1-1-2011

Managing Small Group Instruction Through the Implementation of Literacy Work Stations

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MANAGING SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION THROUGH

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LITERACY WORK STATIONS

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Kathleen Wilson

Lincoln, Nebraska

February, 2011

MANAGING SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION THROUGH

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University of Nebraska, 2011

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This case study explored the journey of four first grade teachers in their pursuit to improve the quality of their small group instruction time through increased engagement of students away from the small groups, thus allowing for quality instruction taking place in the small group. The teachers participated in professional development on literacy work stations that included video and an accompanying text. Based on the qualitative data from observations and interviews, all four teachers believed that the quality of their small group instruction improved with the implementation of literacy work stations through increased student engagement and motivation and the subsequent decrease in interruptions to the small group instruction.

Four themes emerged: The "I Can…" List, Schedule Issues, Group Numbers, and Professional Development – Teachers Seeking Feedback. The "I can…" lists allowed students to make decisions, work independently, increase engagement, and allowed the teacher to teach in the small group without interruptions.

Because schedule issues impacted the effectiveness of the small group instruction block and the implementation of literacy stations, teachers believed that the quality of the small group instruction block could be improved with longer periods of uninterrupted instruction, a decrease in the flow of students in and out of the class, and the inclusion of a paraprofessional in the classroom.

An additional theme regarding professional development emerged from this study. The four teachers continued to seek feedback and support in order to fully implement the instructional practices, making the professional development stronger.

Dedicated to:
Jensen, Josie, and Jake
May your love for education be as strong as mine!

Special Thanks to:

My husband, Marty
Yes, I am finally done going to school!

My parents, Bob and Mary
My sister, Chris and her family
For your continual support and willingness to
assist with the kids

Dr. Kathleen Wilson
For your encouragement, leadership, and guidance

My Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Guy Trainin, Dr. Jody Isernhagen, Dr. David Brooks
For your recommendations, advice and insight

My UNK colleagues:
For your interest, concern, and support in my doctoral program

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mary is a kindergarten teacher with thirteen years of experience in the classroom. Her twenty-five students keep her busy, and she works hard to be an effective literacy teacher. During whole group instruction, Mary models fluency through read-alouds, engages students in higher level conversations, and provides activities that allow students to work at the appropriate level, but as the schedule transitions to small group instruction, the classroom environment changes. The "three ring circus" as it is often called begins as Mary invites a small group of students to work on a guided reading lesson while the other students are to be actively involved in a center activity. The four students at the block center can't decide what to build and an argument begins. Mary walks over to the blocks to help the students try to solve the problem then returns to the small group. She barely sits down when the two students working on the computer are not able to find the right program. Mary leaves the guided reading group again to get the correct games selected. Several students are sitting at their desks gazing around the room or out the window, but Mary ignores it since they are at least quiet and not disrupting her instruction. A few minutes pass and now the art center is out of tape and Mary is again interrupted to find more tape for one student's project. By this time, the small group is off task and Mary must work to regroup and get their eyes back on the text. Time to switch groups and start all over again.

Across the hall, Christine, a first grade teacher with 2 years of classroom experience, is also starting her small group instruction block. While each group of five meets with her, the remaining students stay at their desks and complete a packet of

worksheets stapled together that must be finished by Friday.   The worksheets are the same for all students and are considered easy by some, but extremely difficult for others. Many of the students race through the packet while others visit with their "neighbors", doodle on a piece of scratch paper, or gaze at their surroundings. Christine feels she has started to excel at whole group reading instruction, but she dreads the small group time. Struggling for a better management system, Christine feels less than effective.

While much attention has been given to the effective literacy teacher, limited research has looked specifically at effective literacy teaching during small group instruction time. Several teachers have described their management system (Lanning, 2002; Guastello & Lenz, 2005; Ford & Opitz, 2002), but studies on the implementation of a management system that increases literacy use while engaging students are lacking. This case study will examine four teachers and their instructional choices through interviews and observations as they implement a management system during the small group instruction block and strive to become more effective literacy teachers.

