ms. Holman, he clarified, “I don’t think she does.” Hence, it seemed that his perceptions of himself as a reader were partly shaped by what he felt his classmates thought as he perceived them looking at him in a “weird way.”

*Progress.* The low-cut off score for Progress is 34 and Damon scored a 24. Although that is low, that is the highest that he scored out of all the sections. On all of the statements that related to his progress with his reading fluency or decoding skills, Damon marked that he *agreed* that he was making progress. For instance, he *agreed* that he could figure out words better than before, that he recognized more words than before and that he read faster than what he could before. When explaining why he thought he was better at reading than he used to be, Damon explained, “words are easier.” In regard to comprehension, Damon did not perceive that he was making gains. For example, on any question that related to how well he understood what he read, such as *I understand what I read better than I could before*, he marked *strongly disagree*. When I asked him to explain, he remarked “‘cause I don’t know, I just don’t understand.” On the statements that related to his progress as far as effort, he marked that he *strongly disagreed* on all three about his progress. For instance, Damon *strongly disagreed* with the following statements: *When I read, I don’t have to try as hard as I used to*, *When I read, I need less help than I used to*, and *Reading is easier for me than it used to be*. Damon explained that he put the *SD* because “I disagree because I try hard to read” and he explained that some words were easier

for him, but he sometimes didn't remember what he read. Consequently, Damon's perspective of his progress seemed to be that he was making gains in reading faster and knowing more words, but it was still a challenge to understand what he read and he still had to try hard and receive reading help.

*Observational Comparison.* Damon scored an 8 on the observational comparison section and the low cut-off score is a 16. Damon marked that he *strongly disagreed* on every question in this section except for one where he marked U for *undecided*. Damon *strongly disagreed* that he could read faster than other kids, understood what he read as well as other kids, read better or more, and that he seemed to know more words than other kids when he read. When trying to explain why he disagreed that he read faster, he simply stated "I can't read faster than other kids." He also explained, "'cause they can understand and I don't...because every time I read when I am done I forget about it because I forget fast." In addition, he said "'cause at the end, well I don't know, cause at the end I am done reading it and I don't remember it." Damon once again attributed his lack of understanding to forgetfulness. When discussing why he disagreed that he read better than other kids in his class, he remarked "'cause they like read faster than me because I read slow." When Damon responded that he *strongly disagreed* to *I read more than other kids*, he explained he read "not as much" and "I have littler books they have big books that they check out from the library." Thus, it appeared that Damon felt like his classmates were reading more because they had larger chapter books that what he read.

*Social Feedback.* Damon again marked either all *disagrees* or *undecided* for all questions in this section. His score was a 17 and the low cut-off score is a 27. Damon's perception of his teacher's feedback seemed to stem from how he felt about his reading skills. For instance, when I asked him why he marked the *SD* for the question *my teacher thinks that my reading is fine* he

explained, “I don’t think that she thinks...because every time I read to myself I don’t understand it.” When I commented that was how he felt and asked about what he thought about how she felt, he continued to say *I am not sure* or *I don’t know*. He responded with similar answers on other teacher feedback questions. In regard to feedback from his classmates, he marked that he strongly disagreed that they thought he read pretty well and explained by saying, “they stare at me in a different way now and I don’t think they like how I read because I read slow.” Although he said his classmates never said anything to him, he explained that he just got that feeling by the way they looked at him (Conversation Notes). Damon indicated that he was *unsure* about if people in his family thought he read pretty well or if they liked to listen to him read. He explained that “my brother and sister do, but I am not sure about my mom and dad.” He continued to express, “when I read my story book and there are hard words or my school book and there are hard words she [mom] gives me a weird look.” Overall, Damon felt self-conscious about his reading skills and abilities, especially when reading out loud in front of others. He perceived others looking at him in a strange way when he read and did not feel like his teacher thought he was a good reader because he felt like he could not understand what he read. He did articulate that he did not think his teacher looked at him in a weird way when he read. Hence, whether it was the actual social feedback or the perceived social feedback, his reading confidence was not encouraged and he was self-conscious of his skills and abilities.

*Physiological States.* Damon scored 17 out of 40 on this section and the low cut-off point is 25. Damon’s answers varied in this section of the assessment. Damon *agreed* that reading made him feel happy inside, he felt good inside when he read, and he enjoyed reading. He specified that he felt good inside when he read “at home...because it is not so loud.” Also, he selected that reading made him feel happy inside “‘cause when I read I feel happy and then when

people stare at me I don't feel happy." He further clarified by stating, "when I read out loud I get shy, when I read in my head I don't" so he felt good inside "when I read alone." His location, at home or at school, did not matter as long as he got to read alone (Conversation Notes). In addition, he felt reading was relaxing but "at home" because at school "people yell a lot." He strongly disagreed that he liked to read aloud and that he felt calm when he read. He explained that "I'm shy" and when he read out loud he did not feel calm, but he did feel calm reading in his head. Hence, Damon's physiological state depended on if he was participating in silent reading or oral reading, the location of where the reading took place, and what activities were taking place around him while he was attempting to engage in reading.

### **Reading Instruction Experiences**

In an attempt to understand how Damon experienced reading instruction in his classroom, I examined all of my data sources. From Damon Lewis' perspective, (a) it made him feel shy and he did not want others to know he struggled, (b) the words were hard, he felt like he read them slow, and like he did not understand it, and (c) he felt like academic reading was boring.

#### **Shy and (I Don't Want Them To Know I Struggle)**

Damon explained that his favorite time to read in the classroom was "when it is raining...because it gets a little bit dark in the classroom and I like it when it is a little dark." He further explained that he liked to have his own choice of book to be reading during this time. On the other hand, Damon also shared that what he liked the least about reading time was "when I have to read out loud." When I asked him how he felt when it was time for reading in class, he explained he did not like it "cause you have to read out loud and I don't like that." He further explained that, "I feel shy to read out loud." It seemed that Damon felt so self-conscious about his reading abilities that when he had to read out loud in front of his classmates, it appeared to

affect him in a negative way. When reading aloud, he constantly looked around rather than focus on the text and if he missed a word, he would laugh at himself and look at others even if they were not paying attention to him (Observation Notes). When describing her perspective of Damon's reading skills, Ms. Holman articulated, "If he struggles even a little bit with the reading or answering the question, he turns it into something funny. He laughs about it and tries to play it off because he doesn't want to be embarrassed that he doesn't understand." It seemed that Damon demonstrated a lack of confidence in his reading skills and so he perceived others were always focused on how he was performing. He continually looked at others to see if they were observing him or he would compare where he was with his work to where they were with theirs (Observation Notes). When he was asked to complete independent worksheets, he would stop every few minutes and look over at his neighbor's paper. For example, in my observations, I wrote "Damon has answered the first question on his vocabulary worksheet, he just looked over at his neighbor's paper and then around the rest of the table. Now he is answering number two and number three. Damon is looking around at everyone's work again. It does not appear that he is looking at their answer, rather how far they are on the worksheet. The glance is too fast to read the answers" (Observation Notes). Ms. Holman shared her thoughts by saying, "He likes to be up and looking at what other people are looking at and sometimes he will easily get pulled into what other students are doing." During another observation time when the students were completing an ISAT prep reading practice worksheet, I noted, "Damon is attempting to work on it, but is periodically looking around at others. He is tapping his leg with his pencil and does not appear to be relaxed" (Observation Notes). After one observation, I told Damon that I noticed he was looking around at others and asked him if there was a reason why. He explained, "I don't know, I want to see what they are doing and if they are looking at me or what I am writing."

