

**AN EFFECTIVE ADOLESCENT LITERACY PROGRAM:
TWO CASE STUDIES OF ADOLESCENT NON-READERS**

SHEILA RANDLE

B.Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1984

A Two-Credit Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
Of the University of Lethbridge
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

April 2002

Abstract

The main purpose of this five-month study was to follow the progress of two students in order to identify the characteristics of an adolescent literacy program and the most effective instructional strategies for high school students who struggle with reading and writing. The two students I followed were fifteen years old and reading at grades one and two. Throughout the study I kept field notes to record specific observations related to student behavior, student progress, and the effectiveness of each instructional strategy and the framework for which they were applied in this program. Since my students struggled with writing, I interviewed them asking for continuous feedback about the program. Those interviews took place upon completion of each instructional strategy in order to gain the students' perspective of the effectiveness of each strategy. Through my own journal I reflected on the happenings of my class. In the end I gained a greater understanding of how to better teach non-readers at the high school level.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Gord Baldwin for your help, support, and encouragement (especially on those really bad days). I'm not sure I could have finished without you.

William, you came into my life half way into the program and set my life on a new path. Thank-you for those long naps. It may have taken longer to complete this project but I wouldn't change a thing!

I would also like to thank my mom and late dad, Louise and Gerald Randle, for all your support in all of my life's pursuits.

To my supervisor, Robin Bright, I thank you for all your insightful comments and help. Molly Glesby, Sue Macklin and Teresa Forster, I am so appreciative of all the help you gave me with editing and computer problems. Thank you!

Finally, I must thank Jane and Tom for allowing me to study your progress. You are great teachers.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgment.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review	4
Prevention versus Correction.....	6
Importance of Success	7
Building on the Known.....	8
Fostering Independence	9
Active Involvement	11
Personalized Instruction.....	13
Continuous Assessment.....	14
A Full Range of Literacy Experiences.....	15
Direct Systematic Instruction	17
An Integrated Approach	18
Wide Reading	19
Providing Materials with Appropriate Challenge Level.....	20
Sense of Community.....	21
Summary.....	23
Methodology	25
Analysis of Data	28
Instructional Strategies	28
Findings	31

Phonics.....	31
Daily Reading.....	33
Comprehension Activities	34
Hands on Activities and Jeopardy	35
Summary.....	36
Case Studies.....	38
Jane.....	38
Tom.....	40
Progress and Results - Jane.....	41
Phonics.....	41
Daily Reading.....	42
Comprehension Activities	43
Hands-on Activities	44
Jeopardy.....	45
Progress and Results - Tom	46
Phonics.....	46
Daily Reading.....	47
Comprehension Activities	48
Hands-on Activities	49
Jeopardy.....	50
Summary.....	51
Future Recommendations.....	57
Conclusion.....	58
References.....	60

Introduction

Imagine trying to buy a birthday card for your mother when you cannot read the words in the cards, or imagine needing to use the washroom at a movie theater when you cannot read the words 'actor' or 'actress', which label the doors. Imagine sitting in a grade ten class and trying to hide the fact that you cannot read; a secret that you have been keeping for ten years. Meet some of the students in my high school literacy class and imagine my surprise when I heard stories such as these ones.

When I volunteered to teach the literacy class at the high school where I work, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I never really thought about high school students being illiterate. I knew there were some students who had problems reading, but I was amazed to discover grade ten students reading at a grade one level! I never realized the depth of the problems these young people faced each day.

The first ten years of my teaching career I worked with students with severe behavior problems. I learned from those young people that behavior problems usually stem from one of two sources: lack of success in school, or problems outside of school. However, even with this knowledge, I was never in a teaching position that could seriously address the academic deficiencies of my students. My work focused on stabilizing student behavior using many strategies, with academic concerns being only a small piece of a complex puzzle. Often when the students left my classes, they were again unsuccessful academically and behaviorally. I realize now that some of those students were probably illiterate. Teenagers who cannot read birthday cards, washroom doors, or science quizzes become masters at hiding their 'secret' - an inability to read. One time I asked a student why his behavior was so challenging in his previous schools and he responded, "I'd rather be kicked out of class for my behavior than look stupid

because I can't do the work". Colvin and Schlosser (1998) concur, "for less efficacious students there was less pain in being removed from class for incomplete assignments than to endure the public show often made of their literacy struggles" (p. 278).

The school where I work is a small vocational high school in an urban setting. Approximately ten percent of the student population was found to be incapable of coping with the curriculum, due to an inability to read. With the persistence of our resource teacher, our administrative team agreed to implement a literacy program. It was the hope of the entire staff that, by addressing the students' reading problems, perhaps we would see fewer "acting out" behaviors and an improvement in attendance. The literacy class is now in its fourth semester of operation and I have been teaching this class for three semesters.

When I first began teaching this class, I had no idea how to teach reading to reluctant high school students. I myself had been a reluctant reader throughout my school career so I understood the "I *hate* reading!" attitude of my students. After a few weeks into the first semester I knew I could make a difference in the lives of my students. As I watched the negative behaviors melt away, I also knew that through the literacy class, I could address the academic difficulties that so many of my previous students had faced. My previous teaching position never afforded me the opportunity to deal with those academic difficulties. In those first few weeks of school when I began teaching the literacy class, I also realized I needed to do a great deal of research to understand the adolescent non-reader and literacy programs for this interesting population.

After a year of teaching this challenging group of readers, it also became apparent to me that I needed to study the students in my class in order to improve the learning atmosphere within it. Therefore, I decided to use an action research approach to follow

the progress of my students for one semester in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to better teach reading to non-readers at the high school level. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of an adolescent literacy program for struggling readers and writers?
2. What instructional strategies directly and positively impact the learning atmosphere within an adolescent literacy program?

These questions will be answered through an examination of the literature in this field, an action research project conducted over a five-month period, and anecdotal evaluations of students in the literacy class that I teach.

Literature Review

At the end of the school year after I had taught the literacy class, the resource teacher and I sat down and brainstormed many ideas about adolescent literacy. We discussed the characteristics of the adolescent literacy student and we decided these young people struggle with an interrelationship of certain identifiable concepts. Our observations and discussions indicated that students enrolled in this program usually have poor attendance, low reading skill level, behavior problems, and suffer from low self-esteem. With these factors one can see a cyclic effect on student achievement. That is, poor attendance affects skill level and students with low skills tend to have poor self-esteem. When students do not feel good about themselves they can exhibit inappropriate behaviors which in turn, may cause them to miss school through suspensions. The cycle of being unsuccessful in school continues.

It was therefore decided that the literacy program at our school must address these factors which affect student success. With the support of the school administration, the resource teacher and I established the following goals:

- To improve attendance by providing the students with a sense of belonging and by increasing their sense of accomplishment.
- To improve skill development by providing direct instruction and age-appropriate materials through innovative and research-based teaching strategies.
- To improve self-concept by challenging students at the appropriate instructional level.

- To improve interpersonal skills by engaging students in activities in which they can achieve success.

In order to achieve these goals I began to look for a framework that I could follow in my class. When I first began to research instructional strategies for my class, I came across the work of Gunning (1998, 1995, 1988). With his early work he focuses on beginning readers using a phonics approach. In his book *Assessing and Correcting Reading and Writing Difficulties*, Gunning (1998) describes his work as a “practical text” (p.xxiii) where he covers many facets of reading and writing instruction. Not only does he provide information for teachers of younger students he also includes older learners in his book.

In the first chapter, Gunning (1998) identifies thirteen principles that he believes support the teaching of problem readers and writers. After reviewing these principles, I noted their relationship to the “Circle of Courage” (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990) philosophy that I already followed in my class.

Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990) have written about the powerful effects of ‘reclaiming environments’. Based on First Nations’ teachings, this philosophy advocates designing school programs around four basic precepts: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. The basic idea is that when these fundamental human needs are met in healthy ways in a school program, students will find success. Since I had been following this philosophy in my own classroom for a few years, I needed to find a framework that supported my current practice. Gunning’s (1998) thirteen principles matched my classroom philosophy and became the framework I followed in an effort to

achieve the goals that were set forth for the literacy class. The following is a list of those principles:

1. Prevention versus Correction
2. Importance of Success
3. Building on the Known
4. Fostering Independence
5. Active Involvement
6. Personalized Instruction
7. Continuous Assessment
8. A Full Range of Literacy Experiences
9. Direct Systematic Instruction
10. An Integrated Approach
11. Wide Reading
12. Providing Materials with Appropriate Challenge Level
13. Sense of Community

After researching adolescent literacy, other literature was found to support Gunning's (1998) theory for supporting struggling readers and writers. Therefore, the following literature review will be organized according to Gunning's principles and incorporate a discussion using a wide range of literature.

Prevention versus Correction

Gunning (1998) states, "prevention is vastly superior to remediation. However, 15 to 30% of students who complete prevention programs will still need further help" (p. 11). When I asked my students if they had been in reading programs in their previous

schools, most of the students answered “yes”, but described a class that focused on supporting the regular curriculum. It seems that, somewhere in their upper elementary years, direct reading instruction had stopped for my students. Morris, Ervin and Conrad (1996) describe a situation where the mother of a non-reading grade seven student asked, “if the resource teacher is no longer going to provide direct reading instruction, then who is going to teach him to read?” (p. 369). If prevention does not happen through early literacy initiatives, correction programs must continue to address reading problems. As Mrs. Ervin, the tutor in Morris, Ervin and Conrad’s (1996) case study stated, “it is never too late to help a child learn to read” (p. 377). Even though Gunning (1998) stated “prevention programs may be desired”, my students indicated they were pleased to be in a corrective program at the high school level.