The Need for Effective Teaching

Sanders and his colleagues (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997) analyzed the achievement scores of more than 60,000 elementary students across hundreds of schools and found that the individual classroom teacher is the most important factor affecting student learning. "Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels, regardless of the level of heterogeneity in their classrooms" (Wright et al., 1997, p.63). Haycock (1998) used the findings of Sanders to depict the difference in achievement between students who spend a year in class with a highly effective teacher as opposed to an ineffective teacher. Using standardized assessment

scores from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) the gains were obtained by subtracting the previous year score from the most recent scale score. Students in the classes of teachers classified as the most effective can be expected to gain about 52 percentile points in their achievement over a year's time compared to 14 percentile points for students in the classes of teachers classified as ineffective with six percentile points attributed to maturation.

Marzano's (2000) meta-analysis of 35 years of research on effective schools and teachers supports the conclusions of Haycock's (1998) work. Marzano found that a student, at the 50th percentile in math, entering an average school with an average teacher, will still be at the 50th percentile at the end of about two years. If the same student had attended one of the least effective schools with an ineffective teacher, that student dropped from the 50th percentile to the 3rd percentile in two years. In a school classified as effective but a teacher classified as ineffective, the student will drop from the 50th percentile to the 37th percentile two years later. In contrast, the same student entering an effective school with a teacher classified as effective will enter at the 50th percentile and two years later leave at the 96th percentile. If the student attended a least effective school but was with a teacher classified as most effective, that student would start at the 50th percentile and two years later be at the 63rd percentile. Even if the school is highly ineffective, individual teachers can produce powerful gains in student learning.

Marzano (2009) organizes effective teaching into three major roles: 1) making wise choices about the most effective instructional strategies to employ, 2) designing classroom curriculum to facilitate student learning, and 3) making effective use of classroom management techniques. Effective teachers have a wide variety of

instructional strategies and are skilled in when to use the strategies with specific students and specific content. The second role of effective teachers is classroom curriculum design. Rather than relying totally on the scope and sequence of the district or textbook, effective teachers consider the needs of students and determine the content that requires emphasis and construct learning activities that present new knowledge. Classroom management is the third role of effective teaching. Although effective teaching requires all three roles, a foundation of effective classroom management is necessary in order to build a strong classroom design and deliver instructional strategies (Marzano, 2009). The current study will explore all three roles as teachers organize and manage their small group instruction block with a management system -- literacy work stations -- that support and extend the reading curriculum.

Effective Reading Instruction

Effective reading instruction in the primary grades is necessary to help children reach their potential, but it must include different levels of support as teachers work to meet the needs of all children. Children come to the classroom with varying levels of knowledge and experiences which requires a variety of instructional practices and experiences to meet the needs of all learners (Gaskins, 2003; Neuman & Dickinson, 2001). Gaskins (2003) found that classrooms containing a high percentage of successful beginning readers typically had teachers that provided well managed, productive, and focused classrooms with a high level of involvement in learning.

Pressley (2006) established a set of research-based characteristics of high-motivation and high performing primary grade classrooms. These characteristics include: a) a classroom that is filled with books at different levels, b) teacher introductions of new

books with easy access to them in the classroom, c) a teacher emphasis on effort when doing work, d) student choice in completion of their work, e) teachers engaging students in authentic reading and writing tasks, f) lessons promoting higher-order thinking, g) the use of small groups for instruction, and h) expressive read alouds by the teacher.

Small Group Instruction

Pressley's (2006) list of research based characteristics of high performing classrooms supports small group instruction, but Lanning (2002) found classroom management to be one of the most common reasons that teachers are intimated by implementing small group instruction, including guided reading, as part of their language arts instruction. Management during any form of small group instruction is crucial in order to deliver quality instruction. Schmoker (2001) revealed that most students away from the teacher directed instruction are not participating in literacy activities during reading time but instead coloring, cutting, and building as described in the opening vignettes. Planning activities that allow students to work independently or collaboratively while still gaining an understanding of and practice in literacy tasks is often difficult. Not only does time need to be spent on preparing the activities but also on preparing the students to be able to work effectively while the teacher is instructing a small group. The need for a solid management plan during small group instruction is essential. Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (1981) observed students engaging in many nonreading activities during reading time. They found that close to one hour of each student's day was spent on management "chores" or waiting. Students had an average off-task rate of 15 percent with some being off-task more than 30 percent of the time.