When I asked him why, all he said was “I don’t know, I don’t want them looking at me in a weird way.” It also appeared as if Damon did not want his classmates to know that he struggled with reading.

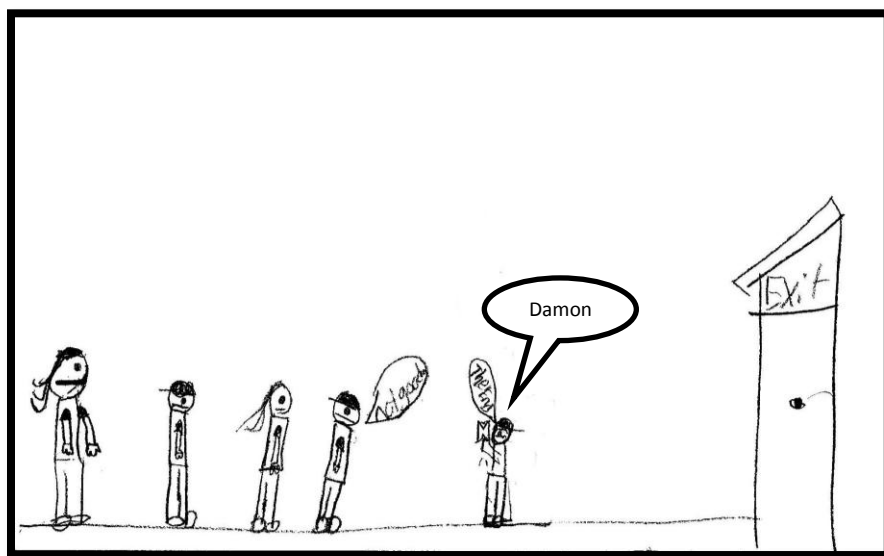
He explained that “I have a little bit of a hard time” sounding out words and he did not think that he was very good at “reading out loud in class.” He did feel he was a good reader “when I read in my head.” During our reading conversation after the Reading Self-Perception Scale (Henk & Melnick, 1995) Damon *agreed* that reading made him feel happy inside, he felt good inside when he read, and he enjoyed reading. He specified that he felt good inside when he read “at home...because it is not so loud.” Also, he shared that reading made him feel happy inside “‘cause when I read I feel happy and then when people stare at me I don’t feel happy.” He clarified further by stating, “when I read out loud I get shy, when I read in my head I don’t” so he felt good inside “when I read alone.” His location, at home or at school, did not matter as long as he got to read alone. In addition, he felt reading was relaxing but “at home” because at school “people yell a lot.” He *strongly disagreed* that he liked to read aloud and that he felt calm when he read. He explained that “I’m shy” and when he read out loud he did not feel calm, but he did reading in his head. He illustrated that when “she calls on us to read out loud...I feel shy to read out loud.” He also articulated that he felt “like I am not going to pass... ‘cause we read books to get a grade.” Damon provided even more details by clarifying that he does not feel shy if it is just with one other person, but when in a small group “a little bit shy” and in front of the whole class “really shy.” From Damon’s explanations, it appeared that Damon had a strong emotional response when he was asked to read or perform out loud in front of his classmates.

It appeared that Damon’s self-consciousness and slow reading pace influenced how much reading practice he experienced during whole group fluency practice activities. For instance,

while observing a whole-group read aloud, I noted, “Damon is attempting to read aloud, but he cannot keep up. He is moving his lips as if he is reading, but they do not match the actual words with what others are reading out loud. He is continually looking around at others. He is also kicking his legs and chewing on his fingernails while he is trying to read aloud and looking at other. It seems as if he is losing his place when he looks up at others” (Observation Notes).

After this particular observation, I asked Damon how he felt about the words he was reading and he said “they were kinda hard” and when I asked him if he liked the activity, he said, “no...because I felt shy.” When discussing why he marked that he *worried about what other kids thought of his reading once in a while* on the RSPS, he explained that, “whenever I am doing my partner reading and I feel shy and sometimes I read kinda slow and I wonder if they think I am reading good enough.”

I asked Damon to respond to the following prompt adapted from Pflaum and Bishop (2004): Draw a time when you were not engaged in a reading lesson or what is it that you like the least about reading time? The image in Figure 9 is what he drew.

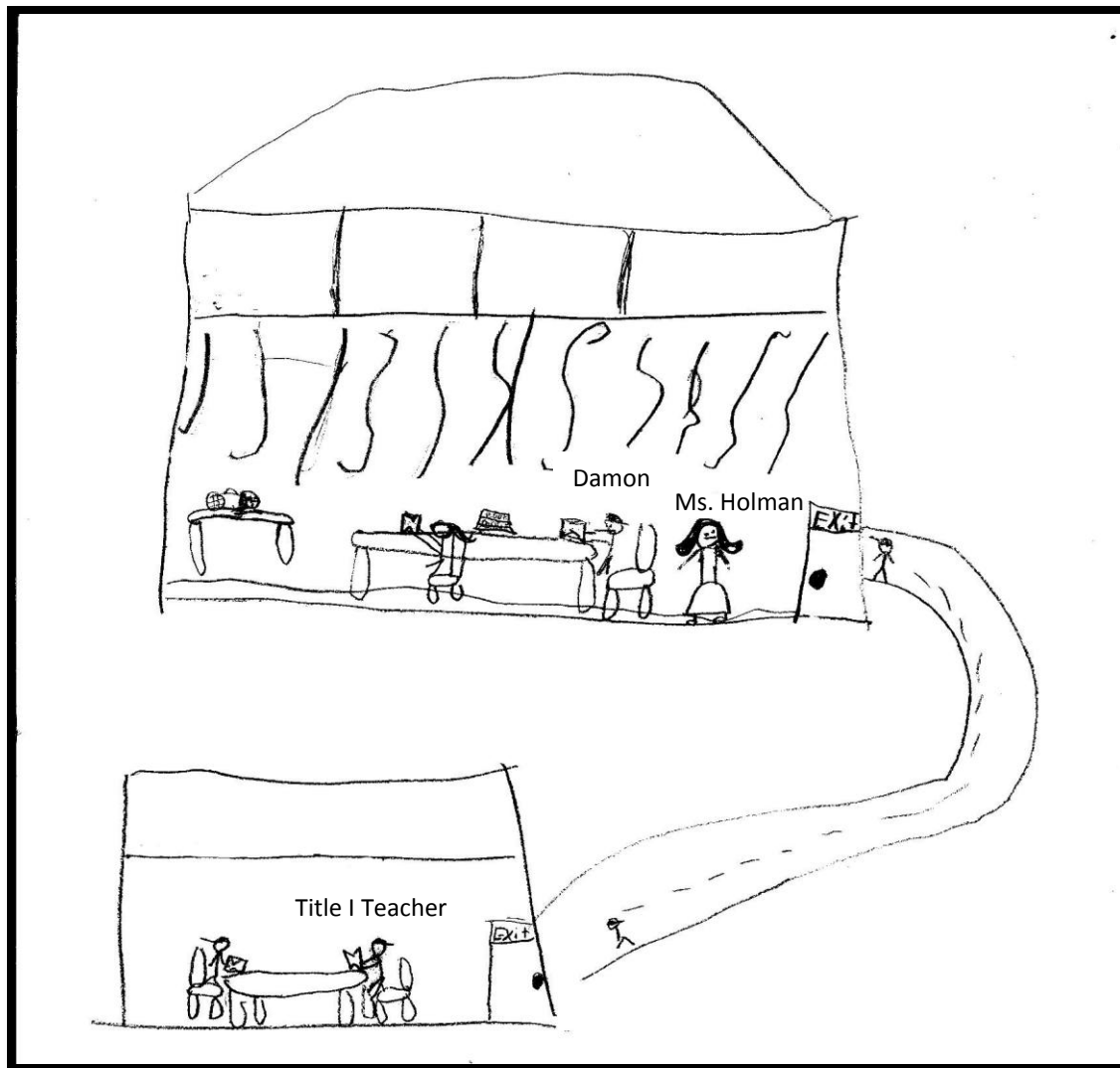


*Figure 9. Damon's Drawing of What He Likes Least About Reading. Note. The caption with Damon's name was inserted to protect the participant's identity; he had drawn a bubble with his real name.*