Importance of Success

“With success there is increased effort, and more success” (Gunning, 1998, p. 12). In their work on building a ‘reclaiming environment’, Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) describe ‘Mastery’ as, “the need to be good at something; the foundation of self-esteem”(p. 10). Students in the literacy class needed to experience some success. By providing simple worksheets and reading aloud to them I was able to begin that process. As their confidence grew I was able to increase the demands of the class. Once my students began to be successful in this class, they were eager to try harder and improve their skill level. Curwin (1992) has taught students at the junior high level and in his work on ‘motivating the hard to motivate’, he states that “students’ motivation will increase when they accurately believe that they are competent in the subjects they are learning” (p. 130). What my students were able to confirm was, students will become

more motivated to learn when they believe they can be successful (Cantrell, 1995; Casey, 1996; Curwin, 1992; Gunning, 1998; McCombs & Pope, 1994).

Building On the Known

According to Gunning (1998), “teaching for success is building on what is known” (p. 12). As with any class, I believe one of the most important things a teacher can do is take the time to get to know his/her students. Some teachers believe they do not have time to get to know their students; there is too much material to cover in the curriculum and that becomes priority. By taking the time to find out some background knowledge of each student, the teacher can begin to understand him or her as individuals.

In their work on adolescents with disabilities, Cantrell and Cantrell (1995), describe three themes and interventions to help these young people make positive life choices. The first theme states, “learning experiences must relate to the youth’s real-life” (p. 25). Casey found when adolescents who had a previous history of school failure were enrolled in an entrepreneurship program they became motivated to learn because their schooling became relevant. Studies have shown that student performance and motivation increase in classes they see as relevant (Cantrell & Cantrell, 1995; Casey, 1996; Curwin, 1992; McCombs & Pope, 1994). In order to know what your students see as relevant, you must know them! With adolescents, Lee and Neal (1992/93) state, “because they are older, they have more life experiences to draw upon which provide a greater store of background knowledge for applying to literacy activities” (p. 281).

McCombs and Pope (1994) state, “teachers must get to know each student and their personal needs and interests” (p. 30). After teaching the literacy program for three semesters I can see how each student enters the class with some pre-learned reading

strategies. Most of the students are familiar with sounding out words, some recognize patterns (two vowels usually means the first one has a long sound), and only the confident will try to guess unfamiliar words.

Once I have an understanding of who each person is and where his/her strengths are, I can help him or her gain confidence by stressing the importance of using strategies, which they may find successful. Continually reaffirming with my students that they do, in fact know something, is a huge part of this job. For example, it does not take long for the students to understand that they are more successful at reading passages than words in isolation, because they have some real life experiences to draw on in order to make their reading make sense. A student in my first literacy class made this point very clear to me when he could not read the word 'full' when it was written on the board. After much frustration on both our parts he started talking about driving. I asked him if he had his license and he answered yes. I then asked how he got the license and he told me the test was easy! The discussion we then had revealed that he was able to read the test because he had previous experience driving and he looked for key words like 'playground'. Since driving was something he had an interest in and it was relevant to him to get his license, this young person was able to make sense of written words that he otherwise may have had difficulty reading.

Fostering Independence

When researching First Nation's child rearing practices, Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990) found that traditional cultural practices stress the importance of young people making independent decisions. "Making one's decisions fostered motivation to attain a given goal and responsibility for failure or success" (Brendtro,

Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 41). These researchers go on to conclude that independence is the need to become responsible for one's actions and make wise decisions in order to gain autonomy (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1996).

The first semester I taught the literacy program, six of my students were reading below a grade three level, with virtually no independence. Each class since then has had an equal number or more students at such low levels that they require constant help. So, how does one foster independence with a group of students which Gunning (1998) describes as "browbeaten by a cycle of failure and self-defeating behaviors" (p. 13)? McCombs and Pope (1994) state, "teaching must be a process that entices students to take control of their own learning, but that also provides levels of control that are appropriate to each student's ability to accomplish specific learning tasks" (p. 29). In an effort to get the students in my first literacy class to take control of their learning, I thought about a friend who taught a junior high learning disabled class. At the beginning of the year, she sat down with her students and went through their files, so they could see exactly where they were in relation to their peers. When I questioned her on this exercise, she simply stated, "they need to know what level they are working at so they can see their improvement". Listening to that voice, I asked my students what grade level they thought they were reading at. All of them stated they knew they were behind their peers, but most thought they were at about a grade six level. When I showed them their most current reading scores, one student asked me what twenty-seven meant. I had to explain that it said 'two point seven' and that meant she was reading at a grade two level. She quietly went about completing her work.

A few months later I asked that student if it was helpful or hurtful to find out her reading level. She responded, “helpful and that was when I knew I had to make some changes in my life”. That was the moment she began to take control of her learning. Since that day, I have told my students exactly what level they are reading at when they enter my class. “Be honest and direct. Teachers who begin by discussing the difficulty of the task with students rather than avoiding such a discussion may find the honesty pays off” (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997/98, p. 279).

When you begin the class on an honest note you also begin to build the second most important factor in fostering independence- trust. In order for reluctant learners to gain independence, they must begin to take risks; but before these students will risk anything, they must trust the people around them. In their work McCombs and Pope (1994) state, “students’ natural motivation to learn can be elicited in safe, trusting, and supportive environments” (p. 29).

Active Involvement

Gunning states that “being an independent learner requires active involvement in the task at hand” (p. 13). When my students began the literacy program, they were unmotivated and passive. Encouraging active involvement from resistant students requires patience and interesting non-threatening activities. As with developing independence, “students need to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning” (Hosking & Teberg, 1998, p. 336). In their work, Hosking and Teberg (1998) describe a middle school literacy program that focuses on a student centered approach. These authors give examples of how to include student input in the learning environment, the curriculum, and instruction/assessment. For example, teachers are “encouraged to

empower the learners; classrooms should be cooperative settings; students can have a voice in resources; and an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies should be used” (Hosking & Teberg, 1998, p. 334). The students in their study “repeatedly praised programs that offered hands-on activities where they could be actively involved in their learning” (Hosking & Teberg, 1998, p. 337). It was the hands-on activities in my class that began the process of active involvement with my students.

When things began to deteriorate in my class on the days in which I did not plan hands-on activities, I had to figure out how to actively engage my students in the learning process in order to make the reading process more ‘real’. After a particularly bad day, I had each student tell me what his/her goals were for this class. Everyone had stated he/she wanted to be a better reader and writer. I wrote their goals on poster paper and hung it at the front of the room. We discussed what strategies we needed to implement in order to ensure successful goal completion.

Ivey (1999), a teacher, reading specialist, and university instructor, discusses four themes that she found apparent in teaching middle school students with reading problems. One of her themes states, “struggling middle school readers need real purposes for reading” (Ivey, 1999, p. 377). A second theme indicates, “struggling middle school readers want to be and can become good readers” (p. 338). Through their goals, my students were able to convey that they indeed wanted to be better readers and writers and the ‘real’ purpose for their reading became the achievement of their goals. When my students found success with hands-on activities, games, and goal setting, they became active participants in their learning, which in the end also led to greater independence.

Personalized Instruction

“No one reading method or set of reading materials is ideal for all students” (Carbo, 1997a, p. 41). Gunning states, “it is important to adapt instruction to meet individual variations in interest and background and in preference for strategies” (p. 14).

Although I was able to provide a variety of activities for my students, Fischer (1999/2000), in her research with at-risk high school readers states, “the diversity of their problems means that these students cannot all be required to progress through the same materials at the same pace” (p. 328). So how does a teacher then personalize instruction if it means more than providing a variety of activities? One-on-one instruction provides some positive options in personalizing lessons (Ballash, 1994; Eldridge, 1985; Ivy, 1999; Lee & Neal, 1992/93; Morris, Ervin, & Conrad, 1996).

Lee and Neal (1992/93) conducted a case study involving a grade eight student with very weak reading skills. They adapted Clay’s model (1985, as cited in Lee & Neal, 1992/93) of one-to-one instruction for first grade students to meet the learning needs of a middle school student. One component of this program had the instructor keep a running record when the student was reading aloud. The instructor would note both mispronounced and correctly pronounced words and the following lesson would focus on the information gained from the running record. In a large class setting this strategy would be very difficult to implement.

Morris, Ervin, and Conrad (1996) also present a case study involving a middle school student. The young person described in this study worked with a tutor over a two-year period and significant gains in his reading ability were noted. Although the authors describe all the instructional methods used with this student they stated his success was

largely due to the tutor's "unrelenting attention to instructional level" (Morris, Ervin, & Conrad, 1996, p. 14). When working one-on-one, a teacher can plan in accordance to the student's instructional level but in a large class setting it is difficult for the teacher to plan every activity at a level that accommodates every instructional level in the class.

Therefore, some students' needs may not be met with all the activities. That was the case in my class until the numbers dropped to a manageable size. As well, at my school our classes are eighty-five minutes long, three days a week, with eighty and sixty minute classes on the other days. With this extended period of time, I was able to provide a variety of activities within each class, which allowed for student differences. Each class had time set aside for phonics activities, writing assignments, reading and twice a week we played literacy games.

Continuous Assessment

"Initial instruction should be based on an assessment that highlights the students' strengths and weaknesses and establishes an appropriate level of instruction" (Gunning, 1998; p. 14). In their study, Lee and Neal (1992/93) constantly focused on making their student aware of his strengths, which in turn helped to motivate him. They constantly pointed out his strengths such as "guessing unknown words, building hypotheses related to meaning by using background knowledge, applying basic phonics knowledge, and persevering in attending to reading tasks" (Lee & Neal, 1992/93, p. 280). Adolescent non-readers believe they have no strengths in reading; so as soon as some can be found, the students begin to feel successful.

Lee and Neal (1992/93) also wrote, "a standardized test score provides a very narrow sample of student's achievement" (p. 280). Although a standardized test provides

a starting point, these students need continual feedback on their progress. In order to focus on students' successes, I marked all their daily assignments and graded them. Since most traditional schools focus on academic ability as the measure of success, it seemed important for the students to receive marks for everything they did. For students in the literacy program, this was their first academic class where they had received good marks and it did not seem to matter that it was a modified program.

