Differentiated Literacy Instruction and Its Effect on Students' Reading Comprehension

by

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DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

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Division of Graduate Studies
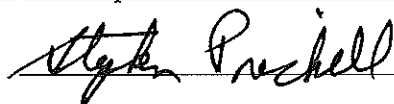
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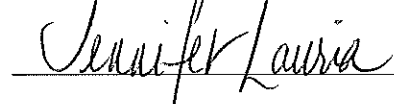
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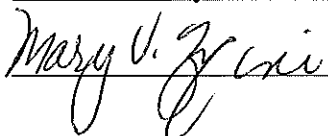
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Abstract

In today's diverse school systems throughout the United States, different types of students are constantly grouped together in classrooms. Many students have different levels of ability as well as different learning styles. With the pressure of standardized testing and curriculum goals, teachers may feel forced to design instruction based on what students will be tested on rather than being able to incorporate students' interests into lesson planning. This study tested students' performance while students' were placed in their reading groups and the teacher chose the book for them versus students' performance in interest groups where they were able to select a text for themselves.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Importance of This Study

The students populating United States classrooms today are extremely diverse. They come from differing cultures and have different learning styles. They arrive at school with differing levels of emotional and social maturity. Their interests differ greatly, both in topic and intensity. At any given time, they reflect differing levels of academic readiness in various subjects, while readiness and interest can vary for a given student over time and depending on the subject matter (Tomlinson, 2001). In today's ever-changing and diverse society, teachers encounter obstacles and challenges every day. A majority of teachers struggle with implementation of instructional strategies, and how to ensure that every student can learn to his/her best ability. Differentiated instruction helps students understand and apply content and processes in their literacy learning and gives them choices about their different learning experiences (Tobin and McInnes, 2008).

This study seeks to explore differentiation strategies and its effect on how well students comprehend texts with these strategies in place. Through various research techniques, students will be grouped and assessed several ways in order to discover the best way for students to learn. The specific techniques being researched are grouping students with the same reading level and assessing their reading comprehension of the text, using three different forms of assessments; Multiple Choice, Fill-In the Blanks, and Written Responses. Additionally, the students will also be grouped on separate occasions, with other students grouped based on their similar interests/text selection. The

students will also be assessed in their interest groups, using the same three assessment

forms. The goal of this study is to compare students' performance results using the two

different styles of differentiation, along with various strategies to conclude whether or not

students comprehend texts more effectively through differentiated instruction in groups

based on their reading levels or when they are grouped based on their interests.

Statement of Problem

Every student learns differently and students with varying abilities are often put

together in one classroom. The goal for teachers is to meet the needs of all students and

ensure that students are learning to their best abilities. Teachers make accommodations,

vary teaching styles and differentiate instruction on a daily basis. It is believed that

mixed-ability classrooms without differentiation techniques and strategies lack the

understanding of students' abilities and accomplishments.

In the end, we can draw at least three powerful conclusions about teaching and

learning. Mixed-ability classrooms that are ambiguous about learning goals, that

evoke little passion, that cast the teacher as the centerpiece of learning, and that

lack responsiveness to student variance show little understanding of these various

learning realities. They lack the foundation of all-powerful learning, top quality

curriculum and instruction— as well as a key refinement of superior curriculum

and instruction, differentiated or responsive instruction. In regard to the first-

named deficit, these classrooms operate as though clarity of understanding can

be achieved through ambiguity and that fires of inquiry will be ignited in the

absence of a flame. In regard to the latter deficit, they imply that all students need

to learn the same things in the same way over the same time span (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 51).

First, while the image of a "standard issue" student is comfortable, it denies most of what we know about the wide variance that inevitably exists within any group of learners. Second, there is no substitute for high-quality curriculum and instruction in classrooms. Third, even in the presence of high-quality curriculum and instruction, we will fall woefully short of the goal of helping each learner build a good life through the power of education unless we build bridges between the learner and learning (Tomlinson, 2001). "These three conclusions are the engine that drives effective differentiation. They, along with our best knowledge of what makes learning happen, are non-negotiable in a classroom where a teacher sets out to make each learner a captive of the mystery and power of knowing about the world in which those learners will live out their lives"(Tomlinson, 2001, p. 52).

Research Question

The goal of this study is to answer the following research question: Do students comprehend texts more effectively through differentiated instruction in groups based on reading levels or groups based on interests?

Definition of Terms

All terms were retrieved from:

School Wide Press: Glossary of educational terms. (2008). Retrieved from:

http://www.schoolwisepress.com/smart/dict/dict3.html

Accommodations.

Changes in the way instruction/tests are designed or administered to respond to the special learning needs of students.

Advanced Learners.

Students who are able to perform challenging tasks and exceed grade level expectations.

Assessments.

Teacher-made tests, standardized tests, or tests from textbook companies that are used to evaluate student performance.

Differentiation.

An instructional technique that includes various ways to teach content and assess learning. It is used to meet student needs and differences in readiness, interests and learning styles. Also referred to as "individualized" or "customized" instruction.

Learning Styles.

Ways in which students learn best as individuals. Some of these include kinesthetic, visual, and auditory learning style preferences.

Learning Profiles.

Characteristics of a students' learning profile can include, intelligence preference, gender, and culture.

Mixed Ability Classrooms.

A classroom that may include a wide range of learners with different levels of ability, and different learning styles.

Reading Comprehension.

The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.

Reading Levels.

A letter or number assigned to the level of complexity of reading material, that is equal to a given level of schooling.

Rubric.

Refers to a grading or scoring system. A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria to be met in a piece of work. A rubric also describes levels of quality for each of the criteria. These levels of performance may be written as different ratings.

Struggling Learners.

Students who find learning to read and write highly challenging tasks.

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Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The Need for Differentiated Instruction in Education

Too many children in America fail to achieve proficient reading skills and the rate is particularly troubling, close to 60% (Connor, et. al, 2009). Ensuring rock solid clarity about where we want students to end up as a result of sequenced learning is fundamental to educational success. Remembering that we cannot reach the mind we do not engage should be a daily compass for educational planning. Multiple factors can affect children's literacy development including home, parenting, parent educational levels, preschool, community resources, as well as formal schooling (Connor, Son, Hindman, & Morrison, 2005; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2004). Offering multiple and varied avenues to learning is a hallmark of the kind of professional quality that denotes expertise (Tomlinson, 1999).