Damon described his illustration by explaining, "I have me reading a book to a big group, I don't like when I read in front of big groups." Damon further explained that he drew another student in his class saying "not cool" to him while he was reading aloud. After I asked him if another student actually said not cool to him while he was reading, he responded with, "I feel like they would say it...they didn't say nothing at all." Thus, the aspect about reading instruction that Damon liked the least did not actually take place, but it was his self-consciousness and fear of what other students thought or would possibly say to him while reading out loud. Hence, it seemed as though Damon's reading insecurities were constantly present and affected how he perceived himself as a reader, how he experienced reading fluency practice, and how he perceived others to be continually noticing his abilities.

Similarly, during another observation, when three students were supposed to be reading the story out loud to each other, Damon was dancing around being silly and off task. One of his partners yelled at him to stop (Observation Notes). However, after another particular observation of partner work, Damon seemed eager to read with his partner and was very on task. When I asked him if he enjoyed his partner reading for the day he explained that "yes...I did not feel shy because I know my partner and he is my friend." In fact, in order to understand what Damon liked the best about reading time, he participated in a drawing prompt adapted from Pflaum and Bishop's (2004) drawing prompts. After a discussion led by Damon about reading activities he did during class, he responded by drawing an answer to the following prompt: Draw a time when you were engaged with the lesson. The image in Figure 10 is what Damon illustrated.





*Figure 10. Damon's Drawing of Reading Engagement. Note. All names were inserted; he had labeled real names.*

When Damon explained his drawing, he articulated “this is at center time... I am reading out loud to my best friend a book that we have chosen from Ms. Holman from her classroom.” In addition, he explained he drew Ms. Holman, because “whenever she lets us read books, she walks around.” Damon clarified that he did not like to read out loud unless it was with his best friend. They got to select their own books and enjoy reading it together and talking about it. Since Damon had such an enjoyment for recreational reading, it made sense that his favorite

reading time was to select a book of his topic and read it with his best friend. When I asked him why he drew a picture of his Title class, explained that he enjoyed going there also. However, when I asked him how often he got to do his centers, he did explain that “we don’t usually get to do this because we come in here [Title I class]. So Damon rarely got to participate in his favorite reading instructional activity.

### **“...They understand and I don’t...”and Hard Words**

Ms. Holman shared her perspective of Damon’s performance, “A lot of time I will get papers turned in with blanks or I don’t know answers instead of asking me for help. He doesn’t want to put in the effort to go find the answers.” When understanding how Damon experienced reading instruction, it appeared that he was continually trying to read words he thought were hard, and he felt like he was a slow reader who did not understand what he read. When trying to explain why he *disagreed* that he read faster than his peers, he simply stated “I can’t read faster than other kids.” He also explained, “‘cause they can understand and I don’t...because every time I read when I am done I forget about it because I forget fast.” In addition, he said “‘cause at the end, well I don’t know, ‘cause at the end I am done reading it and I don’t remember it.” Damon explained why he marked that *when I am reading by myself, I understand some of what I read* rather than *all of what I read* by stating, “‘cause when I read something and when I am done with it sometimes I don’t understand because I forget.” Damon attributed his lack of understanding to forgetfulness. In addition, on the RSPS any statement that related to how well he understood what he read, such as *I understand what I read better than I could before*, he marked *strongly disagree*. When I asked him to explain, he remarked “‘cause I don’t know, I just don’t understand.” When I asked him why he marked the *strongly disagree* for the question *my*

teacher thinks that my reading is fine he explained, “I don’t think that she thinks...because every time I read to myself I don’t understand it.”

Ms. Holman explained that on most reading assignments, she returned them for an averaged-grade due to his lower performance. She clarified her thoughts, “It honestly depends on the kind of day that he is having. Some days he will get it done and it will be fine. The other day he got a 100% on an assignment, but some days he will get a 50% on an assignment; it really just depends on what he feels like doing that day.” She further explained that Damon “often turns in his assignment quickly, will then get it graded, and returned to him. Often he will get his paper back first to go over it and to make corrections so that it takes him more time.” Figure 11 is an example of the type of work that Damon submitted along with notations that Ms. Holman made to communicate with his parents and to keep in his file.

50%

**Social Studies Chapter 7 Lesson 3** Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt!** Match the definitions below with the definitions in your textbook. Then write the letter next to the definitions on the line next to the correct vocabulary word or person. Make sure you write the page number in the blank where you found the definition in the textbook.

1. <u>f</u> decision (page _____)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fairness
2. <u>i</u> Jimmy Carter (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> a time when people refuse to buy or use something because of their beliefs
3. <u>b</u> justice (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> to work together
4. <u>c</u> boycott (page _____)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> someone who does something important and sets an example for others
5. <u>d</u> hero (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> a quality that a person has, such as responsibility, trustworthiness, respect, fairness, patriotism, and caring
6. <u>e</u> Rosa Parks (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> a choice
7. <u>a</u> character trait (page _____)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a teacher who helped farm workers become citizens, learn how to earn money, buy food, and vote
8. <u>g</u> Dolores Huerta (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> a man who worked to gain equal rights for Hispanic Americans in non-violent ways.
9. <u>j</u> cooperate (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> a former President of the United States that works for peace and volunteers to build houses for others through Habitat for Humanity
10. <u>h</u> Cesar Chavez (page _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> an African American who refused to give up her seat on the bus because she knew it was unfair.

\*I gave this back to him to fix. He did not attempt to use his book or his notebook to help.

*Figure 11. Damon's Work Sample.*

During one particular observation, the students were assigned partners to read aloud the story and complete a comprehension worksheet. Damon and his partner appeared to be on task during this time. I saw Damon and his partner taking turns reading the story and filling in the worksheet. As time progressed, partners began returning to their seats with completed worksheets. Damon's slower reading pace seemed to affect how long it took to complete the activity. From my observation notes I wrote, "Damon's partner read through the page quickly, it is taking Damon at least twice as long to work through his page as it is his partner" (Observation Notes). After some discussion between the two, his Partner raised his hand and told Ms. Holman that Damon was not reading aloud anymore. Damon and his partner were one of the few groups to remain on the floor, but continued to work through the worksheet as Ms. Holman directed. They were the last ones to finish; all of the other groups were in their seats when they finally turned in their work (Observation Notes). After the assignment, I asked Damon why he stopped reading aloud to his partner and he responded, "I didn't know the words." Hence, it appeared that Damon was dealing with trying to read aloud and eventually lost understanding of the activity due to lack of fluency and inability to work through third-grade text. It seemed that his partner became frustrated with him because they were the last ones to complete their work and because Damon stopped following the teacher's directions to read aloud when it was his turn.