A Full Range of Literacy Experiences

Remedial reading programs may run the risk of focusing too much time on remediating skill deficits, and not enough time on reading (Eldridge, 1985; Gunning, 1998; Bergman & Schuder, 1992/93). In their work with at-risk students, Bergman and Schuder (1992/93) discuss changes that were made to the curriculum in order to improve the reading abilities of all students. Even with these changes, the poorest readers were still “spending most of their time on isolated, low-level skills in boring textbooks or working on ditto sheets” (Bergman & Schuder, 1992/93, p. 19). Routman (1996) states “most language arts time should be spent reading and writing authentic texts” (p. 102). The greatest lesson I learned from my first literacy class was that an overabundance of worksheets created boredom and left little time for reading practice; not to mention, the mountains of marking for me. With the study group, I drastically cut down on worksheets and implemented a variety of strategies.

One would be remiss in discussing a range of literacy activities without mentioning the debate over the phonics and whole language approaches to teaching and learning reading. Before I began teaching the literacy program, I was a full supporter of the phonics approach; where students learn the relationship between letters and sounds,

and use this information to build words and finally stories. After reading Routman's (1996) description of whole language, I realized that my classroom was a place where "learners are continually supported to purposefully use language in order to inquire and construct and evaluate their own understanding of texts and real-world issues" (p. 41). Without realizing it, I was a supporter of whole language with a phonics component within my program. Research indicates (Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993; Duffy & Hoffman, 1999; Gunning, 1998; Learning Media, 1996; Routman, 1996) that the combination approach to teaching reading I had stumbled onto was the most effective approach.

Allington and Walmsley (1995) state, "the need for some explicit phonics instruction is particularly clear for at-risk children who have not had much exposure to reading and writing and thus have fewer opportunities to figure out how our alphabetic system works" (p. 139). Routman (1996) explains in her work that "successful readers must have sound-letter knowledge in order to read" (p. 91). But, she is also quick to point out that phonics instruction is "a tool in the reading process and not an end in itself" (Routman 1996, p. 93). Like Routman (1996), Davidson and Koppenhaver (1993) found in their study of adolescent compensatory literacy programs that "skills such as phonics are most successful when taught in context" (p. 228). In order to include a phonics component in my program I began the semester with letter, sound, and word identification exercises.

Duffy and Hoffman (1999) argue in their work that we must get away from the idea of a 'perfect method'. "Effective reading teachers understand that different students require different methods at different times" (p. 13). Therefore, the teacher must decide

which method is going to best help each student in the class. When I asked my students if there was a full range of activities they responded with a “yes” and described the worksheets, games, hands-on activities, and daily reading. For them, it was not a question about phonics versus whole-language instead it was a question about whether or not their learning needs were met in the class.

Direct Systematic Instruction

When students arrive in grade ten with a grade one or two reading level, not only will their skills be weak but they will be missing some key strategies in understanding the reading process. “The skills and strategies that achieving readers soak up through immersion all too frequently escape low-achieving readers unless they are provided with explicit explanations and demonstrations” (Gunning, 1998, p. 14). Therefore, various authors (Carbo, 1997b; Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993; Eldridge, 1985; Gunning, 1998;) agree that direct, systematic teaching is most effective in literacy programs. Morris, Ervin and Conrad (1996) summarized the success of their case study by describing a ‘balanced’ program. “Balance was reflected in the consistent lesson routine of (a) reading for meaning, (b) word study, (c) fluency drill, and (d) writing” (p. 373). Although my sessions did not necessarily follow the exact routine of the aforementioned case study, there was a definite routine in the class.

“High school students with reading problems need direct explicit instruction” (Fischer, 1999/2000, p. 328). With little independence and confidence there is little choice in how one teaches these students. Outside of directly teaching the fundamentals of reading the class must be organized in a consistent, systematic manner. Carbo (1997b)

explains that at-risk students learn best in a “highly-structured, organized environment” (p. 41). There are no surprises (except for candy) on how each day will run.

It is also important to mention the need for an intensive program. Joyce, Hrycauk, Calhoun (2001) introduced a secondary reading program that occupied ninety minutes per day in order to “provide students with an adequate opportunity to learn” (p. 42). Although many students and staff complain of the long classes (eighty-five minutes), my students and I recognize the need for the longer periods. On the first day of classes I told my students about a study that Eldridge (1985) conducted with an adolescent non-reader. Through his instructional work with adolescent nonreaders, Eldridge (1985) found that a minimum of one hour per day was necessary for students to find success with their reading programs. Our student population is very resistant to homework; therefore it is imperative that an intensive program be provided within the school day.

An Integrated Approach

“Using a unit or theme approach is one way of helping low achieving readers form the kind of cognitive connections that adept readers make on their own” (Gunning, 1998; p. 15). Within the study class, I tried to introduce the theme approach by providing lessons on grocery words, menu items, and words that the students would find in their vocational classes. Fischer, (1999/2000) states, “at-risk students need to feel that what they are learning relates immediately to their lives” (p. 329). By providing lessons that covered everyday topics such as grocery lists, my students were able to understand how reading can affect the most basic part of one’s life. For future classes, I would like to continue to build on the theme idea by including such topics as safety around the house and reading directions on medications.

Wide Reading

“We learn to read by reading” (Eldridge, 1985; Gunning, 1998). In discussions with my students it was very clear that most of them had no positive experiences with reading, which translated into no interest in daily reading. “Therein lies the most challenging aspects of teaching older students: they cannot read, so they do not like to read; reading is labored and unsatisfying (Moats, 2001, p. 37). So, how does a teacher begin to get a group of reluctant readers to read?

While researching strategies for adolescent non-readers, a teacher at another school recommended ‘The Balanced Literacy Program’ as described in *A Literacy Guide for Teachers Teaching Children to Read and Write* (Toronto District School Board, 1997). The first component of this program is “read aloud and response” (Toronto District School Board, 1997, p. 5-12). Some of the benefits of reading aloud to students (of any age) include: modeling good reading, allowing the teacher to demonstrate his/her enthusiasm for reading, assisting in developing reading comprehension, and providing a positive reading experience (Atwell, 1998; Ballash, 1994; Erikson, 1996; Ivey, 1999; Padak, Davidson & Padak, 1990; Routman, 1994). These same authors agree that it does not matter what you read to the students; a poem, short story, or article from the paper, students in secondary schools like being read to. I, therefore, began the semester with daily read aloud sessions.

Routman (1996) and Ivey (1999) both speak to the importance of reading to a partner, but I never could have imagined the success of this version of shared reading. Not only were the students attentive, they were able to help one another when a problem arose. Colvin and Schlosser state, “for many adolescents, social interactions serve as a

gauge of their connection to school, one measure of their engagement in learning” (p. 274). Partner reading gave the students an opportunity to interact appropriately with one another.

For years these students and others like them went to great measures to avoid reading. “Because reading is a struggle for them, poor readers read less” (Gunning, 1998, p.15). Therefore, several authors (Allington, 1977; Eldridge, 1985; Fischer, 1999/2000; Gunning, 1998; Lee & Neal, 1992/93) agree that daily reading is the key to success with adolescents who struggle with reading. These students have a lot of lost reading time to make up. Everyday of the semester my students were actively involved in some type of reading. When I asked for feedback at the end of the semester one student wrote, “reading everyday was what we needed”.

To implement wide reading into an adolescent literacy program one must remember to gently ease into it. Begin with read alouds but make sure the teacher listens to the students when they say or act like they have had enough. When students begin to read on their own the teacher must also provide a wide range of materials to accommodate student interests and provide personal choice (Hosking & Teberg, 1998; Ivey, 1999; McCombs & Pope, 1994; Worthy, 1998). Although I spent most of my budget last year on books for my class, I see how I need to continually add to my collection.

Providing Materials with Appropriate Challenge Level

In order to encourage reluctant adolescent readers to pursue their greatest challenge-reading, one must have a supply of age appropriate material at a level the students can read without experiencing frustration (Fischer, 1999/2000; Gunning, 1998; McCombs & Pope; 1994, Moats, 2001). In the case study conducted by Morris, Ervin and

Conrad (1996), they attributed the student's success to the tutor's "unrelenting attention to instructional level" (p. 374). She used grade two material as the starting point for her grade seven student. This approach was similar to the one that I have been using since I began teaching the literacy class. I started my students, at what I refer to as the beginning, and I simply told them we were reviewing the basics.

"Access to level and interest-appropriate materials is the dream of every literacy teacher" (Fischer, 1999/2000). Finding the 'right' material can be very difficult and time consuming. Carbo (1997a), Eldridge (1985), and Keefe and Meyer (1988) suggest low level readers should read stories they have dictated to the teacher. This approach enables the reader to recognize words that are already a part of his/her vocabulary. I used this approach in the previous semester when I worked with a student one-on-one and saw amazing results; but using this technique in a large class was not feasible. What did work well was a strategy recommended by Keefe and Meyer (1988), where the students match common advertisements like *Coke* and *McDonalds*. Instead of using advertisements I used words and pictures from grocery fliers and I designed a few lessons around those words.

Adolescents want to learn to read; but using appropriate material is a necessity. For years these students have been working at a frustration level with little or no success. So, building a library of resources must become a priority for this class.

Sense of Community

Numerous authors (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990; Curwin, 1992; Gunning, 1998; Martin & Murphy-Nightingale, 1993) espouse the importance of students having a sense of 'belonging' at school. They have written how belonging is the need to

be a part of a group and how students want to feel like they belong within a school setting. When a fifteen-year-old student is reading at a grade one or two level, it is difficult to have a sense of belonging within a school community that is home to adolescent students and their teachers. My first thought with each literacy class was “my behavior days are not over!” The students in my classes were what Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) would have described as unattached, guarded, and aloof; descriptors for students without a sense of belonging. Building a sense of community begins with the student-teacher relationship and must therefore be a priority for the teacher.