Many children fail to achieve proficient reading skills because they do not receive appropriate amounts of particular types of literacy instruction during the primary grades. Early literacy instruction that is balanced between phonics and more meaningful reading experiences is more effective than instruction that focuses on one while excluding the other (Mathes et al.,2005; Xue & Meisels, 2004). Differentiation develops more equitable learning environments for all students. It creates a classroom community in which all students develop a sense of belonging and acceptance. (Dotger and Causton-Theoharis, 2010)

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Struggling Learners

A wide variety of students struggle with school tasks and differentiated instruction can offer many avenues and timetables to understanding. There are various strategies and techniques that teachers can implement in order to reach the needs of struggling learners. Teachers need to look for the positive attributes demonstrated by a learner. Every student does some things relatively well. It is important to find those things, to affirm them in private conversations and before peers to design tasks that draw on those strengths and to ensure that the student can use strengths as a means of tackling difficulty. Paying attention to the relevance of materials is also something that teachers must consider. Students must be engaged and feel compelled to perform in order to become a life long learner. By engaging struggling readers with high quality content materials and knowledge, they will become more motivated to learn and want to improve.

Additionally, if struggling learners cannot learn all of the material introduced during a lesson, teachers should make sure they learn the big ideas, key concepts, and governing principles of the subject at hand. Not only does this approach help struggling learners see the big picture of the topic and subject, but it also helps build a scaffolding of meaning, a requisite framework for future success (Tomlinson, 1999).

Many teachers feel the need to "teach down" to struggling students, but it is truly more effective to "teach up." By knowing your struggling students' learning profiles, teachers can create tasks for struggling learners, as individuals or in groups, with similar levels that are slightly more difficult than you believe they can accomplish. By doing this, students will still be challenged while being able to accomplish tasks successfully. Additionally, students also need to feel a sense of motivation to learn. By completing

tasks that are relevant, and allowing students to achieve goals, students will feel powerful while having a strong sense of self-efficacy (Tomlinson, 2001).

When teachers are working with struggling learners, there are some key principles and ideas that should be considered in order to ensure that all students are learning to their best ability. Teachers must help the student see how ideas and skills are part of their own families, neighborhoods, and futures. Helping students connect their lives with ideas and skills presupposes that, as teachers, we understand the students' neighborhoods, cultures, and families and what connections are possible. Teachers need to plan teaching and learning through many modalities. If a student has heard about an idea, sung about it, and read about it, success is far more likely than if one avenue to learning predominates. Above all, teachers must continually find ways to let the student know that they believe in him or her- and reinforce legitimate success whenever it happens. If a teacher shows students' that he/she believes in them, and finds ways for students to succeed, a teacher needs to be sure to point out that success to students whenever it is genuine and earned (Tomlinson, 2001).

Advanced Learners

When teachers think of differentiated instruction, they might first consider the needs of struggling learners, without realizing that they will also have to accommodate the needs of advanced students. The primary intent of differentiated instruction is to maximize student capacity. When you can see that a student can learn more deeply, move at a brisker pace, or make more connections than instructional blueprints might suggest, that is a good time to offer advanced learning opportunities. Advanced learners,

producers of new knowledge but who are afraid of failure are unlikely to see their productive capacity realized (Tomlinson, 1999).

Not only do teachers have to consider the academic success of advanced learners, but teachers also need to pay close attention to the way students feel about themselves and the way they view themselves as people. Advanced learners may fail to develop a sense of self-efficacy. Being told you are important, valued or successful fosters self-esteem. Self-efficacy, by contrast, comes from stretching yourself to achieve a goal that you first believed was beyond your reach. Although many advanced learners easily achieve a sort of hollow self-esteem, they never develop a sense of self-efficacy. These students often go through life feeling like imposters, fearfully awaiting the inevitable day the world will discover they are not so capable after all. This factor can also be tied into advanced learners failing to develop studying and coping skills. When students coast through school with only modest effort they may look successful; however, success in life typically follows persistence, hard work, and risk. In many cases, advanced learners make good grades without learning to work hard. Then when hard work is required, they become frightened, resentful or frustrated. In addition, they succeed without having to learn to study or grapple with ideas or persist in the face of uncertainty (Tomlinson, 1999).

Advanced learners, like all learners, need learning experiences designed to fit them. Teachers need to work with advanced learners to set goals, devise plans for reaching those goals, tolerate frustrations and share joys along the way, and sight new horizons after each accomplishment. Teachers can use several key principles that can aid them while coaching advanced learners for growth; teachers need to continually raise the

like other learners, need help in developing their abilities. Without proper instruction and intellectual stimulation, advanced learners cannot achieve their full potential.

There are many reasons why advanced learners may not achieve their potential, and these factors need to constantly be considered when teachers are working with academically talented learners. Advanced learners can become mentally lazy, even though they do well in school. Various studies and evidence have suggested that a brain loses capacity and "tone" without vigorous use, in much the same way that a little-used muscle does. If a student produces "success" without effort, potential brainpower can be lost. At the same time, advanced learners may become "hooked on the trappings of success. They may think grades are more important than taking intellectual risks, and being right is more valuable than making new discoveries. Unfortunately, many advanced learners quickly learn to do what is "safe" or what "pays" rather than what could result in greater long-term learning. Additionally, advanced learners may become perfectionists. The constant praise and pressure to succeed can greatly impact students. They may attach so much of their self-worth to the rewards of schooling, and because those rewards are accessible for years at a time, advanced learners often do not learn to struggle. Teachers who coach for growth and curriculums that are appropriately challenging, do not allow these learners to achieve their potential, as they are not receiving the opportunity to explore more complex materials. As these students are so accustomed to being on "top," failure then becomes something to avoid at all costs. Some advanced learners develop compulsive behaviors, from excessive worry to procrastination to eating disorders, and occasionally even suicide. Creative production typically has a high failure-to-success ratio. Students who have the capacity to be

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ceiling of expectations so that advanced learners are competing with their own possibilities rather than with a norm. As teachers raise ceilings of expectation, they should raise the support system available to the student to reach his or her goals. When tasks are appropriately challenging, teachers will find high-end learners need their support and scaffolding to achieve genuine success, just as other learners do. Teachers must make sure what they would constitute excellence for advanced learners so they know, at least in large measure, what to aim for in their next task. Overall, teachers need to be sure to balance rigor and joy in learning. It is difficult to imagine growth toward expertise when there is all joy and no rigor (Tomlinson, 1999).

Learning Styles

Learning styles/learning profiles refer to ways in which students learn best as individuals. The goals of learning-profile differentiation are to help individual learners understand modes of learning that work best for them, and to offer those options in order for each learner to find a good learning fit in the classroom. Tomlinson explained that learning styles can refer to environmental or personal factors. Some factors include group orientation, cognitive style, learning environment and intelligence preference (Tomlinson, 2001).