Students need to have access to high quality, meaningful literacy activities that keep them engaged and allow the teacher to focus on the needs of the small group.

When organizing small group instruction, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) consider the first challenge for the teacher is to manage the classroom to be able to work in a focused, uninterrupted way with small clusters of students. All other class members must be engaged in meaningful literacy tasks. Students must be able to work without teacher assistance and maintain and manage their own learning. "Clearly, the power of the instruction that takes place away from the teacher must rival the power of the instruction that takes place with the teacher," (Ford & Opitz, 2002, p.710).

Diller (2003) encourages teachers to incorporate literacy work stations into the small group instruction or guided reading block as a management tool and hands on learning that engages students. The emphasis in literacy work stations is on initial teacher modeling and students taking responsibility for their own learning. All students get to participate in literacy work stations for equal amounts of time with materials that are differentiated for students with varying needs and reading levels. The materials are taught with and used for instruction first, and then the stations remain all year long with changes made to reflect children's reading levels, strategies currently being taught and topics being studied. Through modeling, a gradual release of responsibility, creating a risk free environment, independent work levels, materials, and clear, explicit expectations, students are more likely to successfully engage in literacy work stations and allow the teacher to work with students in small group instruction without interruptions.

Theoretical Framework for Literacy Work Stations Study

Constructivism is a theory of learning that emphasizes the active construction of knowledge by individuals (Woolfolk, 1999). From a constructivist viewpoint, learning occurs when individuals integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge and the learner must be actively engaged in the learning process (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). "Piaget made it clear that children learn through direct experiences and social interaction with peers. Play and activity, according to Piaget, were equated with intellectual growth" (Seefledt & Barbour, 1994, p.11). Within Constructivism, is the Whole Language Theory first established by Smith in 1971. Whole Language Theory is associated with all the following instructional strategies: a) use of real, high-quality literature for literacy learning, b) use of real, meaningful contexts for literacy activities, c) child-centered instruction based on children's interests, d) heavy emphasis on student choice, e) use of thematic instruction, f) use of active, social learning experiences, g) use of a variety of grouping systems, h) use of large blocks of time for integrated literacy activities, i) use of alternative systems of assessment, j) use of centers in the classroom (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). These instructional strategies closely match the components of literacy work stations.

A form of Constructivism, Social Constructivism provides much of the framework for the implementation of literacy stations in the primary classrooms and most prominently focuses on the belief that children learn as a result of social interactions with others. Vygotsky's (1978) influential concept of the The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the ideal level of task difficulty that allows for the development of children and facilitates learning. This is the zone or level at which a child can be successful with

appropriate support. Teachers must be aware that students are not being asked to work at a frustration level but must also ensure students are not working on tasks that are too easy. The differentiation that literacy work stations provide is critical to meet the variety of academic levels found in a typical classroom.

Scaffolding, another key idea from Social Constructivism, refers to the assistance that adults and more competent peers provide during learning episodes. Scaffolding is a process that allows a child to carry out a task or achieve a goal that they may not have successfully completed without the assistance of the teacher or peer (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Children learn during experiences within the zone of proximal development as a result of others' scaffolding. Vygotsky's theory suggests guidelines for the ways in which cognitive development occurs. A child must experience the use of higher mental functioning in social situations before he or she can internalize such functioning and independently use it. Literacy work stations allow for scaffolding through the Gradual Release of Responsibility Approach (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Through teacher modeling, and then gradually releasing more responsibility to the students, students are able to successfully work at literacy stations.