Learning to read as an adolescent requires a great amount of risk taking. Students will only take risks in classes where they feel safe and trust the people around them. In order to build trust, literacy teachers must create a safe environment, genuinely care about their students, and believe the students are capable of learning to read (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997/98; Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1993; Joyce, Hrycauk, & Calhoun 2001; McCombs & Pope, 1994). Davidson and Koppenhaver (1993) wrote that “not only must staff in literacy programs believe that their students are capable, with help, of learning to read and write, but the teachers must also believe that they can teach these students” (p. 222).

Equally important to the student-teacher relationship, in developing a sense of community, is the student-student relationship. Even with the most caring teacher in a classroom, if teenagers feel at all uncomfortable with their peers, they will be inhibited to do their work. With young adults, Brozo (1990) states, “to avoid ridicule by exposing their ‘stupidity’ in the classroom, many resort to hiding out and bluffing behaviors” (p.

324). It is for that reason, the initial progress in the adolescent literacy class is slow and the teacher must be open and honest so everyone knows all the students have problems. When it was clear that each person was struggling with reading and everyone was working on the same material, the students began to trust one another and me. It was at that time that the atmosphere in the class became more positive. “Because there is a lot of camaraderie associated with having a reading problem and overcoming it, these students form close, healthy bonds with one another” (Fischer 1999/2000, p. 334).

I believe that building a sense of community is the cornerstone to a successful program. Adolescents who struggle academically tend to feel like they do not belong in school. If they attend classes (for many have poor attendance), they are resistant to working for fear of failure. When students do not attend school physically or mentally their skills never improve and the cycle of being unsuccessful continues. If a teacher can create a safe community for these individuals, they will begin to attend; which in turn will effect their overall success.

Summary

Gunning (1998) states, “there are a number of basic principles that should be incorporated in any program created to help students who are struggling with reading and writing” (p. 11). After reviewing the literature, it appears that many researchers and teachers agree with Gunning’s (1998) principles and I can now see how they were present within my own classroom.

While examining the literature, I could also see the interrelationship of the above mentioned principles. Each one directly affects the others. For example, if the teacher provides work at the appropriate level, the students will find success, which in turn will

lead to greater independence. Or, if a teacher provides a full range of literacy activities, she/he will be able to engage the students in wide reading, personalizing the student's programs, which in turn will lead to active involvement, greater independence and finally student success.

Gunning's (1998) principles work well as a framework for designing a literacy class but in order to fully understand what makes a successful program one needs to examine the instructional strategies within these principles. Therefore, the following question needs to be answered: What instructional strategies directly and positively impact the learning atmosphere within an adolescent literacy program?

In the following section, two case studies will be presented in an effort to more fully examine the solutions to this question. More specifically, through the case studies, the instructional strategies that were used in my literacy class will be presented and their effectiveness will be discussed in an effort to clearly understand how to teach reading to high school non-readers.

Methodology

Elliot (1991) defines action research as “the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (as cited in Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh).

After a year of teaching a challenging group of readers it became apparent to me that I needed to study my class in order to improve the learning atmosphere within it.

Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993) state, “any professional situation about which teachers want to gain a deeper understanding, and which they want to change, is a potential starting point for action research” (p. 36). I therefore decided to use action research to follow the progress of my students for one semester, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to better teach high school non-readers.

Since the purpose of this project was to uncover the components of an adolescent literacy program and the most effective instructional strategies, simply measuring the success of the program by inventories and tests would not paint an accurate picture of what went on in this class. Merriam (1988) states, “the case study is a particularly good means of educational evaluation because of its ability to explain the casual links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey of experimental strategies” (p. 29). Davidson and Koppenhaver (1993) describe the success of an adolescent literacy program in terms of student behavior; “you see it in their faces and in their attitudes” (p. 223). By using a case study approach I will be able to tell the stories of two students, Jane and Tom (pseudonyms). These two students will help me uncover the answers to my questions of, “what are the components of an adolescent literacy program and what instructional strategies directly and positively impact the learning atmosphere within an adolescent literacy program?”

Throughout the semester I kept field notes to record specific observations related to student behavior, student progress, and the effectiveness of each component of the program. Since my students struggled with writing, I interviewed them asking for continuous feedback about the program. Those interviews took place upon completion of each instructional strategy in order to gain the students' perspective of the effectiveness of each strategy. Through a journal, I reflected on what did and did not work in my class and why that was the case. Altrichter, Posch, and Somekh (1993) state, "through constant movement between action and reflection weaknesses in the practical theories are gradually detected and useful action strategies are explored and extended" (p. 208). Through this process I gained a greater understanding of what makes an effective adolescent literacy program.

In order to measure the success of the students in the literacy class four goals were established and again a connection can be made to Gunning's (1998) principles.

- Goal: To improve attendance by providing the students with a sense of belonging, and by increasing their sense of accomplishment. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Importance of success; sense of community*)
- Goal: To improve skill development by providing direct instruction and age-appropriate materials through innovative and researched-based teaching strategies. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Direct, systematic instruction; a full range of literacy experiences; an integrated approach; wide reading*)

- Goal: To improve self-concept by challenging students at the appropriate instructional level. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Providing materials with appropriate challenge level; personalize instruction*)
- Goal: To improve interpersonal skills by engaging students in activities in which they can achieve success. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Building on the known; personalize instruction; fostering independence, active involvement*)

In order to meet the goals for this program, every student who entered into the literacy class was given the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (Ekwall, 1986), the *Student Self-Attitude Checklist* (Alberta Education, 1998), and the *Personal/Social Behavior Inventory* (Alberta Education, 1998). Each student was given a pre-test and post-test, using these assessment tools, in order to measure progress in reading levels, self-esteem, and behavioral concerns. Tom and Jane agreed to have me monitor their attendance, skill development, classroom behavior, and self-esteem in an effort to evaluate whether or not they achieved the class goals.

These two young people also agreed to give me feedback on each component of the program. From their remarks I was able to reflect on what worked and what didn't work in the class and made changes accordingly. Furthermore, by extrapolating the case studies I will be able to make recommendations for other adolescent literacy programs.

In the following section, I will describe the instructional components of the class, report on my findings, introduce Tom and Jane, report on the progress/results of Jane and Tom, summarize the data, and make future recommendations.

Analysis of Data

Instructional Strategies

After teaching the first literacy class I began to research instructional strategies for high school non-readers. I worked with two students in a tutorial setting and tried many of the strategies I read about on them. With their help I decided the following strategies would be the ones I would use for this study.

The instructional components of this class can be divided into five categories. First, is what can be described as a phonics unit. To begin the semester I introduced the students to the short vowel families and then proceeded through the long vowel sounds. Three days a week I choose one vowel sound and we brainstormed words, wrote sentences and the students completed two or three related worksheets. Alberta Education (1996) recommended “teaching word families with sounds that represent the same sound (cat, fat, sat)” (p. L.D. 153). Routman (1996) and Gunning (1995) described the use of ‘onsets’ and ‘rimes’ in teaching beginning readers. For example, “with the word ‘bright’, *br* is the onset and *ight* is the rime” (Routman 1996, p. 93). Using this approach, in combination with learning vowel sounds, proved very successful. It provided easily identifiable patterns and sounds for the students. For example, when we were looking at long ‘a’ words I used the rimes *ake*, *ail*, *ase*, *ame*, and *ay*. This process of studying letter, sound, and word recognition took approximately forty-five minutes per day.

The second component of this program was daily reading. While the students were completing the phonics unit, I began to read aloud to them for approximately forty minutes per day. Several authors (Ballash, 1994; Ivey, 1999; Lee & Neal, 1992/93; Routman, 1996; Toronto District School Board, 1997) speak favorably of reading aloud

to older students. Reading aloud to my students proved to be very interesting. First, it seemed to take the pressure off them as they 'hated' to read but at the same time it introduced them to some great stories with interesting characters. They saw that I was not a perfect reader and that teachers do in fact make mistakes and stumble when reading. Reading aloud helped to inspire my students to read independently. The stories I chose to read to the class were all about high school students or were about topics that would interest young adults. I used Crutcher's (1991) book of short stories, *Athletic Shorts*.

Following the read aloud portion of the class, I introduced shared reading. With this strategy I continued to read aloud to the students but they were to follow along. When this version of shared reading failed I introduced a short story unit and partner reading. With this version of shared reading, the students read to a partner of similar ability from Goodman's (1997) *Five-Star Stories*. These books were written at various levels beginning with grade one and again everyone was able to find success with the stories.

When the students were finished their short stories, we completed a novel study as a class; with me reading aloud once again. The novel I chose was *Snowbound* (Mazer, 1973). This story was about two teenagers in a life-threatening situation. From that point, the students moved into reading independently from the *Caught Reading Series* (Bledsoe, 1995), a controlled vocabulary workbook and novel. The most important point to make is that three days a week this study group of students was involved in the reading process for at least forty minutes.

The third component, comprehension activities, was ongoing throughout the entire semester in one form or another. While I was reading aloud to the class, I simply

The third component, comprehension activities, was ongoing throughout the entire semester in one form or another. While I was reading aloud to the class, I simply asked questions orally and we discussed the stories and characters. When the students were working on the short story unit I used a combination of pre-packaged questions for the stories and an activity known as “silly sentences” (Keefe & Meyer, 1988). This exercise entails the students rewriting nonsensical sentences in order to make them make sense. Throughout the novel study, the students did a combination of assignments for building reading comprehension, ranging from questions to artwork to describing situations in the story. Finally, with the novels from the *Caught Reading Series* (Bledsoe, 1995), we had brief discussions at the end of the period so everyone could report on their stories.

The fourth component to this program was the ‘hands-on’ days. Every Wednesday was devoted to activities that required little or no pen and paper. Learning to read, as a teenager is hard work and Wednesdays provided a break in routine for the students, while still involving them in reading activities.

I began with using the *Glass Analysis Kit* (Glass & Glass, 1976), “an analytic decoding method” (Babbitt, S. & Byrne, M., 1999/2000) which involved the students reading from flash cards, words that followed certain patterns, and then reading sentences with those words. Another hands-on activity that I regularly used was having the students build words using scrabble pieces, and on occasion, we actually played Scrabble. Other hands-on activities that I used were exercises involving the theme units. For example, the students matched pictures and product names from grocery fliers, or they created aisle markers for a grocery store.