Intelligence preferences refer to the sorts of brain-based predispositions we all have for learning. "Intelligence theorist, Howard Gardner suggests that we each have varying strengths in combinations of intelligences he calls verbal linguistic, logical mathematical, visual spatial, musical rhythmic, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 62). Verbal linguistic intelligence involves interpreting information successfully through spoken language. In a classroom

setting, students with this learning style would respond best to lectures. Students with a strong logical mathematical intelligence would be able to analyze problems logically, and carry out mathematical operations. Visual-spatial intelligence involves the ability to learn through visual experiences such as slideshows, pictures, and charts/graphs. Musical rhythmic intelligence involves learning best through music. Some students may create lessons into lyrics to remember information or even need to listen to music while studying. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence involves using a very hands-on approach while learning. In a classroom setting students with this intelligence would respond best to tactile activities and "learning through doing"(Gardner, 1999). Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences involve understanding and working with others and understanding one's own interests and goals. Students with these types of intelligences can work well individually and in groups. Naturalistic intelligence involves working well in nature. Some examples in a classroom setting would be students who are particularly interested in science (Tomlinson, 2001).

Differentiation Based on Learning Styles/Profiles

Once a teacher learns about his/her students' learning styles/profiles, they can be used as a differentiation strategy. Tomlinson explained how teachers need to remember that some, but not all of their students may share the same learning preferences. It can be helpful to have students reflect on their learning preferences and analyze ways he/she learns best. The teacher can then learn about how students feel they learn best and incorporate these styles into daily lessons (Tomlinson, 2001). In order to successfully reach out and accommodate all students, lessons need to target all learning styles. For example, a lesson may consist of a lecture with a power point presentation, a group

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activity, and a presentation at the end of the lesson. By using these varied approaches it

gives each student an opportunity to understand the lesson in a different way (Tomlinson,

2001).

Teachers can use both teacher-structured and student-choice avenues to learning

profile differentiation. It can be effective for a teacher to think about using several

intelligences as ways for students to explore or express ideas. At times it is hard for a

teacher to ensure flexible use of time or a combination of presentation modes. Even

when a teacher does not have time to structure or craft several learning-profile options for

a lesson, much can be accomplished by asking students to make their own choices.

Students can select modes of expression and decide whether to work alone or with a peer,

to sit in a desk, or sit on the floor, to accept inevitable classroom sounds or use earplugs

to ensure a quiet environment. When students are partners with teachers in making the

learning environment a good fit, more is accomplished with less strain on the teacher

(Tomlinson, 1999).

Differentiation Based on Students' Readiness

A wide majority of research findings point to the potential importance of

individualizing instruction based on the child's entering skill levels. Children in schools

that used small homogenous skill-based groups had generally stronger reading skills

compared to children in schools that did not. Additionally, the effect of small group

instruction on students' reading skill gains were greater than similar instruction provided

to the whole class (Connor, et. al, 2009)

Tomlinson (2001) explains, "Teachers can differentiate any or all of the three key

components of curriculum; content, process and product, in response to student

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readiness" (p. 51). The aim for differentiating instruction for students based on readiness is to push the students a little further from their comfort zones and allow the work to be a bit more challenging. By implementing this strategy, the students will be able to keep up with the material, because it is not far from their level of ability, as well as motivating the students to make progress. During this procedure, the students can individually discuss with their teacher the specific goals and aims they may have for the unit. For example, some students may have the goal of retelling a story in sequence, while the other students may still be working on identifying the main idea of a text.

Differentiation Based on Students' Interests

In order for students to be fully engaged in a lesson or unit, the students must have some type of interest or motivation to learn about a particular topic. Effective differentiation, allows for students to have choices during their learning experiences, while linking to the curriculum area. Carol Ann Tomlinson, (2001) states:

> The goals of interest-based instruction are helping students realize that there is a match between school and their own desires to learn, demonstrating the connectedness between all learning, using skills or ideas familiar to students as a bridge to ideas or skills less familiar to them, and enhancing student motivation to learn. When a teacher encourages a student to look at a topic through the lens of that student's own interest, all four goals are likely to be achieved (p.53).

Educators differentiate instruction because they believe that all students can learn and should have a say in how they learn. Choice provides students opportunities to try different modalities for experiencing an idea or expressing what they know. When teachers solely direct learning, students may not generate imaginative questions that form

the foundation of an inquiry project. Due to the fact that teachers usually do not give students a chance to guide their own learning, it is expected that when students are given this opportunity, that the classroom may become more chaotic and noisy. Students must learn how to make appropriate choices, just as they learn to perform based on other teacher expectations. When students are regularly and routinely given choices, making choices about learning feels natural for the teacher and students.

Assessing Students' Reading Comprehension

The NRP's (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) synthesis of research (www.nationalreadingpanel.org/Publications/publications.htm) included a chapter on the development of comprehension in classrooms. That report concluded that there are several approaches with some level of research support. The approaches with the strongest support were teaching comprehension monitoring, using graphic organizers, asking questions, teaching students to generate questions, and teaching summarization (Walpole and McKenna, 2007).

One strategy that teachers commonly use both to support and to assess comprehension is asking questions. Not all questions, however, are created equal. Eileen Kintsch (2005) prepared a set of guidelines for the design of questions. She specifically targeted the types and goals of questions. She recommended that teachers ask questions of all three types, to elicit all three types of thinking when needed. If a reader can generate a summary or inference, then text-based questions are not really needed, but if the reader cannot construct meaning, then text-based questions can help him or her search for the information needed to summarize and to make inferences (Walpole and McKenna, 2007).

Kintsch's notion of question "levels" actually has a long tradition, and one of the important lessons for teachers is that they can alter the levels of the questions they ask in order to model a thinking process. The result is a cluster of questions that fits seamlessly into a small-group discussion. The goal of this type of cluster is to reach a higher level of comprehension, such as an inference. However, there are two very different clusters of questions useful in attaining this goal. A bottom-up cluster begins with one or more text-based questions and concludes with an inferential question. Such a cluster starts easy; the children are led by the teacher through questions that can be quickly answered from information in the text. But the real agenda is a higher-level question that builds on the simpler, explicit questions. A top-down cluster reverses the order of questions. The teacher begins by asking the upper-level question, calling for an inference. If the children cannot answer adequately, the teacher might "drop down" to one or more text-based questions. In a top-down cluster, the teacher wants to demonstrate how explicitly stated facts can be used to answer higher-level questions. Once the simpler questions have been posed, and the answers injected into the discussion, the teacher returns to the original question, which will now be much easier to answer (Walpole and McKenna, 2007).

Question clusters will assist readers who have yet to develop adequate proficiency at monitoring their own comprehension. These are children who, at best, read to basic information, but may not be proficient with reflecting and relating information throughout a text to their everyday lives (Walpole and McKenna, 2007).