On another observation occasion, after Damon and a partner completed a worksheet, they were instructed to reread their story of the week again. As Damon was reading aloud, his partner corrected him and provided him with the word if he did not say it fast enough (Observation Notes). Hence, it appeared there was pressure on Damon to read the text faster than what he was

capable of. He would read and then say “wait, no” when he came to a word that he was attempting to figure out. The partner would immediately provide him with the word (Observation Notes). When I asked him if he liked to read with a partner, his response was “no, I was shy.” When I asked about the words in the story he clarified “they were a little bit hard.”

When asked about some things that Ms. Holman did to help him with his reading, he replied “she hasn’t helped me with my reading.” When asked if she does anything to help anyone with reading, he replied, “on the reading test, she helps the whole class.” He continued to explain how she would read the whole test aloud to the class. Damon felt that it helped when Ms. Holman read the words aloud on the test. When asked how he would feel if he had to read it on his own, he said, “I don’t know the words.” When Damon responded on an affective assessment that he strongly disagreed that he read more than other kids, he explained he read “not as much” and “I have littler books; they have big books that they check out from the library.” When I asked him why he explained, “they have easier words.”

### **Academic Reading is Boring**

Damon had a high interest in recreational reading. He enjoyed selecting his own books and he shared that he spent time at home reading books from his book tub. However, when it came to academic reading tasks and activities, Damon did not seem to enjoy it as much. While Damon enjoyed reading library books and books from his tub at home, he explained that did not like the stories that he had to read from his reading book. He felt they were “boring” and he got tired of “rereading the same stories over” throughout the week (Conversation Notes).

Ms. Holman shared her opinion, “He has troubles paying attention. He would rather not be doing what we are doing, he would rather be drawing or something and I have to be on top of him quite often to make sure that it gets done.” During one particular observation, Ms. Holman

had instructed the children to reread their story for the week silently in their heads. Damon instantly pulled out a notebook and began drawing until Ms. Holman asked him to put it away and begin reading (Observation Notes). When I asked Damon why he did not want to read, he explained that he had already read the story and knew what was going to happen. During a reading conversation after administering the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Damon shared that he did not like to reread stories. In fact, he circled the grumpy Garfield when asked about how he felt about the stories he read in reading class “‘cause we have to read in our reading book for a week over and over.” While Damon marked that he “like[ed] learning about books,” he did not like his school books because “I have to read the same thing over and over again.” Damon also felt “not so happy” when Ms. Holman asked him questions about what he read. He did not like to answer questions because he felt if he got them wrong, then he would have to go back and reread the story again (Conversation Notes). Damon thought Ms. Holman had them reread it so many times “for our reading test” but he did not like to because “after I finish it I remember it and I am ready to go on to the next one.” Damon did pull out his book after Ms. Holman asked him to, but spent the reading time looking around at others and playing with his pencils rather than rereading the text (Observation Notes). One instructional activity that Ms. Holman had the students participate in was to listen to the story of the week on tape. Ms. Holman expressed, “Often if we do the listening with the story, I tell them to make sure they are following along and Damon quite often is not.” When I observed Damon during this instructional activity, his eyes were often not in the text, but looking around the room or drawing in his notebook (Observation Notes).

On the other hand, Damon did participate in group discussions by raising his hand and sharing an answer or his thoughts. After the students completed their reading comprehension

scavenger hunt, Damon raised his hand to share some of his answers. When Ms. Holman read a story aloud, Damon had his eyes on her and seemed to be listening. He shared that he enjoyed hearing new stories, so this was an instructional activity that seemed to be engaging to Damon. This type of reading activity was more consistent with the recreational reading activities that Damon enjoyed, where he did not have to produce work, but simply enjoy the story.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

Anthony, Suzie, and Damon met the qualifications to classify them as struggling readers for the purposes of this study. All three students received reading instruction from a single classroom teacher. In looking across the three cases, the unique and complex perceptions of each student are situated in three broad similarities: (a) their perceptions of reading centered on the idea that *reading is about hard words*, (b) their perceptions of themselves as struggling readers revealed their *internal struggles*, and (c) their *sensitivity to the social* in their perceptions of others' perceptions of them. The ways in which the students perceived themselves as readers and experienced reading instruction were framed by these similarities; however, as evidenced in the sections that follow, each one was unique.

*Reading is about hard words.* Anthony, Suzie, and Damon perceived reading to be hard, and for all three of them, hard meant words. Yet, hard words were perceived differently by each one of them. From Anthony's perspective, hard words were words he had difficulty decoding. He continually talked about trying to sound out words, yet he recognized that some words are "not doable" which made it harder for him to figure out how to say them. To Anthony, hard words meant "big words I am still learning." For the most part, Anthony had an understanding of what words meant and was able to discuss and understand vocabulary words; his challenge was simply decoding or figuring out how to read the words. On the reading assessments, he was not

able to read the vocabulary words because he felt “they’re like strange, some of the words I haven’t learned yet so they are hard,” yet, when Ms. Holman read aloud the vocabulary words, Anthony was able to mark the correct definition due to his understanding of meaning.

From Suzie’s perspective, hard words were both words she had difficulty decoding and vocabulary words she did not understand. She shared that “there are a lot of words that I don’t know...and some of the words I can’t really understand.” Not only did she have a difficult time reading or decoding the word, but she also did not know the meaning of many of the vocabulary words. She explained that there are “words I don’t really know...from the story” and she shared that she was not sure of the answer at times when her teacher asked her about what they meant. For instance, even when Ms. Holman read aloud the vocabulary quizzes, Suzie often missed the words because she did not know the meaning. Consequently, when Suzie would at times decode the words correctly, she still had difficulties because she did not know the meaning of them.

From Damon’s perspective, the construct of hard words was how he articulated his difficulties with comprehension. Damon made many comments all throughout that “I just don’t understand.” Not only did Damon have difficulty decoding the words, understanding the meaning of the vocabulary words, but he also just did not understand what he read. Even when he was able to figure out how to pronounce the word, hard words were also about how the words fit together to make a meaningful story or text. He was unable to make meaning out of the stories he read explaining that he often “forgot” what he was reading.

*Internal Struggles.* All three struggling readers experienced some type of negative internal feelings during reading instruction. Anthony felt an underlying pressure to be faster; pressure to read faster and to complete his work faster. However, from his perspective, he was “in the middle,” he read “medium,” and he felt that when he read faster, it was more difficult.



Anthony also felt that he took his time when completing his work. Anthony alluded to feeling the most pressure when he had to read aloud. He described this pressure through his explanation of how he felt nervous, how he would sweat, and how he never would volunteer to read aloud.

Susie felt rushed; from her perspective, she did not have the amount of time she needed to work through the reading tasks. For example, when we were discussing a strategy she attempted to use when she was asked to respond out loud and did not know the answer, she explained how the teacher calls on someone else in the time it takes her to “stretch the word out.” Susie also experienced this time pressure when her classmates said the word while she was still trying to decode the word. In addition, when discussing the comprehension scavenger hunt worksheets, she indicated that she felt that she didn’t have enough time to complete it.

Damon indicated that he felt shy. Damon said he felt shy when reading with a partner and that he felt shy when he had to read aloud. For Damon, reading aloud was one of the aspects he liked least about reading in his classroom. Damon’s internal struggles are also captured in the way he differentiates reading at home and reading at school. Damon had a very positive attitude about recreational reading, but not about academic reading. Even when an instrument did not separate the two, Damon did. For example, when discussing how reading made him feel, Damon articulated that reading made him feel happy inside because he feels happy when he reads, but not when he reads aloud. Damon stated, “When I read out loud I get shy, when I read in my head I don’t.” He feels good inside when he reads alone.