The final component of the literacy class was 'Jeopardy'. This version of the popular television show tested the students weekly on vocabulary, reading comprehension, and trivia. Every Friday this game was played. Although the students saw Jeopardy as a fun way to end the week, I was able to use it as an informal, yet very practical way, to assess student progress. I am not sure anyone in the class, outside of myself, realized that this game was a review of the week's work.

Findings

In the literacy class I tried to implement a wide range of literacy experiences through the instructional strategies that I chose. In the following section I will present data taken from my field notes and journal entries in an effort to uncover the effectiveness of these strategies. I will also look for the interrelationship of the instructional strategies to Gunning's (1998) principles. I will then discuss the specific progress and results of Jane and Tom and their thoughts on the effectiveness of the instructional strategies.

After reviewing the data I can see how everyday I was directly teaching reading and reading skills in the literacy class. The organization of the class was such that everyday was presented in a systematic manner. First we began the class with word identification exercises (phonics) followed by comprehension activities and ending with actual reading (except on 'hands-on' and 'game' days). The students seemed to respond to this 'no surprise' method of teaching. Everyday they knew exactly what to expect as far as the routine of the class.

Phonics. At the beginning of the semester I had twenty-two students in this class. Until we were able to complete the standardized testing, little one-on-one instruction took

place. Eight students were functioning at grade three or lower, seven students were grade six or higher, and the remaining students were around grade four. I moved the higher level students into another class; however, I received two more low-end students with one of them having extreme behavior problems. With such a large group of remedial readers it was impossible to “personalize their instruction” (Gunning, 1998) so I planned the lessons for the lowest level students and told the better readers that we were reviewing. This was the beginning of the phonics work.

With the first literacy class I taught, the students complained on the first day about the elementary worksheets but the complaining was short lived when they received very high marks. I was not sure if this class of literacy students would respond in the same manner but this is what I found. Teenagers who struggle with reading do not want material that appears too elementary, yet many of them need work at the grade one or two level. In order to combat this problem I used a variety of material. However, the worksheets I used for the phonics section of the program were definitely from elementary resources, but after the first day, no one seemed to comment on their origin. In reflecting on why the students did not mind the elementary work I wrote in my journal, “I believe when the whole class is doing the same work and everyone is achieving eighty to ninety percent, the grade level of the material does not matter”.

Another indication that the students did not mind the phonics work was when they took over the brainstorming sessions. While I was talking to another teacher, a student began the class for me and refused to give me my job back. From that day on the students took turns leading the class. After several days of observing the students ‘teaching’ the phonics lessons I wrote, “this class loves to be involved in the teaching”.

Daily Reading. Everyday my students were involved in some form of reading beginning with me reading aloud to them. Initially, everyone loved the stories. The students would laugh and cheer while I was reading. Gradually their behavior became worse, especially when there were no hands-on activities. By the third week they were rowdy and definitely not listening to the stories. But, I continued reading aloud. In my journal on week four, I described myself as a 'slow learner' because student behavior during the read aloud time was such a serious problem. I wrote, "I want to finish the story for two reasons: it's a good story and *I* want to finish!"

In an effort to avoid a student revolt, I switched to the second component of 'The Balanced Literacy Program' - shared reading- where "a text to be shared with the whole class is selected by the teacher. The lesson focuses on modeling what proficient readers do as they interact with text. Texts are revisited over a two or three day period" (Toronto District School Board, 1997, p. 5-15).

The following journal entry best describes what happened with shared reading. "When I was in the library I was reading about shared reading. Reggie Routman (1994) described this nice elementary class with the teacher sitting in a chair surrounded by kids on the floor. It sounded cozy but really... in my class? I think not. I'm not sure why shared reading is so unsuccessful; the material or, are they tired of being read too. Why won't they follow along?" Finally, I asked my students and the fellow with the lowest reading level responded, "we want to read on our own!" The next day my students began to read short stories to a partner at a similar level. My journal entry from the first day of partner reading simply read, "It was amazing! I wasn't sure what to do with myself as

everyone was on task.” After a few days everyone was discussing their stories and telling one another which ones they enjoyed.

By the time the students began the short story unit, everyone had been tested with the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) and I had a good idea of where their strengths and weaknesses were. Most of the students’ scores indicated weak word identification skills, but when they completed the ‘reading passages’ portion of the test their scores improved. When the students knew they could read better in context, they were surprised. Most assumed that since reading isolated words was challenging, reading whole passages would be impossible. The test indicated the opposite. The *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) gave me a place to begin to “build on the known” (Gunning, 1998) and it gave the students some confidence for beginning their independent reading.

After reflecting on my journal entries I can see how my students asserted their independence and they became actively involved in the learning process through a wide range of reading activities. (Gunning, 1998).

Comprehension Activities. In my opening address to the students I told them that everything they read must make sense. The students who were reading above grade three had no trouble understanding that statement. However, the lower level group was simply pleased when they could pronounce some of the words. To them they were reading. Needless to say reading comprehension skills must be taught to high school non-readers.

I had made a note to myself not to use standard comprehension questions after reading in Wilhelm’s (1995) book about teachers taking the fun out of reading when they have the students answer questions all the time. In an effort to not turn my already reluctant students off of reading I began to initiate discussions about the stories I read

aloud. We would discuss the characters, their problems, and relate them to real life situations.

When the students began the short story unit they answered multiple choice questions about their stories. With the stories being at a level they could easily read the students found they could comprehend the material with greater ease. Some students really liked the multiple-choice questions as they again provided high marks.

The most successful comprehension activity for the non-readers was the 'silly sentence' exercise. When the students read my weird sentences it was very obvious to them that they did not make sense. This exercise really made the concept of 'reading for meaning' clear for my students. The silly sentences also provided some comic relief in the class.

Hands-on Activities and Jeopardy. The second week into the semester, I wrote in my journal about a lesson that had gone well. After a review of short vowel words, the students used scrabble pieces to build as many words with short vowels as possible. Working in small groups the students spent sixty minutes building words and fifteen minutes sharing with the class. Two days later, we played my version of 'Jeopardy'. Here the students spelled words and answered comprehension questions in front of the class as a review for the week. The most passive student (who was also the lowest reader) was the most active participant. The hands-on activities and games were a great hit with the students. Some of my colleagues believe that high school students think that games and hands-on activities are too juvenile and will therefore refuse to participate. I can assure them nothing is further from the truth. Once you implement these activities into your routine the students will let you know if you forget their activity days. The hands-on

activities and games allowed the students to experience “success and become actively involved in their learning (Gunning, 1998). They provided me with an informal way to “assess student progress as well a place to integrate thematic material” (Gunning, 1998).

Summary

Within weeks, the students that I was following for this study were comfortable working with a partner and shortly after midterm reports they were comfortable working in small groups. I was very surprised when this happened. When I asked at the end of the term why they were not hesitant to work together one responded, “we knew everyone was in the same situation”. When my students saw one another take small risks and still make mistakes they knew they were not alone with their reading problems and they quickly learned that they could help each other when problems arose. From my notes I can see how my students were able to build trusting relationships which lead to a strong “sense of community and a greater sense of independence” (Gunning, 1998).

After the first month with this class, I told my principal that in my ideal world my class would be like an adult literacy class with highly self-motivated students. He laughed. A few weeks later mid-term report cards were distributed and my students started to become more motivated. By the end of the semester motivation was no longer an issue. When I asked some students what changed and what did they need to motivate them, one student spoke up and stated, “when I knew I could do the work, I wanted to do more”. The other students agreed. The report cards were clear evidence of the student’s success. Everyone with regular attendance was passing and these students were used to failing! The assessment tool of the report card gave the students the feedback they needed

in order to increase their motivation. The report cards indicated to me that the students were finding success with the instructional strategies that I chose for the class.

When I asked my students at the end of the semester why they felt they were so successful in this literacy program they responded, “It was because it was obvious that you cared about us and helped us when we needed it”. I responded in my journal that night with the following question, “Why have these students felt like teachers did not care about them?” I am not sure how to answer that question. But, administrators should be careful how they staff literacy positions as teachers are the ones who begin the process of building a trusting, caring, learning environment that creates a sense of community for adolescent non-readers.

In the future, I would like to work with my colleagues in order to make literacy education a school-wide project. A common complaint of my students was, “we cannot do the work in our other classes”. I continually have the literacy students coming to me for help with their other classes, so I would like to help my students find success in their whole program, not just mine. “To a large extent secondary school teachers believe that if reading needs to be taught in secondary school, it should be integrated into the language arts curriculum and taught by English teachers” (Bintz, 1997; p. 15). Literacy students need considerable support in all their classes. I have had students ask me to read exams for them, or tell me they simply cannot read the assignments in their classes. Imagine my surprise when I walked into a vocational class during a theory lesson and saw one of my students following along in a textbook that he was holding upside down. Reading needs to be taught by everyone, or the programs must be somehow integrated without the literacy class becoming a support program where direct reading instruction is forgotten.

Case Studies

Jane

I first met Jane in September 1999. This young woman with a beautiful smile was placed in the first literacy class I taught. She could not read, and I was unclear how to teach reading. Jane's journey to literacy has been an amazing learning experience for both of us. While I taught her the fundamentals of reading, she has taught me many lessons on the fundamentals of being an adolescent reading teacher.

When Jane joined the literacy class her previous school placement had been in a rural community, where she was in a pre-employment program. Testing from June of 1999, indicated she was reading at a two point six grade level. Jane's individual program plan stated her attendance, attitude, and ability to concentrate were poor. Improvement was described as minimal and while attending her previous school she participated in counseling for personal issues.

Jane moved to the city. She and her family lived one block from the school until the end of the school year when they moved to another area of the city. She was also in a physical education class I taught, which meant she was with me for the entire morning. In both classes it was apparent that Jane had little confidence, but slowly, she began to find success, particularly in the literacy program. Jane and another student, whom I will refer to as Dick, began to work together and improve. They were a great support system for one another. When the semester was nearing the end, Jane stated, "this always happens, just when I start to improve- the class ends." With those words haunting me, I decided to give up half of my prep time the following semester to work with Jane and Dick, three

days a week for forty-five minutes a day. Jane missed only three sessions the entire semester.