Benefits of Differentiated Literacy Instruction

In today's society, the student population is constantly changing and becoming more culturally diverse, which makes differentiated instruction in classrooms necessary

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in order for all students to learn to his/her best abilities (Cox, 2008). Today's classrooms usually contain students with a wide variety of abilities and varied backgrounds. These students learn at different rates and in different ways. Differentiation is especially important in the elementary years because students' early experiences have a profound impact on their views of school, their understanding of the learning process and their views of themselves as learners. Through differentiating instruction, teachers create different levels of expectations for task completion, and environments where all learners can be successful (Tobin and McInnes, 2008).

Students learn in different ways and require responsive teaching based on these differences, especially in the area of literacy learning. Tobin and McInnes stated, "A differentiated instruction approach can be a powerful organizing framework in the language arts classroom because of its broad evidential and theoretical base, drawing on sociocultural perspectives" (p. 8). Differentiated instruction also emphasizes flexible instructional groupings known to facilitate reading comprehension and fluency (Cox, 2008). This approach also provides opportunities for students to work independently and with others on authentic literacy tasks, while providing explicit instruction on reading and writing strategies, and creating a motivating and supportive literacy environment (Conner, et al., 2009).

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Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study are students in a 2nd grade public elementary school in Staten Island, New York and are in a general education classroom. The participants all have different reading levels and possess different levels of ability. There were a total of 17 participants in this study. These participants were chosen based on which students returned their Parent Informed Consent Forms. The consent forms were distributed twice to the entire class of 32 students. 58.8% (10) of the participants were female and 41.2% (7) of the participants were male. 41.2% (7) of these students were considered to be performing below grade level, 29.4% (5) of these students were performing at their expected grade level, and 29.4% (5) of these students were considered to be exceeding their grade level expectations.

Setting

The setting for this study is a public elementary school in the urban area of Staten Island. The school is considered to be a Title I school which means that the school receives additional federal funding in order to meet the needs of all students.

The school has a total of 524 students. 56% of the students are Hispanic, 27% are African American, 12% are White Non-Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and 1% of students are American Indian. 80% of these students are eligible for free lunch whereas an average New City Department of Education School 41% of students are usually eligible for free lunch. The median household income for families living in this area is $42,452.

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In this specific classroom, there are a total of 32 students. The classroom is arranged into tables of four students sitting at each table. The classroom is equipped with a Smart Board and several desktop computers for students to utilize. The library area is at the back of the classroom along with a floor reading area and the teacher's desk.

Instrumentation

A.) Parent Cover Letter

A Parent Cover Letter was distributed to each student prior to the beginning of this study. The cover letter included a brief introduction of the researcher, as well as the request for the parent to allow his/her child to participate in the study. The letter explained that all information collected is strictly confidential and both child's and parent's names will not be associated with the study or included in any reports. Additionally, all lessons were part of the child's normal school day and no additional time is required outside of school. (See Appendix B)

B.) Informed Consent Form

An Informed Parent Consent Form was provided for all students, along with the Cover Letter, prior to the beginning of this study. The Informed Parent Consent Form described the actual activities the students were going to complete. Portions of the Informed Consent Form also reiterated information previously provided in the cover letter to ensure that all parents are aware of their rights and understand the procedures for completing this study. If parents wished to allow their child to participate in this study, they returned one copy of the consent form with the child's name, parent's name and parent's signature to the classroom teacher indicating that they give permission for their child to participate in all activities. (See Appendix C)

C.) Student Assent Form

A Student Assent Form was distributed to each student after the Parent Cover Letter and Informed Parent Consent form were already distributed. During the distribution of the Student Assent Form, the investigator explained all activities that will take place during the study. After all of the procedures were explained, the students had the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had.

Additionally, the students were also informed that they do not have to participate in this study if they do not want to, and they can withdraw from participating in the study at any point and suffer no penalty. The students were instructed to sign the assent form if they wished to participate, and if they do not wish to participate, they will be instructed to not sign the form. (See Appendix D)

D.) Thank You Note for Parents

At the end of the study, a Thank You note was distributed to all parents of the students who participated. The note included the investigator's contact information for parents to utilize, if they wish to obtain a copy of the final thesis.
(See Appendix E)

E.) Thank You Note for Students

At the end of this study, a Thank You note was distributed to all of the students who participated in this study. The note included the appreciation the investigator has for the students always trying their best and cooperating throughout the entire course of the study. (See Appendix F)

Once the notes were distributed, the students had the opportunity to ask any final questions or address any concerns they may have.

F.) Student Reading Questionnaire

Prior to the study beginning, the researcher chose five to six different types of books from the "On-Level," leveled readers from the Story Town Reading program. Each book consisted of a different story line, and some even included different genres. The researcher created a "Student Reading Questionnaire", with the title and summary consisting of two sentences for each book. (See Appendix G) The students numbered each title and summary ranging from their favorite to least favorite book.

Based on the questionnaire, the researcher grouped the students based on their preferred interests and assigned them to a reading group based on their interests. The students were grouped based on their first or second choice and placed with students who selected the same book.

G.) Assessments

All assessments aligned with the school curriculum's reading program and consisted of the same number of questions. Each multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank assessment had five questions, and each written response assessment consisted of four small questions. The students will also had the same amount of time, 20 minutes, to complete each assessment during every session. See appendix H, I, and J for sample assessments.

H.) Rubrics

For each text given to students, there was a rubric to correspond with the assessments given during that particular session. For multiple choice and fill-in the blank assessments, students were assessed based on the number of questions they answer correct. For the written response questions, students were assessed on

whether or not they have comprehended the main idea of the text, main characters,

problem/conflict, and solution of the story. Student rubrics were provided, as

students were thoroughly instructed on the goals of their task and how to accurately

display their understanding of the text. (See Appendix K and L)

Procedure

Throughout the duration of this study, the researcher collaborated with the

cooperating teacher regarding what concepts the students are learning at any given time

throughout the study. The researcher took note of how often students are given a choice

of their own texts, and how often the students work in mixed ability groups.

Additionally, in order to ensure that students were placed in a comfortable environment,

the researcher observed the class on a few occasions prior to the study beginning. The

researcher took note of how the teacher grouped her students, which students usually

worked together, and which strategies the students were most receptive to. Through this

action, the researcher was able to follow the classroom routine and took note of strategies

that should be avoided, in order to make sure that the students' results were as accurate as

possible.

An Informed Parent Consent Form was provided for all students, along with the

Parent Cover Letter, prior to the beginning of this study. The cover letter included a brief

introduction of the researcher, as well as the request for the parent to allow his/her child

to participate in the study. The letter explained that all information collected is strictly

confidential and both child's and parent's names will not be associated with the study or

included in any reports. Additionally, all lessons were a part of the child's normal school

day and no additional time is required outside of school. The Informed Parent Consent

Form described the actual activities the students will be completing. Portions of the Informed Consent Form also reiterated information previously provided in the cover letter to ensure that all parents were aware of their rights and understood the procedures for completing this study. If parents wished to allow their child to participate in this study, they returned one copy of the consent form with the child's name, parent's name and parent's signature to the classroom teacher indicating that they give permission for their child to participate in all activities.