*Sensitivity to the Social.* The ways in which Anthony, Susie, and Damon perceived that others perceived their reading was quite profound. When Anthony explained how he felt about reading aloud, he described his feeling as “stage fright,” and while singing in front of a crowd did not scare him, reading did. When questioned about what kind of a reader he was, Anthony

indicated that he was *ok* rather than *good* or *very good*. He explained, “I feel that I am a good reader, but sometimes my friends say you’re ok.” Consequently, even though Anthony felt like he was a good reader, he marked that he was *ok* because he knew that was how his friends felt about his reading, suggesting that his awareness of his friends’ perspectives swayed him to mark a different answer than he truly felt. Anthony clarified, “I think I am great, but some kids don’t, they don’t know I am a great reader.” He also marked that he worried about what other kids think about his reading *once in a while* instead of *never*. When discussing his least favorite aspect of reading instruction, Anthony drew a scene of another student laughing at him as a result of him still working while others were finished. Further, he shared that he knew it took him longer to complete his work because “I seen them reading their books or their folders are gone” suggesting that he was aware and sensitive to what took place around him.

Suzie articulated that she also felt nervous if she had to read out loud in class. She explained her worry by stating, “Some of the kids might kinda like see you and think that you are weird.” Suzie continually looked at others to take note what they were doing and she made social comparisons of her skills and abilities to others. Suzie felt that she did not read as well as her friends as she explained that her grades were lower than her friends and that happened regularly when she looked at her friends’ papers. She also articulated that “when we are reading in our reading book, everyone usually gets done before me.” Again taking note of what activities were taking place around her. Suzie did not think that her classmates thought she read well. She shared that this opinion was formed because one of her friends giggled when she Suzie attempted to stop and figure out a word. In turn, these perceptions shaped Suzie’s own perceptions as she shared that she did not think she was a very good reader based on what was taking place around her. Suzie articulated through a drawing that one of her favorite parts about

reading included looking at others to see what they were reading or what activities they were participating in.

When Damon and I discussed the statement of *I think I am a good reader*, he told me “Every time I read to someone I think they feel like I am not a good reader...they stare at me in a weird way.” He also felt that his classmates did not think he was a good reader because “they stare at me in a different way now and I don’t think they like how I read because I read slow.” When I asked Damon how he felt when it was time for reading in class, he explained that he did not like it “‘cause you have to read out loud and I don’t like that.” He shared that one of the aspects he liked least about reading in his classroom was “when I have to read out loud.” In his drawing of what he liked the least about reading, he drew what he perceived that other students thought about his reading. He drew them saying “not good” while he was reading a book out loud. However, he articulated that students did not actually say this to him; he just felt that is what they thought about his skills. Hence, one aspect that he liked the least did not actually happen, it was just his fear and sensitivity of what may socially happen. He articulated his concerns about reading with a partner by expressing, “whenever I am doing my partner reading and I feel shy and sometimes I read kinda slow and I wonder if they think I am reading good enough.” His insecurities also appeared during observations as his social sensitivity seemed to cause him to constantly look at others when reading aloud rather than focus on the text and if he missed a word, he would laugh at himself and look at others even if they were not paying attention to him.

In summary, all three students had a different perspective of how they perceived themselves as readers and the role that reading attitude, motivation, and self-perception played in their experiences. Although they all experienced the reading instruction in a different manner by

constructing their own realities, their realities were framed in (a) the idea that *reading is about hard words*, (b) they experienced *internal struggles*, and (c) their *sensitivity to the social* shaped their perceptions of themselves as readers and the way they experienced the instruction.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Pollard, Thiessen, and Filer (1997) suggested that, “what is taught is not necessarily what is learned” (p. 5). In part, this is because educators and researchers make assumptions about students and their learning that are different from students’ perceptions (Wray & Medwell, 2006). Throughout this study, I saw how the students’ perception differed from their teacher’s perception and how instructional activities implemented with specific purposes did not always match the ways they were experienced by students. As a previous classroom teacher and a current Title I teacher, it was occasionally challenging for me to see the experiences from the lens of the students as I understood most of the rationales and purposes behind the given instruction. For example, I recognized that the teacher was attempting to provide fluency practice through multiple readings of the same story, whereas the students saw another time of reading a story they had already read several times boring or too difficult.

#### **Multiple Realities**

Lantolf (2000) applied the activity theory, which is a derivative of social constructivist theory, to classroom experiences. He articulates that even if students in the same class participate in the same task, they may not be engaged in the same activity. That is, regardless of the intentions of the classroom teacher, students with different reading motives and/or attitudes often have different reading goals which formulate their actions. Thus, students play a major role in shaping the goal and the ultimate outcomes of reading tasks and activities. Although the classroom teacher’s intent was to provide reading instruction and practice that encouraged growth in all third-grade students; that was not always the case with the way these three students experienced the instruction. For example, Suzie perceived that everything moved very quickly

around her and she often felt rushed when trying to complete the reading tasks. However, in observing Suzie when the teacher was giving directions for class work, Suzie would be playing with her pencil box, tying her shoes, getting up from her seat for a tissue, whispering to others, or simply looking around. Suzie often missed the instructions (or part of the instructions), and that could make her reading work harder to complete. There are many possible reasons as to why Suzie's experiences in reading instruction were to engage in off-task behavior. In perceiving that reading was boring, perhaps the instruction did not hold her attention, or in perceiving the work was too hard, perhaps she felt that listening to the instruction would not help, or in perceiving the work would be too hard and boring, perhaps she was just avoiding the task. As a classroom teacher it is unsettling to observe and then defend students who are off task, not following directions, and seemingly not putting in any effort. Yet, as a researcher, I see Eccles et al. (1983) expectancy-value theory of motivation; that is, motivation is strongly influenced by one's expectations of failure or success at a task. As a teacher/researcher, I am left wondering, who then should be accountable?

Struggling readers are often instructed with materials that are too difficult for them to read (Allington, 1984), which was the case with these three students. During classroom reading instruction, they were expected to read third-grade level text, when reading assessment data placed their instructional reading levels one or more grade-levels below. All three students articulated the difficulties they encountered in reading. Anthony felt there were too many words he didn't know, Suzie felt that the text was too long and she didn't have enough time, and Damon felt like he just didn't get it. When considering the text and their reading abilities, the words were too difficult, the texts were too difficult, and the activities were challenging for them because the words were too hard.

Yet, while the students' voices are powerful throughout this study, we cannot just take them at face value as there is more to their struggles. Henk and Melnick (1995) stated that "when children feel negatively about reading, their achievement tends to suffer" (470). All three students had either a complacent attitude or a negative attitude about academic reading, and they tended to attribute their struggles to outside sources besides their effort and or lack of personal skills and abilities. Attributions are the reasons individuals use to understand or explain past successes or failures in task completion. For instance, individuals may attribute past successes to ability, luck, effort, help from others, and/or task difficulty. Within the reading domain, students that struggle may attribute their performance to external sources such as difficulty of the words, lack of help from the teacher, or the difficulty of the story rather than their personal effort (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). Furthermore, Heibert, Winograd, and Danner (1984) suggest that low-achieving third-grade students attribute their outcomes to luck more than high-achieving third-graders, who perceived their successes and failures as a result of internal factors such as effort. Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Connell (1998) also suggest that 8-year-old children tended to ascribe their level of performance success to external causes. Further, the third-graders who were less confident of their ability and their internal means of control (effort) also demonstrated less engagement in tasks than some of the higher-achieving students who perceived they were able to control the learning situation through their efforts and abilities (internal sources). This study further supports the idea that young struggling readers tend to make outside claims for why they struggle.