Together, the three of us began to unravel the mysteries of adolescent literacy. I would research strategies, read to them what the ‘experts’ said, and they would try the techniques and give me feedback. The following semester I was going to be implementing many of the strategies we had discovered; so it seemed important to follow Jane’s progress now. Dick was also supposed to be a part of this study; however, he withdrew from school the second week in the semester due to family problems.

Every student who joined the literacy class had to complete a standardized reading test. The following are Jane’s results from the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) which was administered the previous May.

Results of Graded Word List	Results of Reading Passages
Independent Reading Level – primer	grade 2
Instructional Reading Level – grade 1	grade 3
Frustration Reading Level – grade 2	grade 4

Jane’s reading test showed that she had extreme difficulties with word identification but that she had had some success with reading the passages. These results indicated some progress had been made that first year with regards to reading comprehension. I did not administer this test to Jane but in a discussion with the teacher who tested her, he indicated that Jane would not guess at unfamiliar words. When he questioned her as to why, she answered, “you are not allowed to guess when you read.” It appeared that Jane still lacked confidence with her reading and following her progress for another semester would continue to help both of us understand high school non-readers.

Tom

Tom was a grade ten student, who was not initially placed in the literacy program. It was not until he refused to complete a science quiz because he could not read it, that he came to my attention. The previous semester he had been in a grade nine class at our school and had been recommended for the literacy class, but somehow his name had been missing on my class list. When this tall, young man entered the room he was hiding behind a curtain of hair.

Prior to our grade nine program, Tom had been in two schools for grade nine, but there is no record of Tom attending either program. He told me he rarely attended those schools. From kindergarten to grade eight, Tom attended ten schools, with attendance and academic success being serious issues for his entire school career. While in the grade nine program at our school, Tom was described as kind and helpful, yet hard to motivate. Tom's attendance was still a problem.

In discussions with Tom, he clearly liked the social aspects of school and the vocational classes (as long as there is not any theory to learn). He did not like academic classes. Tom's ability to be successful in academic classes had been seriously hampered by his inability to read.

The following are Tom's scores from the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) which was administered his second week in the literacy class.

Results of Graded Word List	Results of Reading Passages
Independent Reading Level – pre-primer	pre-primer
Instructional Reading Level – grade 1	grade 1
Frustration Reading Level – grade 2	grade 3

It is important to note at this time that Tom was an interesting test case for the following reason. While it was clear that Tom struggled with word identification, he was able to comprehend the passages with a high degree of success. After testing Tom, we had a long discussion about his ability to extract the meaning from reading, even though he could not pronounce many of the words. It also became apparent in the testing that Tom had little confidence; as he would not even try to guess unfamiliar words. Tom was chosen for this study because he was one of the lowest level readers in the class.

Progress and Results - Jane

Phonics. Based on the standardized testing that Jane completed the previous spring, it was clear that she struggled with word identification. Her independent reading level in this category placed her at a Primer level and her instructional level was Grade one. She attempted to sound out words letter by letter, which often became very laborious when she was reading. Because she placed so much emphasis on sounding out words, she completely lost the meaning of what she was reading.

Since this was Jane's second time in the literacy class, the phonics portion was a review for her; but it should be noted that there were some key differences from the previous year. The first year Jane completed this portion of the class, I presented the material in an alternating form (short 'a' long 'a'). With the study group, the information was presented in the form of vowel families (all the short vowels first, followed by long vowels). Using this approach, in combination with the rimes and onsets, proved to be much more useful for Jane. Instead of sounding out each letter, she began to look for patterns in words.

When I asked Jane for feedback on this component of the program she stated, “it was boring but helpful”. She went on to explain that she found it boring because it was too easy and too similar to her experience the previous year. Jane was very excited when I administered the post-test of the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) and her results indicated growth in the area of word recognition. Jane’s independent reading level in this portion of the test increased from a primer level to grade two, her instructional level increased from grade one to grade three, and the frustration level rose from grade two to grade three.

Daily Reading. Jane reported in an interview at the end of the semester that she loved it when I read to the class. Listening to stories gave Jane a chance to relax and enjoy books. What Jane did not like doing was following along while I read during shared reading. With shared reading, the students in the class were inattentive; it appeared they wanted to visit, rather than follow along with the reading.

When the students switched to partner reading, I was not sure whether Jane and her partner would read or visit. They went into a separate room, away from most of the other students, and were very diligent with their reading. The stories the students were reading were written at levels where everyone could find success. When Jane discovered she could read the stories she was motivated to read more.

With the novel study *Snowbound* (Mazer, 1973), Jane again liked the fact that I was reading to the class. Where Jane really began to shine was when she began to work in the controlled vocabulary workbook. Last year Jane completed level two of this series with great success. This time I had her complete level four. I was unsure how she would do with this level as it was reaching her frustration level of work. Together with her

partner from the short story unit, the two students worked through the workbook. Jane completed the workbook and received a grade of seventy-seven percent. When Jane read the novel for this unit she was successful in reading the book. If Jane was stuck on a word she was using a variety of strategies for solving the problem. Jane had begun to guess unknown words, skip the difficult ones and read on looking for context clues, and as a last resort she still tried to sound out unfamiliar words. It was evident that Jane had gained confidence in her ability, which led to greater risk taking.

Comprehension Activities. One day near the end of the first semester when I was working with Jane, she announced that although she was beginning to read the words, she had no idea what she had just read. Reading comprehension was a problem for Jane. As mentioned earlier, Jane was putting all her energy into ‘sounding out’ the words.

When I used the read alouds with the class, I questioned them orally on what I had read. At that time it was clear that Jane understood the content of the stories when I read, therefore, I held out hope that she could improve her comprehension skills. When questioned about the comprehension activities Jane stated she disliked answering the questions that went with the short stories and she hated the art activities that went with the novel study. What she liked was discussing the stories and the ‘silly sentence’ exercises.

The greatest shift in Jane’s comprehension skills came with her realization that reading must make sense. Since reading comprehension was a weakness for Jane, I had to remind her that she had a lot of real life experiences that would help her in understanding what she read.

When I gave Jane the post-test for the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) there was some improvement in the 'reading passages' portion of the test. Jane's independent reading level increased from grade two to grade three. What becomes interesting in interpreting Jane's results is the fact that she goes from an independent reading level of grade three to a frustration level of grade four and that left out the instructional level. When you compare the pre-test and post-test one can see that she answered eighty percent of the comprehension questions correctly in the post-test as compared to sixty percent in the pre-test. It was also evident as I tested her, that she had in fact learned some reading strategies. Jane would stop at the end of a sentence and say, "this sentence does not make sense." She would reread it and often she would correct her mistake. Although her test results indicate she is still at a grade four frustration level her post-test results indicate she is very close to a grade four instructional level and a grade five frustration level. I believe it is important to note at this point that the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) does not measure in a point system (3.4, 4.2.). If I had used a test that measured more accurately I believe the results would have been clearer.

Hands-on Activities. One time Jane complained to me because she could not read her own writing due to the poor spelling. The first year Jane was in the literacy class the work consisted predominantly of worksheets. Often Jane would get frustrated because her writing made little sense to her. By incorporating hands-on activities into the program once a week, Jane and her classmates were relieved of some of the stress the material created.

Most of the students in my school are kinesthetic learners and using things like scrabble pieces to build words seemed to get the students actively involved in spelling.

Jane is no exception to this style of learning. Using this technique worked well as a review for the word families that we were working on for the week.

With the *Glass Analysis Kit* (1976) I had hoped for great results for Jane because word recognition was an area of weakness for her. I found that since word recognition in isolation was difficult for all the students, they could not work with a partner because neither person knew the words. This activity needs to be used one-on-one with a teacher and the student. In this study group, everyone found the *Glass Analysis Kit* (1976) frustrating.

Matching words and pictures from grocery fliers was an interesting activity. Initially, I was questioned as to why we were doing that exercise. When I explained the real-life connection the students took the activity very seriously. Jane was often a strong advocate for the work I asked the students to complete. One day she told another student not to question what I asked because “it may seem weird but it works”. Jane often expressed to the class her inability to function in the reading world outside of school. She stated in her feedback that she liked the hands-on activities that applied to the ‘real-world’.

Jeopardy. When Jane first joined the literacy program she had so little confidence that she would not participate in Jeopardy. It was not until I began giving her two or three answers to the questions while we were in gym class, that she began to play. With the study group, confidence was not a problem and Jane participated whole-heartedly. If ever there was an activity to build success, encourage active involvement and build a sense of community it was this game.

Our version of Jeopardy required the students to spell in front of their peers, recall information from our daily reading and work with a team. Jane was not the best speller on her team, she could recall some facts, but she excelled as a team player. When I asked Jane if I should keep Jeopardy in future classes she said, “Absolutely!”

Progress and Results – Tom

Phonics. Recognizing sounds and words in isolation were serious weaknesses for Tom. Initially when we brainstormed words, Tom would not participate. His effort on the sentence writing and the worksheets was minimal. Tom would only complete the assignments if I sat with him; ensuring he remained on task. When I hovered over him, he would complete the work with a high degree of success. It was not until we began the hands-on activities that I saw Tom become an active participant in the class.

Once Tom gained some confidence with the phonics work he began to take risks in the class. This risk taking was evident when the students began to lead the brainstorming sessions. Tom was eager to lead the class as long as he had my list of words as a reference so he could correctly write them on the board. This involvement was a huge step for Tom; however, he was still resistant to complete the written work. When comparing Tom’s pre-test and post-test scores on the word list portion of the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) little change took place. His independent reading level improved from a pre-primer level to a primer level but his instructional level remained at grade one and his frustration level remained at grade two. It is important to note that when Tom came across words that he was unsure of, he simply said, “I don’t know” without trying to guess or sound out. When observing him, Tom came across as very

passive, but I believe he really lacked the confidence he needed to take risks in his learning.