A Student Assent Form was distributed to each student after the Parent Cover Letter and Informed Parent Consent form were already distributed. During the distribution of the Student Assent Form, the investigator explained all activities that will take place during the study. After all of the procedures were explained, the students had the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had.

Additionally, the students were also informed that they did not have to participate in the study if they do not want to, even if their parents have already signed the informed consent form. The students were informed that they can withdraw from participating in the study at any point and suffer no penalty. The students were instructed to sign the assent form if they wish to participate, and if they do not wish to participate, they were instructed to not sign the form.

After all consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher, the students filled out a Student Reading Questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of information for six books with a summary and rating scale included for each book. The students rated each book on a one to six scale, and this form was used to determine the students' interest

groups throughout the study. The students were grouped with students who chose the same books and complete assessments together.

During the first three days of the study, and on days six through nine, the students were grouped in their daily reading groups. These groups consisted of students on the same reading level. Their classroom teacher placed them in their groups, assigned the texts and distributed the assessments, as the researcher did not know the students' reading levels until the study was completed. The students also placed their assigned number on each assessment in order to keep track of students' scores. On days one and seven, they read a text from the leveled readers in their groups and completed a multiple-choice assessment from the curriculum program. On days two and eight, they read another text from the leveled readers in their group and completed a fill-in-the-blank assessment from the curriculum program. On days three and nine, they read another text from the leveled readers in their groups and completed a written response assessment.

During days four through six and days ten through twelve, the students were placed in their interest groups. As previously stated, the students' interest groups were formed based on the results from the Students' Reading Questionnaire, and the students read the texts they selected as their top choices from the questionnaire. On days four and ten, the students read a text from the leveled readers and completed a multiple-choice assessment from the curriculum program. On days five and eleven, the students read another text from the leveled readers and completed a fill-in-the-blank assessment from the curriculum program. On days six and twelve, the students read a text from the leveled readers and completed a written response assessment.

The students' scores were established based on the rubrics provided. (See appendix K and L) Students' results were averaged together divided by differentiation strategy and the form of assessment. Therefore, the students had four scores per assessment and six scores per differentiation strategy. There were a total of twelve assessments throughout this study, and eventually through these assessments, the students portrayed their comprehension of the text and indicate whether or not students comprehend best in groups based on reading levels or when they are grouped based on interests and read texts that they choose themselves.

At the end of the study, a Thank You note was distributed to all parents of the students' who participated. The note included the investigator's contact information for parents to utilize, if they wish to obtain a copy of the final thesis. Additionally, a Thank You note was distributed to all of the students who participated in this study. The note included the appreciation the investigator has for the students always trying their best and cooperating throughout the entire course of the study. Once the notes were distributed, the students had the opportunity to ask any final questions or address any concerns they may have had.

Data Collection

Based on the rubrics provided, assessments were scored and averaged for each student. Each student had a total of twelve scores; six of these scores resulted from assessments carried out in their reading groups and the other six scores resulted from assessments conducted in their interest groups. Each student has four scores from multiple-choice assessments, four scores from fill-in-the-blank assessments and four

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scores from open response assessments. The maximum score a student could receive on

an assessment was a score of four.

Results (See Tables)
<u>Below Grade Level Group (Red Group) Results</u>

Student	Reading Group Multiple Choice	Reading Group Fill-in-the Blank	Reading Group Open Response	Interest Group Multiple Choice	Interest Group Fill-in-the Blank	Interest Group Open Response	Average Reading Group Score	Average Interest Group Score
1 (F)	4	4	4	3	A	A		
	A	4	3	4	4	A	**3.8**	3.7
2 (M)	A	3	2	3	4	3		
	A	4	3	4	4	A	3	3.6
3 (F)	4	3	4	3	A	4		
	A	4	3	A	4	2	**3.6**	3.3
4 (F)	3	3	4	4	A	3		
	2	1	3	3	4	1	2.7	**3**
5 (M)	3	2	4	4	A	4		
	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	**3.8**
6 (M)	4	3	2	3	A	A		
	4	4	3	A	4	3	**3.3**	3.3
7 (F)	4	A	4	4	A	2		
	3	4	3	3	4	2	**3.6**	3

<u>**Key**</u>
(M): Male Student
(F): Female Student
(A): Student was absent

<u>On Grade Level Group (Blue Group) Results</u>

Student	Reading Group Multiple Choice	Reading Group Fill-in-the Blank	Reading Group Open Response	Interest Group Multiple Choice	Interest Group Fill-in-the Blank	Interest Group Open Response	Average Reading Group Score	Average Interest Group Score
8 (F)	4	3	A	4	A	3		
	A	4	3	4	4	2	3.2	**3.4**
9 (F)	3	A	4	3	4	3		
	3	4	4	A	4	2	**3.6**	3.3
10 (F)	4	3	4	3	A	4		
	A	4	3	A	4	2	**3.7**	3.3
11 (M)	4	4	A	4	4	4		
	4	4	3	4	4	4	3.8	**4**
12 (F)	4	4	4	3	4	4		
	A	4	3	4	4	3	**3.8**	3.7

<u>**Key**</u>
(M): Male Student
(F): Female Student
(A): Student was absent

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Above Grade Level Group (Green Group) Results

Student	Reading Group Multiple Choice	Reading Group Fill-in-the Blank	Reading Group Open Response	Interest Group Multiple Choice	Interest Group Fill-in-the Blank	Interest Group Open Response	Average Reading Group Score	Average Interest Group Score
13 (M)	4	2	4	3	4	4		
	3	4	3	3	4	4	3.3	**3.7**
14 (F)	3	3	3	3	4	3		
	3	4	3	3	4	3	3.2	**3.3**
15 (F)	3	3	3	4	4	4		
	3	4	3	3	4	4	3.2	**3.8**
16 (M)	3	1	3	4	4	4		
	3	2	3	A	4	4	2.5	**4**
17 (M)	A	1	4	3	A	A		
	4	4	3	4	4	4	3.2	**3.8**

Key
(M): Male Student
(F): Female Student
(A): Student was absent

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Chapter IV

Discussion

Limitations of Study

Throughout this study, there were various limitations that needed to be addressed. Most of these limitations were due to scheduling and other events that students had to attend throughout a school day. The researcher planned with the classroom teacher to avoid as many of these obstacles as possible, and to receive as much accurate data from the students.