Current Study on Effective Literacy Teaching Through the Use of Literacy Stations

So, what are students doing while the teacher is working with a small group? How can a teacher be effective during the small group instructional time? This study explored those questions. Teachers participated in professional development using Diller's (2003) Literacy Work Station model and the quality of small group instructional time for all students, especially those away from the teacher instruction was explored through teacher interviews and classroom observations. The information gained from

this study will be beneficial to teachers, principals, and teacher educators in the

improvement of small group instruction and effective literacy teaching.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Effective reading instruction is a goal of classroom teachers that is often difficult to achieve. Students enter classrooms with a wide range of skills, strategies and reading levels that require teachers to meet their individual needs through one-on-one interventions or small group instruction as well as teaching to the whole group. This review will first look at effective classrooms and the key characteristics that are evident. While whole group instruction plays a role in the classroom for meeting grade level expectations, small group instruction must also be included to meet the different needs of the teacher and student. An examination of different small group structures that may take place in the classroom will be presented. Use of small group instruction requires some type of classroom management to be implemented so that the teacher is allowed to teach and children not involved in the instruction remain engaged. Literacy work stations are one possibility of managing a classroom of primary students during small group instruction time while continuing to increase student engagement. The definition of literacy work stations and the characteristics these stations share with the effective practices will be followed by a comparison to traditional learning centers and typical management during small group instruction. The review will end with the purpose of the study and the questions to be answered.

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS

A number of studies on effective teaching have had a substantial impact on outlining the characteristics of effecting literacy teaching. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni's (2007; Mazzoni &Gambrell, 2003) Ten Best Research Based Practices of Literacy

Instruction and a joint statement by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1998) have based

their reports on studies conducted on effective literacy instruction. These studies have

had a significant impact on identifying what effective teaching looks like and have helped

create a "common ground" of best practice.

Survey of Nominated Effective Primary Teachers

Pressley, Rankin and Yokoi (1996) surveyed well-respected primary grade teachers

about their literacy instruction practices. Elementary language arts supervisors

throughout the United States were asked to identify their very best kindergarten, grade

one, and grade two teachers. These teachers, identified as exceptional in promoting

literacy achievement, were contacted by mail and asked to describe the ten most

important elements of their teaching. More than 300 different practices were mentioned

in the first phase which prompted a more focused questionnaire. The most significant

finding in the study was that primary-grade teachers did many different things to support

and encourage the literacy development of their students. The school days were packed

with many different types of reading and writing and great balance was reported in the

instruction offered to the primary grade students. This group of teachers identified as

exceptional, supported whole-language principles but also offered frequent skills

instruction.

Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston Upstate New York Study

Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston (1998) decided that observations would

be the best next step in studying outstanding teachers. Outstanding Grade 1 teachers in

Albany, New York were nominated as well as typical teachers. Five outstanding and five

typical teachers were selected. Ten observations of each teacher and 2 in depth interviews of each participant took place. After the study three clusters of teachers were made. Only nine teachers remained due to one dropping out of the study for personal reasons. Three classrooms had high student engagement, reading levels at or above grade level, and writing was relatively coherent and sophisticated. Another cluster of teachers was at the other extreme and one cluster in the middle. All nine classrooms had commonalities, with seven of the classrooms sharing the following characteristics. The classrooms were positive places, led by caring teachers with little competition taking place among students. Classroom routines were evident much of the time and students seemed to know what they were supposed to be doing. There was a variety of teaching configurations in the classrooms including whole and small group instruction, cooperative learning, and independent work. The teachers mixed direct skills instruction such as decoding, punctuation, and capitalization, that included the use of worksheets, with whole language type activities that included the use of trade books, process writing, and teachers modeling their love for reading. All teachers also recognized the importance of parental participation in children's literacy development (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998).

The three most effective classrooms had unique aspects that seemed to contribute to the difference in student involvement. "The best teachers in the sample were masterful classroom managers. They were so good, in fact, that classroom management was hardly noticeable – students were busy and appeared to be happy with virtually no misbehavior observed" (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998, p. 251). The worst that happened in these classrooms were students being off task which typically ended quickly as the teacher

quietly and positively got individual students back on task. A high density of instruction in the best classrooms allowed students to always be engaged (Wharton-McDonald et al, 1998). Increased engagement of the students working away from the small group instruction is a goal of literacy work stations.