Tom's feedback on this component indicated that he did not like the phonics work but he acknowledged that it was helpful. It was not until close to the end of the semester that Tom indicated that writing was a chore, and for that reason he avoided completing the supplementary worksheets. His advice for future classes was to continue with the phonics component but use it every second day instead of daily and implement spelling tests.

Daily Reading. Tom was one of the first students to make me realize how much adolescents want to learn to read, even though their actions may indicate otherwise. This young man clearly communicated to me that he wanted to take control of his learning, when he announced he was tired of me reading aloud. In his interview about daily reading he simply stated he wanted to read independently sooner. It was Tom's words that made me realize why the shared reading strategy did not work-I read to them for too long. I learned from Tom that one must listen to the students particularly in regards to reading aloud to the class.

When Tom began the short story unit I was amazed at how he and his partner worked together. If the person reading was stuck, the other person was able to figure out the problem word. Tom, like Jane, had excellent listening comprehension skills. Even though he and his partner struggled with reading, when they heard the story, they could draw on their background knowledge to figure out problem words. The person who was reading was often focused on pronouncing the words correctly, and missed context clues.

An interesting note is how Tom and his partner, the two lowest level students, refused to work together after the second week. Both insisted they be partnered with a stronger reader. I was unclear why this refusal happened. Initially, my pessimistic side thought it was so they could avoid reading. I was sure their partners were going to do all the reading; but I was wrong. Each student chose a partner he was comfortable with and everyone did his share of the reading. After reflecting on why this partner switch took place, I believe two things may have happened. First, it was difficult to follow another struggling reader read. Second, in an effort to remain socially on par with the other students, they became partners with more efficient readers. As a result, at the end of the short story unit, Tom indicated how much he liked the stories.

With the novel study Tom again voiced his dislike. He did not want to listen to me read; he wanted to read himself! Tom also did not like the supplementary activities. When I asked him why he seemed so unmotivated he stated, “if the work seems too hard it is easier to give up.”

The *Caught Reading Series* (Bledsoe, 1995) was a different story. Although Tom did not like the workbook, he managed to get through it with some assistance/pressure from me. When it came to the novel, there was no mistaking Tom’s excitement at the realization that he was, in fact, reading a novel. To build his confidence I sent him back to the assistant in his grade nine class and had him read to her. The reactions from both people were very positive.

Comprehension Activities. Unlike Jane, Tom had an amazing ability to understand what he was reading; even though he made numerous mistakes in pronouncing the words. If a teacher is to build on a student’s strengths, then it was this

area for Tom. While I was administering the pre-test to Tom, we found his first strength in reading; an ability to extract meaning from what he was reading. Because he struggled with words in isolation, Tom assumed he could not read the passages. When he discovered he could comprehend what was being read, he was interested in completing comprehension exercises as long as writing was not involved. Whether I was reading aloud or he was working on the short story unit or novel study, if he could discuss a selection or use multiple choice questions he completed the assignments. But if writing was required to demonstrate knowledge, he did not do the work unless he has directly supervised. As with most high school students who cannot read, Tom's writing skills were very poor so any assignment that involved writing was difficult to get done; including the 'silly sentences' where all he had to do was rewrite the sentence changing one or two words to make it correct.

When reviewing the pre-test and post-test scores for the passages portion of the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) improvements could be seen in all areas. Tom's independent reading level increased from a pre-primer level to grade one, his instructional level jumped from grade one to grade three, and his frustration level increased from grade three to grade four. Again, it is worth mentioning that after completing this portion of the test it would appear that Tom struggles with words in isolation partially due to a lack of confidence in his ability.

Hands-on Activities. When Tom would not complete the phonics work I was unclear how to motivate him, until we began the 'hands-on' Wednesdays. Tom loved using the scrabble pieces to build words. While he was participating in those activities, I could see that he was gaining an understanding of the material. Whether or not Tom

played Scrabble depended on who else was playing. Tom became very comfortable with another person in the class who was a better reader and speller. That person helped Tom a great deal with his reading. If he played as Tom's partner, Tom would participate.

As with Jane, the *Glass Analysis Kit* (1976) did not work with Tom. Poor readers simply cannot test one another with words in isolation. If I could have personalized Tom and Jane's instruction sooner in the semester, I believe we may have found success with this kit.

With the matching words and pictures from grocery fliers and the subsequent activities using the grocery words, Tom was eager to complete this type of lesson. Using real-life words and hands-on activities were very successful for Tom. These activities provided an opportunity for Tom to find initial success in the program as well as get him actively involved in his learning.

Jeopardy. There is only one way to describe Tom's involvement in Jeopardy; he was the life of the party! He was often the first person to raise his hand, which afforded his team the right to guess the answer. Because of his strong comprehension skills and countless hours of television watching he often had the right answers and was a highly sought after teammate. Tom was one of the lowest level readers in the class yet on Fridays he was clearly one of the stars of the show. Through this game Tom experienced success, he became an active participant in the class, demonstrated his reading and spelling skills in front of the class, and became a valued member of the class community. It is not difficult to guess what Tom said about Jeopardy in his evaluation of this component of the program. He loved it!

Summary

At the onset of this project I stated that Jane and Tom would help me uncover the answers to my questions:

1. What are the characteristics of an adolescent literacy program for struggling readers and writers?
2. What instructional strategies directly and positively impact the learning atmosphere within an adolescent literacy program?

Before I address those two questions a third question must also be answered: Were Jane and Tom successful in the literacy program at my school?

In order to answer that question one must revisit the goals of the course and their interrelationship to Gunning's (1998) principles and then decide if we, (the students and myself) were successful in achieving them:

- Goal: To improve attendance by providing the students with a sense of belonging and by increasing their sense of accomplishment. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Sense of community; importance of success*)

In Jane and Tom's files there were no attendance statistics, but anecdotal comments stated that both students had 'poor attendance'. In the literacy program, Jane attended seventy-one percent of the classes and Tom attended eighty-three percent of the classes.

In order to build a sense of belonging, I tried to provide a safe and caring environment for the students. By providing continuous feedback in the way of marks and comments I was able to help the students recognize their personal accomplishments. Jane, Tom and their classmates were very surprised at the amount of work they did and their

passing grades. It was observed that both individuals were valued members of the class and both students expressed pride in their accomplishments in the program.

- Goal: To improve skill development by providing direct instruction and age-appropriate materials through innovative and research-based strategies.

(Gunning Principle (1998): Direct, systematic instruction; a full range of literacy experiences; an integrated approach; wide reading)

Post-test results from the *Ekwall Reading Inventory* (1986) indicate improvement for both students in the area of ‘reading passages’. With word identification, Jane experienced improvement but Tom did not. If one were to measure skill development by observing these students, it could be said that both young people improved. Jane and Tom began to read more confidently and applied more strategies to their reading.

For myself, throughout the semester I was able to provide direct instruction in phonics, reading comprehension, and daily authentic reading. However, I was not always able to personalize the students’ programs because of the size of the class. If I had been able to provide a more personal program for each student, further growth may have been observed.

Although I could not personalize programs, I did try to implement a variety of strategies and I tried to use age appropriate materials. By using the right materials the students were able to have dignity in the class.

- Goal: To improve self-concept by challenging students at the appropriate instructional level. *(Gunning Principle (1998): Providing materials with appropriate challenge level; personalized instruction)*

In order to build self-esteem I provided the students with work to increase success. I began the class with material that easily was within the independent range of everyone in the class. In an effort not to discredit the students, I told them we were reviewing the 'basics'. As the semester continued, the work became progressively harder, with everyone working at his/her instructional level. By the end of the semester I had the students pushing their frustration reading levels.

Using the self-esteem section of the *Personal/Social Behavior Inventory* (Alberta Education, 1998), a teacher uses observable criteria to measure a student's self-concept. Comparisons of the pre-inventory and post-inventory scores indicate improvements in self-esteem for both Jane and Tom. The *Student Self-Attitude Checklist* (Alberta Education, 1998) showed that Tom had a strong sense of self at the beginning and end of the semester. However, Jane's results indicated she saw herself as experiencing some problems. In discussions with Jane throughout the semester, she clearly felt good about her accomplishments in the literacy program. It was Jane's personal life where she was experiencing feelings of self-doubt. Although the problems Jane was experiencing were outside of school, they were inadvertently affecting her schooling and how she felt about herself.

- Goal: To improve interpersonal skills by engaging students in activities in which they can achieve success. (*Gunning Principle (1998): Building on the known; fostering independence; active involvement; personalized instruction*)

The group of students in this study made gains with their interpersonal skills; they became one of the most connected groups of students that I have taught. I believe that the

hands-on activities, games, partner reading, and the honesty, with which I approached this class, helped the students to form a close bond.

Using the interpersonal relationship portion of the *Personal/Social Behavior Inventory* (Alberta Education, 1998), I again observed the students in order to measure changes in behavior. Results indicated both Jane and Tom experienced growth in this area.

Jane became a positive leader and strong advocate in this class. She was sensitive and respectful towards her peers; especially those with low skill levels.

Although Tom's interpersonal skills improved, he still has areas with which he can continue to work. When Tom felt the work was too challenging he became very passive, he looked for extrinsic forms of motivation, and he became distracting to other students. With continued work in the literacy program I expect to see these behaviors disappear as Tom gains more confidence.

After reviewing the goals set forth for this class one can see that Jane and Tom were successful in the literacy program. Both students had improved in the areas of attendance, skill development, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills. As their teacher, I can see how the methods and ideals employed in this class helped to inspire student success.

When I began this study, I was searching for the answer to the questions, "What are the characteristics of an adolescent literacy program for struggling readers and writers, and what instructional strategies directly and positively impact the learning atmosphere within an adolescent literacy program?" Together, Jane, Tom and I found that Gunning's (1998) thirteen principles provided the framework to build the program.