Of all three of the students, Anthony seemed to be most aware of his strengths, abilities, and in tune with his academic performance. He recognized that some words were difficult for him and that at times he had difficulties understanding the stories. When his friends told him

“you need to work a little bit on those words,” he responded that he “feels ok” with this because “I do have to work on them.” He recognized that it was an internal source of abilities and if he continued to work harder, then he could do better. In addition, when I asked him why he marked that he was *unsure* for the statement *I am getting better at reading*, he clarified, “because I don’t know yet because there are big words that I am still learning” recognizing he was still growing in his skills as a fluent reader. In regard to his reading comprehension, Anthony marked that when he was reading by himself, he understood *some* of what he read rather than *all* of what he read or *none* of what he read. He gave insight by explaining that “sometimes things don’t make sense to me in a story.” He did not attribute his lack of understanding to an outside source he simply explained that they did not make sense to him. However, one of Anthony’s biggest reading struggles was his slow pace and how fast he was able to figure out words. On a statement such as *I read faster than other kids*, he marked that he *disagreed* and explained by stating, “Because kids read faster than me, I take my time with words.” While he recognized this was a struggle for him, he attributed his slower reading pace to the fact that he took his time with words, which may be the case, or it may also be that he lacked the decoding skills and automaticity to recall the words quickly. Yet, he was aware that “if I hit the fast mark then I mess up on words and lose my spot, I skip lines when I read fast... I am like that is jumping.” When asked about losing his spot, he clarified, “sometimes, but I find it easy when I read back slow.” Hence, Anthony is a struggling reader that was aware of his strengths and weaknesses and is an example of a student who mostly attributes his successes and failures to internal factors.

Suzie, on the other hand, attributed her lack of skills to the factors of time, difficulty of the tasks, and a disinterest in the subject of reading. While she very well may have felt this way about reading, she did not appear to acknowledge that even though she felt this way, there were



other possible internal factors as to why she lacked the skills to successfully complete the third-grade reading work. When we were discussing why she marked the grumpiest Garfield representing how she felt about reading workbook pages and worksheets, she simply stated, “I don’t like to read that much on homework and stuff” and “I don’t have time to get it done...” In addition, she explained she thought people who read a lot are boring because “all they want to do is read” and she felt reading was boring. Rather than the possibility that she could not figure out the words or understand the assignments, she attributed her difficulties to a dislike of reading, that it was boring and the teacher not providing her with enough time. She shared “I don’t really like reading time because the words are so hard” and she also explained that she did not feel calm about reading because the stories were long and the tests were difficult for her to complete. Hence, she attributed her lack of success to the difficulty of the reading tasks and dislike rather than her personal skills.

In a conversation with Damon about understanding what he read, he explained he had difficulties, “cause when I read something and when I am done with it sometimes I don’t understand because I forget.” Another time he also explained that “...because every time I read when I am done I forget about it because I forget fast.” He thereby attributed his lack of comprehension to forgetfulness. When discussing how he felt to read out loud, he explained that “I’m shy,” yet when observing Damon in the classroom he was acting silly and joking around with his classmates which were not characteristics of a shy person. Damon attributed his dislike of reading out loud to being shy rather than the possibility of his lack of oral reading skills to contribute to his feelings. He explained that when “she calls on us to read out loud...I feel shy to read out loud.” It appeared that Damon attributed his lack of internal reading skills to the outside traits of forgetfulness and being shy.

The literature on self-perceptions suggested that third-grade students were able to make distinctions in attributions for academic successes and failures. However, lower achieving students tended to attribute to outside sources where as higher achieving students tended to understand that their performances stem from internal sources such as the amount of effort they give on particular tasks. In addition, reading self-perceptions may not correlate with actual reading abilities. Rather, reading self-perceptions form based on influential factors such as reading experiences and teacher and peer perspectives (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995; Nicholls, 1978; Wilson & Trainin, 2007). In turn, throughout this study, I saw that the students' perceptions and understanding of reading were shaped by their classroom experiences. Further, Paley (1986) contended that, "The first order of reality in the classroom is the student's point of view" (p. 127). Regardless of the multiple realities and how the students attributed their skills, and whoever receives the role of the accountability, the bottom line is how the students experienced the instruction was their everyday reality. Pflaum and Bishop (2004) argued that, "how students perceive reading in school has the potential of informing teachers about practice on many levels ..." (p. 202). Maybe if we learn from their perceptions and their reality we can adjust some of our instructional practices to foster higher reading motivation and time on task along with experiences conducive to less internal negative feelings and pressure on the students that struggle and more conducive to experiences that encourage growth and an interest and desire for reading.

### **Implications for Practice**

While the goal is not to generalize how all struggling readers experience reading instruction, there are some instructional implications that I learned from these three students that I will take into account in my future instruction. These implications include: (a) the social

components of learning, (b) lack of benefits of group fluency activities for all students, (c) the importance of the instructional reading level, (d) an awareness that when students leave the regular classroom they are ‘missing something else’.

### **The Social Components of Reading**

Alvermann and Guthrie (1993) attest that literacy learning is both complex and socially situated. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that individual cognitive growth occurs first through personal interaction with the social environment (the classroom), then internalization of the experiences take place (within the self of the reader). Applying this to the reading domain, the social environment, which has been formed by culture and history, shapes the internal processes of reading during reading instruction. While I gained many beneficial insights from this study, one of the most prominent aspects that has opened my eyes to how struggling readers view themselves as readers, which ultimately affects how they experience instruction, is the role of the social world in their reading perceptions and experiences. Self-perceptions are likely to either motivate or inhibit learning (Schunk, 1982). A reader’s self-perception can impact an individual’s overall approach and understanding toward the process itself (Henk & Melnick, 1995). Academic self-perceptions situated in a school setting are not only about actual ability; they also depend on the perceived thoughts and views of teachers and peers (Pitkanen & Nunes, 2000; Stipek & Lupita, 1984). Pitkanen and Nunes (2000) contend that while children’s self-perceptions of their reading may or may not correlate with their academic performances (or realistic abilities), teachers and peers have an influential role in how students’ reading self-constructs shape, form, and/or change over their schooling experiences. I saw this to be the case with all three students. Their reading self-perceptions not only influenced how they experienced the classroom instruction, but the social aspect of learning had a great impact in how their

reading perceptions were shaped. For instance, Anthony felt he was a good reader, but since he felt his friends did not, he indicated on several occasions that he was only an ok reader. Suzie and Damon also both perceived that their friends felt they were poor readers causing them to constantly be socially aware of others rather than focusing on the reading task at hand. All three readers had a strong dislike for oral reading and oral reading activities due to their insecurity of reading in front of their classmates. Hall (2007) examined how three middle school struggling readers used various techniques to promote or protect their specific identities as readers to their peers. She argues that:

Rather than being unmotivated to read and learn, each participant demonstrated that she was interested and cared about learning information presented in the text. However, when trying to promote an identity, the students sometimes had to forgo comprehending text and learning content rather than risk being viewed unfavorably by peers (Hall, 2007, 132).