Activities in the top classrooms connected with one another. Reading materials connected to writing topics and literacy instruction tied in with content instruction. The activities in the classrooms with high reading levels were consistently academically rich in comparison to other classrooms where simply copying took place. More activities and objectives were covered and the message to students was clear. Teachers believed that their students would develop as readers and writers and that students can and will learn. Students were consistently reinforced for their achievements and teachers especially focused on the progress being made by weak students (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998).

Literacy instruction in the top three classrooms was exceptionally well balanced with the reading of outstanding literature, extensive writing time and explicit teaching of skills. Skills lessons were filled with reminders about how the skills related to the children's writing and reading and students were given opportunities to use the skills as they read and wrote. Skills in the top classrooms were not decontextualized .

The classrooms with the highest levels of reading were taught by teachers that scaffold and support all levels of students learning. The students appeared busy and happy while learning and received help as they needed it. Self regulation was obvious in the top three classrooms.   Children were not dependent on the teachers, and students worked independently or with other children. The best teachers developed students who

could do much of what was required to them without adult assistance and stayed engaged in productive learning without constant monitoring. The best teachers were highly aware of their practices and of the purposes driving those practices. "There was nothing haphazard about literacy instruction in these classes. This was in contrast to other teachers, who justified some frequently observed activities as giving the children something to do while the teacher worked with small groups" (Wharton-McDonald et al, 1998, p. 254). Busy work was not part of the thinking in the classrooms of the outstanding teachers. Literacy work stations are designed to eliminate busy work and increase student engagement in activities that meet the varying needs and levels of students.

Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, and Morrow National Study

A follow up study was conducted at a national level to determine the significance of the New York findings. Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, and Morrow (2001) also found that effective grade one teachers teach very differently from ineffective ones. "…effective grade-1 instruction does include extensive teaching of skills, much reading of excellent literature, a great deal of student composition, precise matching of task demands to student competencies, extensive encouragement of student self-regulation, and frequent connections across the curriculum. Moreover, these classrooms were very attractive student-centered worlds. Teachers were positive and reinforcing, with the day carefully managed. Cooperation abounded. The kids loved being in these classrooms" (Pressley et al., 2001, p. 260). The national study supported that effective grade -1 instruction includes extensive teaching of skills, a large amount of reading literature, a close match of task demands to student competencies, encouragement of

student self-regulation, connections across the curriculum and large amount of student composition. Student-centered classrooms and positive, reinforcing teachers that had the school day carefully managed were evident.

Common Features of Effective Literacy Instruction

Allington's (2002) extensive study of effective reading instruction and exemplary elementary classroom teachers confirms that "good teachers, effective teachers, matter much more than particular curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches or 'proven programs' " (p. 740). Allington studied teachers selected primarily from diverse schools that enrolled large numbers of poor students. First and fourth grade teachers from New York, Texas, New Hampshire, California, Wisconsin and New Jersey were observed, interviewed, and videotaped for at least 10 instructional days. After hundreds of observational hours, a clear picture of what effective elementary literacy instruction looks like was outlined with six common features: Time, Texts, Teaching, Talk, Tasks, and Testing. These six categories provide a synthesis for effective elementary literacy instruction.

Time. Teachers in the most effective classrooms maintained a "reading and writing versus stuff" ratio that was far better balanced than in a typical classroom. Children routinely participated in reading and writing for as much as half of the school day compared to many classrooms where children read and write for as little as 10% of the day (Allington, 2002). In many classrooms that utilized a 90 minute "reading block," Allington (2002) determined that only 10 to 15 minutes were actually spent on reading. Eliminating "stuff" such as test preparation workbooks, copying vocabulary definitions from a dictionary, and completing after reading comprehension worksheets increases

actual reading time that is critical for the development of reading proficiency. Students involved in the most effective literacy classrooms participated in more guided reading, more independent reading, and more social studies and science reading than students in less effective classrooms.