However, it was the instructional strategies within that framework that further lead to student success.

What then, are the characteristics of an adolescent literacy program? The answer can be found in the thirteen principles identified by Gunning (1998) and supported by other literature:

1. Prevention versus Correction
2. Importance of Success
3. Building on the Known
4. Fostering Independence
5. Active Involvement
6. Personalized Instruction
7. Continuous Assessment
8. A Full Range of Literacy Experiences
9. Direct, Systematic Instruction
10. An Integrated Approach
11. Wide Reading
12. Providing Materials with Appropriate Challenge Level
13. Sense of Community

The instructional strategies related to these principles, and that directly and positively affected the learning atmosphere within my program, were as follows:

1. Phonics
2. Daily Reading
3. Comprehension Activities

4. Hands-on Activities

5. Jeopardy

Teaching high school non-readers is a challenging job. When dealing with students with such great learning needs one never really knows for sure what will happen from one class to the next. Will the students attend class? Will they be so defensive that the teacher cannot even reach them? What activities will they respond to? I now know with confidence that I have a framework to build on with each class of students that comes my way. The activities may need to change with each group of students but the foundation of the class is now securely in place.

Future Recommendations

In a discussion with Jane and Tom I asked them about their success and what they would recommend for future adolescent literacy classes. Jane attributed part of her success to the fact that she had spent three consecutive semesters in the literacy program. Her recommendation is that students spend as much time in the program as they see fit. When I asked Jane's classmates if they wanted to return to the literacy program the following semester, all but four chose to stay.

Tom recommended that the class size be smaller. He found that twenty-two students at the beginning of the semester were too many. I had to agree with him. With a smaller class, students could receive more one-on-one help yet still experience a sense of belonging within a community of learners.

In an effort to improve the assessment process of this class, I would like to introduce portfolio assessment. Young, Mathews, Kietzmann and Westerfield (1997) describe portfolio assessment as a way to get students actively involved in the evaluation process. When I interviewed my students at the end of the term, they indicated that they would have liked more self-evaluations. Portfolio assessment would allow for the students to have more control of their evaluations. "When students are encouraged to join in the evaluation process, they can become invested in designating where they would like to improve as readers and writers" (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997/98, p. 280).

My final recommendation for such an adolescent literacy class is simple. Teachers must provide a safe learning environment where the main focus is student success. Every resource and activity within this class must set students up for a successful learning experience.

Conclusion

Teaching and studying the literacy class at my school has been an amazing learning experience. The students in this program were great teachers. When I began teaching this program last year I had no idea what life was like for someone who was illiterate. Now I carefully watch people when I'm out in the community and compassionately offer assistance when it appears that a reading problem is present.

When I was at the hospital visiting my mother, a young man was intently staring at the hospital index when he asked me which floor the maternity ward was on. I am almost positive he could not read. Experiences like that and comments made by my students have made me appreciate the fact that I can read. Our society is full of written language, and life as an illiterate person must be unbelievably difficult. Imagine trying to hide your inability to read while you are looking for a job or raising a family.

I firmly believe literacy programs at all levels of education must exist. You never know when someone has missed the opportunity to learn to read. Teenagers who cannot read are a challenging group of individuals; they are angry, deeply hurt, yet hopeful. With the right kind of program it is not too late to address their learning needs.

At the beginning of this project I described the characteristics of the literacy student: poor attendance, low skill level, behavior problems, and low self-esteem. I stated they were caught in a cycle of being unsuccessful. In order to break that cycle of failure one must create a program designed to foster success. Each element of the program must strive to provide successful experiences. If a student reaches high school and is essentially illiterate, it is safe to say in his or her particular case, prevention programs were either not successful or were nonexistent. However, it is critical to realize that in

most cases, these young people want above all else, a chance to correct their reading deficiencies so that they can function in a 'reading world'. I believe that with my students I have found one way to help them achieve, or at least begin their successful journey into that world.

References

- Alberta Education Special Education Branch. (1998). *Teaching Students with Emotional Disorders*. Edmonton, AB.: Alberta Education.
- Alberta Education Special Education Branch. (1996). *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*. Edmonton, AB.: Alberta Education.
- Allington, R.L. (1977). If they don't read much, how can they ever get good? *Journal of Reading*, 21, 57-61.
- Allington, R. & Walmsley, S. (Eds.). (1995). *No quick fix: Rethinking literacy programs in America's elementary schools*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Altrichter, H., Posch, P., Somekh, B. (1993). *Teachers Investigate Their Work: an introduction to the methods of action research*. London: Routledge.
- Atwell, N. (1998). *In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning*. (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Babbitt, S. & Byrne, M. (1999/2000). Finding the keys to educational progress in urban youth: Three case studies. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 43:4, 368-376.
- Ballash, K. (1994). Remedial high school readers can recover, too! *Journal of Reading*. 37: 8, 686-687.
- Bergman, J.L. & Schuder, T. (1992/93). Teaching at-risk students to read strategically. *Educational Leadership*. 50:4,19-23.
- Bintz, W.P. (1997). Exploring reading nightmares of middle and secondary school teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 41:4, 12-24.

- Bledsoe, L.J. (1995). *Caught Reading*. Paramus, NJ: Globe Fearon Educational Publisher.
- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service.
- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1996). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Facilitator's guide*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service.
- Brozo, W.G. (1990). Hiding out in secondary content classrooms: Coping strategies of unsuccessful readers. *Journal of Reading*. 33:5, 324-328.
- Cantrell, R.P. & Cantrell, M.L. (1995). Recapturing a generation: The future of secondary programs for students with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure*. 39:3, 25-28.
- Carbo, M. (1997a). Reading styles times twenty. *Educational Leadership*. 54:6, 38-42.
- Carbo, M. (1997b). Learning styles strategies that help at-risk students read and succeed. *Reaching Today's Youth*. 1:2, 37-42.
- Casey, R.E. (1996). Delinquency prevention through vocational entrepreneurship. *Preventing School Failure*. 40:2, 60-62.
- Colvin, C. & Schlosser, L.K. (1997/98). Developing academic confidence to build literacy: What teachers can do. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 41:4, 272-281.
- Crutcher, C. (1991). *Athletic Shorts*. New York. Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers.
- Curwin, R.L. (1992). *Rediscovering hope our greatest teaching strategy*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service.

Davidson, J. & Koppenhaver, D. (1993) *Adolescent literacy what works and why*. (2nd ed.) New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Duffy, G. & Hoffman, J. (1999). In pursuit of an illusion: The flawed search for a perfect method. *The Reading Teacher*. 53:1, 10-15.

Ekwall, E. (1986). *Ekwall reading inventory*. (2nd ed.) Boston, Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Eldridge, B. (1985). Reading in context: An alternative approach for the adolescent disabled reader. *Journal of Reading*. 29:1, 9-17.

Erickson, B. (1996). Read-alouds reluctant readers relish. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 40:3, 212-214.

Fischer, C. (1999/2000). An effective (and affordable) intervention model for at-risk high school readers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 43:4, 326-335.

Glass, G.G. & Glass, E.W. (1976). *Glass analysis for decoding only*. Garden City, NY: Easier-to-Learn.

Goodman, B. (1999). *Goodman's Five-Star Stories: Travels*. Lincolnwood, Illinois: Jamestown Publishers.

Goodman, B. (1998). *Goodman's Five-Star Stories: More adventures*. Lincolnwood, Illinois: Jamestown Publishers.

Gunning, T. (1998). *Assessing and correcting reading and writing difficulties*. Boston, London, Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.

Gunning, T. (1995). Word Building: A strategic approach to the teaching of phonics. *The Reading Teacher*. 48:6, 484-488.

Gunning, T. (1988). *Teaching phonics and other word attack skills*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas Publishing.

Hosking, N.J. & Teberg, A.S. (1998). Bridging the gap: Aligning current practice and evolving expectations for middle years literacy programs. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 41:5, 332-340.

Ivey, G. (1999). Reflections on teaching struggling middle school readers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 42:5, 372-381.

Joyce, B., Hrycauk, M. & Calhoun, E. (2001). A second chance for struggling readers. *Educational Leadership*. 58:6, 42-46.

Keefe, D. & Meyer, V. (1988). Profiles of and instructional strategies for adult disabled readers. *Journal of Reading*. April, 95-100.

Learning Media. (1996). *Reading for life the learner as a reader*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Lee, N.G. & Neal, J.C. (1992/93). Case Study - Reading rescue: Intervention for a student "at Promise". *Journal of Reading*. 36:4, 276-282.

Martin, M. & Murphy-Nightingale, S. (1993). A jesness comparison of "high risk" Jr. High students with "high achievers", and students attending a provincial training school. *Guidance and Counseling*. 8:5, 37-49.

Mazer, H. (1973). *Snow Bound*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

McCombs, B. & Pope, J. (1994). *Motivating hard to reach students*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: a qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Moats, L.C. (2001). When older students can't read. *Educational Leadership*. 58:6, 36-40.

Morris, D. Ervin, C. & Conrad, K. (1996). A case study of middle school reading disability. *The Reading Teacher*. 49:5, 368-377.

Padak, N., Davidson, J. & Padak, G. (1990). Exploring reading with adult beginning readers. *Journal of Reading*. September, 56-60.

Routman, R. (1994). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners K-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.

Routman, R. (1996). *Literacy at the crossroads crucial talk about reading, writing and other teaching dilemmas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.

Toronto District School Board (Scarborough). (1997). *A literacy guide for teachers teaching children to read & write*. Scarborough, Ontario: Scarborough Board of Education.

Wilhelm, J.D. (1995). "You gotta be the book." *Teaching engaged and reflective reading with adolescents*. New York and London: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Worthy, J. (1998). "On every page someone gets killed!" Book conversations you don't hear in school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 41:7, 508-517.

Young, J.P., Mathews, S.R., Kietzmann, A.M. & Westerfield, T. (1997). Getting disenchanted adolescents to participate in school literacy activities: Portfolio conferences. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. 40:5, 348-360.