A.) Number of Participants

Although there were a fair amount of participants in this study, the majority of the participants were students who performed below grade level. I would have been interested in having a wider variety of students performing at all different levels of ability. This would have provided the researcher with a greater understanding of which method was more effective; having students read in their reading groups or in their interest groups.

B.) Classroom Time/Scheduling

Throughout this study, the students had a total of 42 minutes per classroom session to complete the readings and assessments in their groups. At times, the researcher had to go to the classroom on different days and the study was not conducted throughout a period of consecutive 12 days as anticipated. It was rarely an issue, but the students were at times thrown off because of the different schedules. Instead of working with their classroom teacher for the

period, they were completing readings and assessments with the researcher at unexpected times and in unplanned ways.

C.) ESL (English as a Second Language) Testing

At one point throughout the study, a number of students were pulled out of the classroom for statewide ESL testing. The majority of these students who participated in the testing were in the "Below Grade Level Group" (Red Group) and missed the assessments on this day. Therefore, this group of students had fewer scores averaged together to determine their results. If these students were present on this day, the outcome of the study may have been different.

D.) Student Attendance

Throughout the study, various students were absent due to illness or other reasons. As a result, these students also had fewer scores to be averaged into the results than other students. The researcher did not have students make up these assessments because in doing so it would have altered the desired environment for completing the study. The students could not make up these assessments independently because the participants had to read and perform the assessments in their reading groups and interest groups, not on their own.

E.) Classroom Distractions

Although this study had a large number of participants, there were still students in the classroom that were not participating in the study. The classroom teacher would usually take these students to another part of the classroom and conduct a lesson or have the students do a different activity. At times, the noise

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level distracted the students in their reading groups as well as the other students

walking around the classroom.

Conclusions/Discussion

The goal of this study was to assess whether or not students comprehend texts

more effectively when they are grouped based on reading levels and assigned a text

without choice or when the students choose a book for themselves and read in a group

with students who chose the same book. The results of this study indicated that

participants in this study performed better when they were grouped based on interests and

chose the book themselves. 64.7% of the students scored higher in their interest groups

while 35.3% of the students performed better in their reading groups. In contrast only,

42.9% of the students in the below grade level group (red group), scored higher in their

reading groups and 42.9% of these students performed better in their interest groups.

One student in this group had identical reading group and interest group scores. On the

other hand, the on grade level group responded rather differently and seemed to prefer

their reading group, as 60% of the students in the on grade level group (blue group),

scored higher on assessments while they were in their reading groups. Finally, the above

grade level group showed an extraordinary preference for interest groups as all of the

students in this group scored higher on assessments when they were grouped in their

interest groups.

While analyzing this data, I found it interesting to notice that students in the

below grade level group did not perform better in their interest groups. There are various

possibilities and reasons why this may have occurred. Most of the students in this

reading group were ESL students who have been speaking English for only a few years.

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These students may not have the background knowledge nor the vocabulary fluency

needed to comprehend texts above their reading level. If students were able to become

more familiar with the vocabulary in the texts prior to the study beginning, I feel that

these students would perform at a higher level in their interest groups. Additionally,

some students in this group may also be unfamiliar with some of the cultural aspects of a

text and would not be able to make personal connections to the text. In the classroom, it

may be effective for a teacher to group students on this level in their reading groups daily

and provide mini-lessons before breaking them up into interest groups in order to expand

their vocabulary knowledge and add variety to classroom practices.

The on-grade level students had similar results to the students in the below grade

level group. More than half of these students performed better in their interest groups,

however there was not much of a significant difference as they were only five students in

this group. Particularly with this group of students, I feel that when they were placed into

different groups that they felt distracted by the change in routine for the day. Some of the

students felt intimidated by the fact that they were grouped with students who read on a

higher reading level. This discomfort can alter students' scores, as students must feel

they are in a safe learning environment in order to perform to their full potential.

Overall, once the data was analyzed as a whole and within the small groups, it can

be concluded that students comprehended texts more effectively when they were placed

in their interest groups and had the opportunity to choose the book they wanted to read.

The advanced group of students in this study performed better in their interest

groups. This particular group was always excited to read in their interest groups because

they were able to select their own texts. This aspect of the study motivated these students

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to want to read because they were able to choose what they wanted to read that day.

Since these students are already performing above their grade level, they were able to

fully comprehend any text given to them throughout the study. Due to the fact that these

students understand a wide range of vocabulary as well as advanced reading

comprehension skills, they were able to accelerate in their interest groups while being

engaged with the text.

Implications for Practice

Incorporating Students' Interests into the Classroom Curriculum

In future practices, I feel that teachers need to incorporate students' interests into

lessons as often as possible. When students are reading texts that they are interested in,

they become more engaged and show passion for reading. It also helps students to

become lifelong learners as they learn how to select appropriate texts for themselves

while being able to enjoy reading. In order to acknowledge and learn about students'

specific interests, teachers can create activities at the beginning of the year for students to

complete. For example, a teacher can create some sort of reading questionnaire where

students can select which type of books they enjoy reading or students can simply write

the teacher a friendly letter introducing themselves and explaining some of their interests

and hobbies. By using these tools, teachers can not only get to know their students on a

personal level, but they can also learn about their students' interests and incorporate their

interests into the school's curriculum.

Specifically in this study, the most advanced learners benefitted the most from

interest groups and the other groups performed at about the same level in both reading

and interest groups. As a researcher I feel that this pattern may have occurred because

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the higher-level students have more advanced vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, which basically gives them the skills to read a wide variety of texts. When these students were able to choose a text, they were not only engaged but they were also able to comprehend the entirety of the text. Whereas, students in the below grade level and on grade level groups may have been engaged by the topic of the text, however they might have lacked the background knowledge, vocabulary fluency, and comprehension strategies needed to fully understand the meaning of the text.

Implications for Further Research

Creating a Study to Last for a Longer Period of Time

For future research practices, I would be interested in exploring a few more details in relation to this study. Due to semester deadlines and limitations with scheduling, this study only lasted for a duration of 12 school days. If this study took place over a course of a year where students alternated between reading in their reading groups and interest groups, interesting results could occur. If students had an entire school year to practice reading more difficult texts with different groups of students, they would eventually develop their own personalized vocabulary decoding and reading comprehension skills that would enhance their level of ability.

Preview Lessons for Texts

In addition to having a similar study last for a longer period of time, future researchers can create lessons for each interest group book to introduce new vocabulary and words to students, prior to reading the text. This previewing strategy can help students recognize words and vocabulary that may have been difficult for them in the past, as well as broaden their understanding of the text. At times students may not fully

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comprehend a text they chose because they were unable to decode some of the words or were not able to interpret the meanings of the words in the story. This strategy not only benefits lower level students but it can also challenge the higher-level students as the teacher can provide more challenging texts for them to choose in order to enhance their vocabulary skills and help them to continue to improve as a reader.