The most effective classrooms had a focus on instructional planning, not just allotting time, and this was a crucial piece in increasing the time students spent reading and writing (Allington, 2002). Daily experiences of being read to and independently reading meaningful and engaging stories and information text is part of excellent instruction (IRA & NAEYC, 1998; Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003; Gambrell et al., 2007). The amount of time spent reading is the major contributor to increased vocabulary and comprehension (Allington, 1983; Stanovich, 1986). Students get the practice to consolidate the skills and strategies they have been taught during independent reading time, and the increased opportunities allow for a better grasp of the skills and strategies needed to be a successful reader. Literacy work stations provide students with the time needed to practice reading and writing.

Text. Students need large quantities of successful reading to become independent, proficient readers which requires high levels of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Allington (2002) found that exemplary teachers rejected district plans that required all children to be placed in the same textbook or trade book, and complete all worksheets. These exemplary teachers gave students access to "a rich and expansive" supply of texts to promote children's learning across the school day, including Science and Social Studies. In effective classrooms, lower-achieving students spent their days with books they could successfully read, not just during the limited time they might receive extra

support.   Locating and purchasing the texts needed to effectively teach the children was

necessary. "No child who spends 80% of his or her instructional time in texts that are

inappropriately difficult will make much progress academically" (Allington, 2002, p.

743).

Pressley et al. (1996) revealed that outstanding primary-level reading teachers

reported many different types of reading in their literacy environment. Students read

along with the teacher, echo and choral reading, shared reading, students reading along

with others, daily silent reading and student rereading of books and stories were all

included. Many different types of material were read, including outstanding children's

literature, big books, chart poems and stories, picture books, and patterned and

predictable books. A focus on authors was also included and the outstanding primary

level teachers indicated that literacy instruction was integrated with the rest of the

curriculum. Gambrell et al. (2007) included high-quality literature as one of the ten

evidence based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction. Classrooms must

have a wide variety of genres and styles of high quality literature and use multiple texts

that link and expand vocabulary and concepts. Students who have authentic purposes for

reading and have access to a variety of quality literature, both narrative and expository,

are able to construct meanings and develop concepts through the reading of multiple texts

(Moje & Sutherland, 2003; Soalt, 2005). Literacy work stations allow students to work

with text on a daily basis and integrate other subject areas allowing many different types

of text to be read.

Teaching. Allington (2002) found that effective teachers focus more on active

instruction, which includes the modeling and demonstration of useful strategies that good

readers employ instead of simply assigning work and assessing it. The "watch me"or "let me demonstrate" stance that effective teachers took was quite different. Expert teaching requires knowledge not only on how to teach strategies explicitly but also how to foster transfer of the strategies from the structured practice activities to students' independent use of them while engaged in reading (Allington, 2002). Reading should be taught for authentic, meaning-making literacy experiences, for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task (Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003). Teachers need to be mindful of the reasons and purposes they establish for reading and writing tasks. Authentic literacy activities are often designed to focus on communicating ideas for shared understanding rather than simply to complete assignments or answer teacher-posed questions. Authentic literacy events include activities such as reading to share stories and information, reading to find out how to do or make something, and writing a letter to a pen pal. It is more likely that children will transfer their classroom literacy learning to real life when they engage in authentic literacy learning in the classroom (Teale & Gambrell, 2007).

Wharton-McDonald et al. (1998) concluded that classroom routines were evident much of the time in outstanding classrooms, and students seemed to know what they were supposed to be doing. There was a variety of teaching configurations in the classrooms including whole and small group instruction, cooperative learning, and independent work. The teachers mixed direct skills instruction and whole language type activities, and all teachers recognized the importance of parental participation in children's literacy development.

Excellent instruction in reading and writing utilizes a balanced instructional program that includes systematic code instruction along with meaningful reading and writing

activities (IRA & NAEYC, 1998). Students need direct instruction in decoding and comprehension strategies but also need time to practice these strategies through independent reading. The balance of direct instruction, guided instruction and independent learning is crucial in providing quality literacy instruction (Mazonni & Gambrell, 2003).