I contend that the three third-grade students that participated in this study also used various social techniques to protect or promote their reading identities and were concerned about how their peers perceived their reading abilities. Damon would behaviorally act out in front of his peers to distract from his lack of skills or laugh at himself as a way to protect his own insecurities. Further, in order to prevent being the last one to turn in his work, he would often rush through the assignment not giving his best effort. Suzie would not take the necessary time she needed to decode unknown words due to a fear of what her peers thought. She would often focus on other tasks and cause others to be off task to draw attention away from her slow reading pace and poor reading performance. During oral reading activities, Anthony would often try to look ahead in the text asserting that he did not need to read it again because he already knew it or

would argue that it was not his turn so he did not have to read it aloud. Hence, while all three examples mostly relate to oral reading, ultimately they were sacrificing gaining the reading practice, skills, and comprehension to protect their reading identities. Hall (2007) asserts that "...their decisions suggest that struggling readers may place a higher priority on how they are seen as readers than on learning from the text." While their reading motivation and attitude did play a role in their performance; the social feedback was so intertwined with how the motivation and attitude was shaped that they cannot be isolated components. Reading's social components often drove the reading motivation and attitude displayed during instructional activities. That awareness or realization that reading is socially situated and the social arena of learning impacts how the students construct their reading knowledge makes a difference in how instruction can be planned and delivered. The awareness also provides insight into the particular behaviors of students attempting to promote or protect their reading identity, even at the young age of eight.

### **Fluency Practice**

Two common fluency reading practices are (a) choral reading, where all students or a group of students read in unison and (b) partner reading, where each student takes a turn reading the text aloud to practice his/her fluency. While these practices are known for providing practice in reading text aloud (e.g., Rasinski, 2003), they offered little on task practice time for Anthony, Susie, and Damon. Ms. Holman would often have the entire class read sections of the story aloud or would group them in larger groups such as all the boys read a section and then all the girls read a section. While observing this activity on multiple occasions, all three students received limited practice during this activity. For instance, Anthony was often on the wrong page, playing with his pencil, or did not know what he was supposed to be reading and missed the opportunities to practice reading the text. When the attempt was there, he was unable to keep

up with the reading pace. Suzie often had her eyes on her friends to observe their behaviors or she was tying her shoe or some other off task behavior receiving limited practice as well. For Damon, the attempt was often there, but his body language indicated that it was a stressful situation for him. He would kick his legs, tap his fingers, or some other nervous gesture while trying to read. He would move his lips, but they would not match with the words due to the pace of the reading. Hence, all three students missed the instructional benefits of this fluency building activity. In order for it to be of maximum benefit to these three students, I would suggest that they needed to be in a smaller reading group and reading text that was at their reading level so they could keep up with the pace rather than struggling to decode words while attempting to keep up with the pace of the rest of the class.

The students also received limited fluency practice when they were paired with partners. Anthony would often be on a different page than his partner or arguing whose turn it was to read. He would work ahead of his partner by reading it in his head and then not know where he was supposed to read when it was his turn. During my observations, rarely did he work in partners that Ms. Holman did not have to intervene at least once. Suzie would rather not attempt to decode words, so she would quickly ask her partner what the word was or ask her partner to read the page instead. If they were working on completing a reading assignment together, she would take a passive role by trying to simply write down what her partner told her. Depending on who his partner was, Damon would act silly with his partner rather than attempting to read the text aloud. When he did try to read it, his partners would often quickly tell him the word as he attempted to decode it so he missed the opportunity to implement his own strategies of figuring out unknown words. In summary, all three students experienced limited on task instructional practice time with reading the text aloud to their partner. Rather than the unstructured partner

read time, students could have participated in teacher led fluency Peer Coaching (Marr, Algozzine, Nicholson, & Dugar, 2011) where the students are either coaching or being coached in a partner setting, on their reading instructional level, in how to build their reading fluency. This type of fluency practice encourages all students to have a role in the reading and students are receiving scaffolding in building their fluency and accuracy.

Another common instructional practice for the third-grade teachers to implement was to spend a week using the same story to teach a variety of skill lessons and other reading activities. However, at one point in the study, all three students verbalized their dislike for rereading the same story so many times. Anthony, who already had limited interest in reading, lost focus very fast in reading the same text multiple times. His behavior demonstrated that he was bored, he tried to drive his pencils in the air and attempted to read other books rather than doing the activity that the teacher had instructed him to do. Anthony articulated that he only liked reading stories once, "I like reading a new book every time." After a skill lesson where he and a partner had to reread the story to find a fact and an opinion, Anthony shared that he was "bored because I already read the story." Consequently, he missed out on practice with the skill of fact and opinion because the text was not engaging to him. Suzie also shared that she got bored by rereading the story more than once. She explained that she already knew what was going to happen and did not understand why she needed to read it again. In addition, during a reading conversation after administering the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), Damon shared that he did not like to reread stories either. In fact, he circled the grumpy Garfield when asked about how he felt about the stories he read in reading class because "cause we have to read in our reading book for a week over and over." Further, he felt like the purpose of rereading the text so many times was to get ready for the test rather than the authentic purposes of reading. For instance, Damon

thought Ms. Holman had them reread it so many times “for our reading test,” but he did not like to because “after I finish it I remember it and I am ready to go on to the next one.” Thus, it seemed that part of all three students’ lack of engagement was due to redundant text and a lack of understanding the benefits of why they were rereading the story so many times. In addition to boredom, the students were also reading text that was too difficult. Rather than the approach of continually rereading a lengthy story, the students could have received fluency practice through activities such as Reader’s Theatre or rereading short poems (Rasinski, 2003) that may not have seemed so lengthy and boring to the students.

Overall, the way these three students experienced fluency practices suggest that it is important to be particular in choosing instructional activities for the students that struggle by selecting activities that encourage on task reading behaviors and providing practice on their reading level.

### **Reading Instructional Level**

After this study, I can truly appreciate Vygotsky’s theory regarding the zone of proximal development in reading. Vygotsky (1978) defines this theory as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Reading instructional experts such as Fountas and Pinnell (2008) have applied this theory to reading and provided a framework to provide guided reading instruction to students by first identifying their reading instructional range and then providing text and instruction within that range. This provides the opportunities for students such as the three participants in this study to receive reading scaffolded on their reading level until they make enough gains to become independent readers on grade level text; which will ultimately



build their confidence and self-perceptions as they approach learning levels equal to their peers. When students are placed in small groups and are receiving scaffolding on their instructional level from their classroom teacher, it encourages them to receive the practice they need rather than being off task with whole group, one-level text instruction. It seems it would also soothe their insecurities because they are able to perform the oral reading activities with text on their instructional level rather than with words that are out of their range and vocabulary.

### **Missing Something...**

One final implication of how the students experienced reading instruction in this particular class was that they missed what they perceived to be “fun” opportunities to read. All three students felt they were missing “fun” reading center time and library time because they had to leave the classroom. After Ms. Holman explained the format of her reading center time, she clarified “That is all during my lowest students’ Title time, so they don’t get to experience that often. Whenever they don’t have Title, which doesn’t happen very much at all, they can join in, but this is not a daily thing they get to do.” Hence, while all three students received much needed intensive reading instruction through Title I class, they missed out on daily opportunities to further socially construct their reading knowledge and to practice their reading skills in a hands-on, flexible, small-group setting. This was an instructional time when students had the opportunity to practice and experiment with their reading skills in peer led sessions where they were out of their seats and completing activities for the sake of learning and practicing rather than activities for assessment and monitoring.