Comparing Students' Performance in Relation to the Type of Assessment

When designing this study, as a researcher I found it important to have different types of assessments to target different types of learning styles. Some students may fully comprehend a text, but still choose the incorrect answer on a multiple-choice assessment or a fill in the blank assessment, but the student may be able to fully explain his/her answers through an open-response assessment. In future studies, researchers may want to consider comparing and contrasting students' performance on different types of assessments in relation to their learning styles. Findings in this type of study can truly influence education by helping teachers truly understand his/her students and also be able to differentiate testing.

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Appendix A.

Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) Approval

March 2, 2011

Dear Ms. DeLucrezia, Professor Ortis and Dr. Preskill:

Your research proposal received by the Human Experimentation Review Board (HERB) on December 6, 2010 (and revised on February 27, 2011) entitled "Differentiated literacy instruction and its effect on students' reading comprehension" (project F10-22) was considered under the no-harm review procedure and approved.

As described in the revised proposal, the project complies with all of the requirements of HERB for the protection of human participants in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after the approval date.

1. A project status report (available on the HERB website as Part C of application packet) must be returned to HERB within one year.

2. Any significant change in the experimental procedure must be reported to HERB immediately prior to altering the project.

3. Any injury to a participant because of the research procedure must be reported to HERB immediately.

4. The investigator must keep all signed consent forms on file for 3 years past completion of the project.

5. HERB must be informed of the addition of new investigators not named in the original application.

Please inform HERB when the study has been completed. All future correspondence regarding this project should display the HERB identifying number.

Best wishes,

Laurence J. Nolan, Ph.D.

Chair, Human Experimentation Review Board

Laurence J. Nolan, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology Wagner College
Staten Island, New York, NY 10301

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Appendix B.

Parent Cover Letter

Lauren DeLucrezia
(646)-670-1232
Lauren.DeLucrezia@Wagner.Edu

Dear Parents and Guardians,

My name is Lauren DeLucrezia, and I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Literacy Education Grades Birth through six, at Wagner College, Staten Island, New York.

I am currently conducting research in order to complete my Master's thesis on Grouping and Differentiated Literacy Instruction. Differentiated Literacy Instruction is teaching students various reading strategies and techniques in order to examine if all students are learning to his/her best abilities. Wagner College's Human Experiment Review Board (HERB), has approved my thesis proposal, Grouping and Differentiated Literacy Instruction, and has granted permission for me to complete this study.

Through this letter, I am asking if you would be willing to allow your child to participate in the study described in the consent form. Enclosed, you will find two copies of my informed consent form. Please review the information and if you wish to allow your child to participate, please return one of the copies to your child's classroom teacher. Feel free to keep the other copy for your records.

It is important to note that all lessons will be provided as part of your child's regular school day and it will not require any additional time outside of school. By agreeing to allow your child to participate in this study, you are giving me permission to use all data collected during those lessons.

All information collected during this study will not be associated with you or your child's name. When my thesis is completed, I will be happy to share any results with you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at Lauren.DeLucrezia@Wagner.edu or via phone at (646)-670-1232.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,
Lauren DeLucrezia

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Appendix C.
Parent Informed Consent Form

Wagner College in Staten Island, New York, supports the practice of protection of human participants in research. The following will provide you with information about this study that will help you to decide whether or not you wish to allow your child to participate. If you agree to allow your child to participate, please be aware that you are free to withdraw him/her at any point throughout the duration of this study without any penalty.

This study seeks to identify the best ways for students to comprehend texts. On a daily basis, your children are already grouped based on their reading levels with other students for one classroom period a day, and explore various stories, and readings within the reading program. The students complete various worksheets and assignments in order to assess their understanding of the content being presented to them. For half of this study, the students will follow their daily reading routines. They will be placed in their reading groups with the same students they work with everyday, and perform the assessments assigned by their classroom teacher. During the second half of this study, the students will choose which books they would like to read within the reading program, and work with students who chose the same books as them. These groups will be considered their "interest groups," and they will explore the texts with students who have the same interests. In these "interest groups," the students will perform assessments within the reading program, and all content will parallel with the school's curriculum guidelines. At the conclusion of each session, the results will be compared with their daily reading routine assessments to portray how the students learned best.

Please note, that this study will last for a total of 12 school days and the students will be participating in these activities for only one period a day, which consists of about 42 minutes. All lessons and activities will be provided as part of your child's current school day and no additional time is required outside of school. By agreeing to allow your child to participate in this study, you are giving the researcher permission to use all data collected during those lessons.

Confidentiality of each participant will be maintained and data reported will not be associated with your child's name. If for any reason during the study, you feel the need to withdraw your child's participation, his/her data will not be used in this study. When this study is completed, you will be provided with the results, and you will be able to ask any questions.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me, Lauren DeLucrezia at Lauren.DeLucrezia@Wagner.Edu (646-670-1232) or Dr. Preskill at Stephen.Preskill@Wagner.Edu. Please indicate with your signature on the space below that you understand your rights and agree to allow your child to participate in this study. Your child's participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary. Confidentiality of each participant will be maintained. Your child's name will not be associated with any research findings.

_____	_____
Signature of Parent/Guardian	Researcher
_____	_____
Print Parent/Guardian's Name	Print Child's Name

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Appendix D.

Student Assent Form

Student's Name _____

School and Class _____

     I _____, have been asked to participate in a research study about different types of reading instruction and how students, like me, understand texts the best. This study was explained to me by, Lauren DeLucrezia, a Wagner College Graduate Student.

     I understand that I will read stories within my school's reading program in my assigned reading group on a given day and complete worksheets. I also understand that there will be days that I will be able to choose the book I wish to read and complete worksheets with other students who may not be in my assigned reading group.

     I will face no known risks by taking part in this study. My participation is based on my own choice and I can change my mind at any time to stop participating in this study without any consequences.

     The person conducting this study will not reveal my name to anyone, and my name will not appear in any reports on this study.

     I was informed that if I have any questions, I can ask Lauren DeLucrezia or my classroom teacher.

     I will sign this form and return the bottom portion to my classroom teacher if I chose to participate, indicating that I agree to participate in this study. If I do not wish to participate in this study, I will not sign this form.

_____

Date_____

     The study on Reading Instruction has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I would like to take part in the study.

_____

Student Name (Print)

_____

Student's Signature

Appendix E.

Thank You Note for Parents

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing your child to participate in the research study this thesis. Your cooperation and your child's participation provided extremely valuable information and results.

If you would like to obtain a copy of my thesis and reporting of results, please feel free to contact me at Lauren.DeLucrezia@Wagner.Edu or (646)-670-1232.