The classrooms with the highest levels of reading achievement were taught by teachers that scaffold and support all levels of learning. The students appeared busy and happy while learning and received help as they needed it. Self-regulation was obvious in the top classrooms and children were not dependent on the teachers but instead worked independently or with other children. The best teachers developed students who could do much of what was required of them without adult assistance and stayed engaged in productive learning without constant monitoring (Wharton-McDonald, et al., 1998). Students need scaffolded instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension to promote independent reading. The Gradual Release of Responsibility model provides scaffolded instruction through the process of students gradually assuming a greater degree of responsibility for any aspect of learning. As students demonstrate greater degrees of proficiency, the "supports" are gradually withdrawn (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model describes a process in which students gradually assume a great degree of responsibility for a particular aspect of learning. In the first stage the teacher models and describes a particular skill or strategy. The second stage allows the teacher and student to assume joint responsibility, with the children practicing the application and the teacher offering assistance and feedback. In the third stage, when students are ready, they assume all or

almost all of the responsibility by working in situations where they independently apply newly learned skills and strategies. Scaffolds are gradually removed as students demonstrate greater degrees of proficiency. Teachers need to monitor when students are having difficulties, and provide enough support so that students are able to make progress (Pressley, 2006). The gradual release of responsibility and scaffolded instruction is consistent with constructivist principles when it is used within meaningful and authentic contexts provided through literacy stations (Mazzoni & Gambrell, 2003).

Prior knowledge is the foundation upon which new meaning is built. Effective teachers assess students' conceptual understanding, beliefs, and values and link new ideas, skills, and competencies to prior understandings. They also provide experiences that equip each child with sufficient background knowledge to succeed with literacy tasks. The Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)) suggests that optimal learning occurs when teachers determine a child's current level of understanding and teach new ideas, skills, and strategies that are at an appropriate level of challenge. The best predictor of what students will learn is what they already know (Gambrell et al., 2007). Literacy work stations are differentiated so that students can work at their appropriate level.

   Talk. The nature of the classroom talk in the most effective classrooms is purposeful discussion, problem posing and problem solving related to curricular topics. Teacher/student and student/student conversations rather than interrogations allowed for the discussion of ideas, concepts, hypotheses, strategies and responses with one another. Effective classroom talk is highly personalized and thoughtful which requires teacher expertise, not a scripted, teacher proof instructional packet (Allington, 2002). Mazzoni

and Gambrell's (2003) Ten Research Based Best Practices includes the importance of balancing teacher-and student-led discussions. From a social constructivist perspective, literacy is a social act but discussion doesn't just happen (Vygotsky, 1978). Students need assistance in developing interpersonal skills and they also need a degree of teacher assistance and influence to stimulate new learning. Greater student achievement and more positive social, motivational, and attitudinal outcomes for all age levels, genders, ethnicities, and social classes result from participation in collaborative learning contexts compared to individualized or competitive learning structures (Slavin, 1983, 1990; Gambrell et al., 2007).

Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997), Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), and Peer-led Discussion (Almasi, 1995) are three approaches to classroom discourse that focus on group discussions used to create a deeper understanding and appreciation of text ideas. McKeown, Beck, and Sandora (1996) analyzed the talk of teachers and students during Questioning the Author (Beck et al., 1997) discussions and found over the course of a year that students who engaged in the discussions began to initiate more of their own questions, integrated information for other sources with text information, and responded to the comments made by other students. Almasi (1995) compared peer-led and teacher-led discussion groups and found that students who participated in peer-led discussions talked more and provided more elaborate responses and comments than those who were in teacher-led groups.

Palincsar and Brown (1984) used Reciprocal Teaching as an approach to teach comprehension by putting talk about text at the center of the instruction. Students learned to ask questions, identify text information that was unclear, make predictions, and

summarize information. Students involved in *Reciprocal Teaching* (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) demonstrated improved performance on standardized tests of comprehension, but Palincsar and Brown (1984) suggested that simply engaging students in talking about text, not only the *Reciprocal Teaching* approach, may have been responsible for the improvement.

   Tasks. Tasks in the exemplary teachers' classrooms consisted of greater use of longer assignments and less emphasis on filling the day with multiple, shorter activities (Allington, 2002). The students read whole books, completed individualized and small group research projects, and worked on tasks that integrated several content areas. "The work the children in these classrooms completed was more substantive and challenging and required more self-regulation than the work that has commonly been observed in elementary classrooms" (Allington, 2002, p.745). Observations revealed that effective classrooms had more complex tasks that took place across the school day and across subjects and far less of the low-level worksheet-type tasks (Allington, 2002).