Edmunds & Bauserman (2006) offer five recommendations to teachers for motivating students in the classroom based on the fourth-graders’ responses in their study. They suggested the following recommendations for increasing children’s reading desires: self-selection, attention

to characteristics of books, personal interests, access to books and active involvement of others. Choice of reading materials was a motivational factor for all three of the students. In fact, they each had specific topics that they liked to read about. However, due to the fact that they had to go to Title I class during their library time, they had a limited amount of time to select books of their choice. In addition, because they took longer to complete their assignments or had to make corrections, they did not get to utilize as much free time reading books of their choice as the other students did. On the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), when I asked Anthony about books he had been reading at school, he said, "I don't have any library books anymore [because] I went to your class [Title I reading]." In addition, Anthony explained that he tried reading his friends' books in the classroom since he did not have his own library book, but he does not read them that much "cause they are not that interesting." Hence, he missed out on some of the motivational aspects of reading such as book choice, which was a highly important reading factor for Anthony, and time to browse for books of interest. Suzie also felt like she was rushed during her library time. Suzie said she would like to read more horse books, but "I can't find any in the library 'cause every time on Wednesday we have to come here [Title I]." She continued to explain that she only got a few minutes in the library and she wished she had more time. She also wished that she could be a part of reading station time, but she has to leave the classroom to either go to a Tutor or Title I time. Further, when Damon drew one of his favorite reading activities, he drew an activity that took place during center time. When I asked him how often he got to do his centers, he explained that "we don't usually get to do this because we come in here [Title I class]. So Damon rarely got to participate in his favorite reading instructional activity. Overall, while the benefits of the Title I class were great, all three students noted that they missed their library time and would like to participate in reading center

time. In a sense, all three struggling students missed some of the most motivational aspects of reading instruction. While this is a limitation to this particular study, as not all struggling readers miss activities such as these, it is important to note they are missing something when they leave the class. As a Title I teacher, my focus has been the intensive reading instruction that the students need, and this study has reminded me that any time students leave their homeroom class, additional frustration and/or pressure can be added due to what they feel they are missing. Hence, the implication from this study is for teachers to take into account what the students are missing when they are out of the room, take note how the students may feel, and, if possible, allow them opportunities to experience missed activities, such as an additional library time.

In summary, while many insights were gained from this study, there were several factors that I will be aware of during my future instructional time with struggling readers. First of all, is how much the social arena impacts the students' perceptions of themselves as readers, which ultimately affects the way they experience reading and reading instruction. There are also instructional factors that either inhibit or promote the widening achievement gap between struggling readers and their peers, such as the choice of fluency practice and activities implemented and providing opportunities for students to experiment with text on their instructional level. Finally, teachers should have an awareness that students often recognize that they are missing *something* when they leave their class for additional services and attempting to structure the time missed to be the least disappointing to their reading motivation. While students have to take responsibility for their own learning and how they construct their own reading knowledge, many instructional and environmental factors could have been changed so that these three struggling readers could have experienced maximum instructional benefits. Thus, while it is a challenging role, it is the teacher's responsibility to pay attention to how the

students are experiencing instruction, and, if there is little practice being received by the student, then the challenge to educators is to determine why and to change their teaching approaches until the struggling readers become engaged and active learners in their classroom environment.

### **Implications for Future Research**

While this study does not propose or suggest new findings, it does support and extend current literacy ideas. Additional research in the following areas would be beneficial: (a) an investigation of how reading identities are formed in struggling readers at an elementary age and how these identities impact how students experience reading instruction, (b) a comparison study to investigate how struggling readers experience reading instruction in a whole-group instruction format versus a guiding reading/ instructional level focused format, and (c) additional studies with a larger number of participants from a variety of classes.

When examining how three struggling readers transacted with reading tasks, Hall (2005) reported that “the ways in which each participant transacted with the reading task demands of her classroom was influenced by how she saw herself as a reader” (p.9). Although each student attempted to engage in the text and wanted to understand the readings and the class content, the students’ perception of themselves as readers affected how they interacted with the text. The students were more likely to engage with the text if they thought they could understand and comprehend it. Further, the participants showed that they would rather not “understand a text rather than risk revealing their perceived inabilities to their teacher and/or peers.” (p.9). Similar to the assertions of McCray et al. (2001), she suggested that the students were motivated to read and learn, but one component was that the students were concerned about being embarrassed in front of their peers and/or teacher. In fact, when attempting to protect their identity, the students chose to relinquish understanding the story rather than risk a chance of their classmates viewing

them negatively. My study proposes that struggling readers as young as third-grade acted in a similar manner. The social environment and these reading identities had a strong impact in how the students experienced their daily reading instruction. Thus, additional research is needed to begin to understand *how* these identities are formed and in turn what type of reading instructional approaches foster healthy reading identities and healthy social learning situations.

Struggling readers ranging from first grade (Bondy, 1990), third grade (Medwell, 1991), to middle school (McCray, Vaughn, & Neal, 2001) constructed very different definitions and purposes of reading than higher readers. Their definitions of reading were very narrow and simplistic that related to the process of reading (i.e., decoding words, school work, reading fluency) rather than the higher purposes of reading (i.e., ways to learn, private pleasures, social activities). All three students in this study perceived difficult words to be a main aspect of reading. It seemed that they perceived that the purpose of reading instruction was to help them learn new words, rather than to become better reader. Moreover, to them, a better reader meant knowing more words. Hence, an additional question that this raises is: if they were instructed on their reading instructional level with text that was not so overwhelming, would they have made more meaning out of the text and thus have begun to develop higher meaning for reading than simply figuring out the words? Dahl and Freppon (1995) sought to learn how students experienced reading instruction in classrooms that implemented two different methodological approaches. They completed a two-year ethnographic study that examined the perceptions of urban elementary students to their instruction in two different instructional contexts: a skills-based reading curriculum and a whole language approach to learn to read and write. Their data, similar to other studies (e. g., Bondy, 1990) supplied evidence that suggested students' learning and perceptions imitated and developed based on the particular reading strategies and approaches

valued by the classroom teacher. Therefore, an additional research direction would be to compare how struggling readers experience reading instruction from a whole-group instructional method compared to a small-group guided reading approach where students are instructed within their zone of proximal reading development. Would one of their commonalities be how hard they found the instruction or would it be more meaningful to them?

Finally, by choice, the design of this study was to limit the participants to three students that experienced reading instruction in one classroom by one teacher. While all three students constructed different experiences, there were some similarities in how they experience the instruction: they felt internal pressures, the activities, tasks, and words were hard, and they found aspects of instruction to simply be boring. In order to gain further instructional insights, additional studies need to be conducted with young readers from different classrooms to determine how they experience reading instruction. Using data gathered from more participants experiencing various teaching styles and approaches, we could either find additional insightful commonalities of how struggling readers experience reading instruction or find that particular instructional approaches encourage or prohibit reading growth, motivation, and/ or an enjoyment of reading with meaningful experiences rather than word recall with negative internal feelings. Overall, additional studies from the students' perspectives provide further insights into how struggling readers perceive themselves as readers and ultimately experience the delivered instruction. These insights shed valuable information into our future instructional practices for struggling readers.

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APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Teacher Interview

This interview was informal and flexible. I asked additional questions based on the teacher's responses.

1. How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ as a student?
2. How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ as a reader?
3. What are \_\_\_\_\_ strengths and weaknesses as a reader?
4. How would you describe \_\_\_\_\_ social skills?
5. How would you describe your approach to teaching reading?
6. How do you think \_\_\_\_\_ feels about reading?
7. Will you talk about the format you use for reading instruction? What about the materials?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add about your reading instruction or about \_\_\_\_\_?

After a lesson taught

1. How do you think that reading lesson went?
2. What was the purpose of the lesson?
3. Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ understood what reading concepts you were teaching?



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