Thank you again, for all of your help and support, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Lauren DeLucrezia

Appendix F.

Thank You Note for Students

Dear Students,

During these past few weeks, I have truly enjoyed working with all of you in your classroom. You are all hard-working, students and I want to thank you all for cooperating during my lessons. I hope that you have enjoyed our time together, and have learned some valuable information.

Best of luck to all of you, and thank you once again, for letting me be a part of your classroom community.

From,
Ms. DeLucrezia

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Appendix G.
Sample Student Reading Questionnaire

Please circle one of the numbers next to each summary in the order you wish to read the books. Your number 1 choice would be your favorite summary and your number 6 choice would be your least favorite choice.

The Art Lesson By: Tomie DePaola

Tomie loves creating his own art. He will draw or paint almost anywhere, even on his own bed sheets! Tomie is very excited to start school and learn from the art teacher, but there are a few problems along the way. Will Tomie be able to still love art and fulfill his dream of becoming an artist?

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

Amelia Bedelia's First Day of School By: Herman Parish

Amelia Bedelia seems to always be getting herself into trouble by being her silly self. Now it is her first day of school and she is so excited! She is sure she is going to love school and meet plenty of new friends, but will Amelia Bedelia be able to keep herself out of trouble?

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

The Case of the Spooky Sleepover: Jigsaw Jones Mystery #4 By: James Preller

Ralphie Jordan can't sleep. Something is making spooky noises in his room at night. This seems like a perfect case for his friend Jigsaw Jones to piece together all of the clues. What or who could be making those spooky noises to keep Ralphie awake every night?

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

Flat Stanley
By: Jeff Brown

Stanley is a nice, normal, boy. He has lots of friends and leads an ordinary life. Until one day a bulletin board fell on Stanley and he was suddenly flat! What do you think will happen to Stanley with his new appearance?

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

The Secret Science Project that Almost Ate the School By: Judy Sierra

A little girl needs an idea for her science project. She decided to do some research where she discovered a Super Slime–a mutant yeast with just a piece of dragon DNA. She ordered it and feeds the slime sugar until it expands to 1000 times its size! She finds herself with a large, green, slimy glob that begins to grow and swallow those who are rude to it, including her own cat!

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

Cam Jansen: The Mystery of Stolen Diamonds By: David A. Adler

Cam and Eric are sitting in the mall when an alarm goes off. Cam jumps onto a bench to get a better view and sees a man race out of the jewelry store. Cam knows that she has to act fast, especially after the police arrest the wrong person. It's up to Cam and Eric to catch the real thief.

Rating Scale: 1   2   3   4   5   6

Appendix H.

Sample Multiple Choice Assessment

1.) What is Pedro's problem in the selection?
    (a)He thinks he must find a special band.
    (b) He wants his grandfather to visit longer.
    (c)He cannot find his grandfather's puppets.
    (d) He doesn't know what to do for his homework.

2.) Why is Pedro's mother worried?
    (a) Pedro has a fever.
    (b) Pedro does not eat during dinner.
    (c) Miguel wants to eat Pedro's food.
    (d) Miguel has agreed to help with the play.

3.) Why doesn't Pedro's father like the idea of the mariachi band?
    (a) He has forgotten how to play the music in a band.
    (b) He believes that hiring a band would cost too much.
    (c) He thinks he will have to dress up in a fancy costume.
    (d) He thinks it would be hard to find a band on short notice.

4.) What happens RIGHT AFTER Pedro's play?
    (a) The class applauds for Pedro and asks questions.
    (b) Pedro's grandfather explains the Mexican puppets.
    (c) Pedro's father says puppets are a family treasure.
    (d) Grandfather asks if Pedro's father has forgotten the puppets.

5.) Which action BEST shows that Pedro feels proud of his heritage?
    (a) Pedro finds his father's toy puppets.
    (b) Pedro tells Mrs. Lloyd that his skills run in the family.
    (c) Pedro asks Miguel to help him put on a play.
    (d) Pedro will not eat dinner.

DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Appendix I.

Sample Fill-in-the Blank Assessment

Word Box			
Puppets	Pedro	Mariachi	Father
Grandfather			

1.) A _____ band is a type of band that came from Mexico.

2.) The main character in this story is _____.

3.) Pedro's _____ is from Mexico.

4.) Pedro lives with his mother and _____.

5.) Pedro's grandfather gave him a great idea for his play and let him borrow his Mexican

_____ for his performance.

DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Appendix J.

Sample Written Response Question

How do Pedro's feelings change throughout the story? Explain how his feelings change and why. Describe a time when your feelings changed. Were your feelings different or similar to Pedro's?

DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Appendix K.

	Unacceptable Score of 1 (Below Grade Level)	**Acceptable** Score of 2 (Below Grade Level)	**Target** Score of 3 (On Grade Level)	**Exceeds Target** Score of 4 (Above Grade Level)
Making Connections	• Does not make connections to the text.	• Explains what the text reminds them of, but cannot explain how it relates to the text.	• Relates background knowledge and experience to text.	• Links background knowledge and examples from the text to enhance comprehension and/or interpretation.
Determining Importance	• Unable to identify important concepts in the text.	• Identifies some important concepts in the text such as; characters, plot, main idea and setting. • Does not provide supporting explanations linked to the concepts.	• Identifies some important concepts in the text, such as characters, plot, main idea and setting. • Provides some supporting explanations linked to the concepts.	• Identifies at least one key idea, theme or concept linking it to the overall meaning of the text. • Uses supporting details from the text to clearly explain why it is important.
Inferring	• Does not attempt to make predictions, interpretations or draw conclusions.	• Makes predictions, interpretations, and/or draws conclusion. • Does not justify response with information from the text.	• Makes predictions, interpretations, and/or draws conclusions. • Justifies response with information from the text. • Needs some teacher prompting.	• Independently makes predictions, interpretations, and/or draws conclusions. • Clearly explains connections using evidence from the text and personal knowledge, ideas, or beliefs.
Synthesizing	• Unable to retell elements of the text.	• Randomly retells 4some elements of the text.	• Retells all key elements of the text in logical sequence.	• Retells elements of the text in logical sequence. • Extends the overall theme, or background knowledge.

DIFFERENTIATED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Appendix L.

Sample Rubric for Multiple Choice and Fill-In-the-Blank Assessments

Unacceptable Score of 1 (Below Grade Level)	Acceptable Score of 2 (Below Grade Level)	Target Score of 3 (On Grade Level)	Exceeds Target Score of 4 (Above Grade Level)
• 1 out of 5 questions answered correctly	• 2 out of 5 questions answered correctly.	• 3-4 out of 5 questions answered correctly.	• 5 out of 5 questions answered correctly.

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