   Students in the most effective classrooms seemed more engaged and less often off-task. Student choice is another factor related to student engagement (Allington, 2002; Pressley, 2006). "Managed choice" is the instructional environment that allows students to work on similar but different tasks. This allows for greater student ownership of and engagement with the work. Low achieving students are not viewed as the worst because the activities vary from student to student (Allington, 2002). A high density of instruction allows students to almost always be engaged and make classroom management hardly noticeable (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998). To ensure student success, teachers must make certain that students attempt tasks that are within their reach.

Task are much more motivating to participate in and complete when they are appropriately challenging, rather than too easy or too hard (Pressley, 2006). The "I can…" list of literacy work stations is created by the students with the assistance of the teacher and allows students to choose what activities they will participate in. This aspect of literacy stations supports a sense of autonomy in the students, which has been shown to enhance motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

   Testing. Student work and grades were based more on effort and improvement rather than simply achievement in the most effective classrooms. All students had a chance to earn good grades. Allington (2002) found that when teachers graded on achievement only, the higher-achieving students are not required to put forth much effort to rank well, while the lower-achieving students soon realize that even working hard will not produce performances that compare to those of the higher-achieving students. Teachers have to be able to recognize growth and to track or estimate the student effort involved. Mazzoni and Gambrell (2003) suggest using a variety of assessment techniques to inform instruction. Regardless of the type, assessment influences the support the teachers will provide to each student and the amount of adjustment the teachers need to make with the instruction. (Gambrell et al., 2007). Because both teachers and students can track their progress, the assessment results impact the decisions teachers and students make in selecting appropriate literacy work stations and activities.

Motivation Studies

   Throughout the prior studies, motivation proved to be a key component of effective classrooms. Outstanding teachers were concerned with motivating their students to do literate activities and attempted to do this by creating an exciting mood, reducing risks for

students, and encouraging students to believe they can be readers and writers. (Pressley et al., 1996).

Bogner, Rapheael, and Pressley (2002) focused on the motivational differences between classrooms through their observations of seven grade one classrooms over the course of a school year. Two classrooms were found to be very engaging and students were working on reading and writing much of the time. Several characteristics were present in the classrooms that exhibited higher levels of engagement. Bogner et al. (2002) found the teaching style to be very motivating, gentle and caring with many positive one on one interactions.   A high level of scaffolding took place with many connections being made in the classroom.   A great deal of cooperative learning was present in the classroom but individual students were still held accountable for their work. Students had autonomy in the classroom and were allowed to take appropriate risks. The classrooms were fun, had connections with home, and students were encouraged to be creative.

Beyond the teaching style the two exceptional classrooms had content material that was challenging but not overwhelming. The teachers made certain the students knew the learning goals and were clear on assignments. They modeled thinking and problem solving skills and had great communication with the students. The engaged teachers sent the messages that school work was important and deserved intense attention and that students get smarter through their own efforts. Developing the self-concept of the students was also a critical component. The engaged classrooms favored depth over breadth, made connections to Social Studies and Science and had students produce products that they were proud of. Curiosity of the students was encouraged through the

suspense created by the teachers while praise and feedback were consistent in the classroom. Teachers also consistently modeled their own interests and enthusiasm to their students (Bogner et al., 2002).

Creating a classroom culture that fosters literacy motivation serves as one of the Ten Best Research Based Literacy Practices (Gambrell et al., 2007). Motivation exerts a tremendous force on what is learned and how and when it will be learned. Motivation often makes the difference between superficial and shallow learning and learning that is deep and internalized (Gambrell, 1996). Best practices include ways that teachers support students in their reading development by creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation, such as providing a book-rich classroom environment, opportunities for choice, and opportunities to interact socially with others. The most basic goal of any literacy program should be the development of readers who can read and who choose to read (Gambrell et al., 2007). Teachers should also build motivation through encouraging students to attribute their successes to expending appropriate efforts and their failures to lack of effort or failing to deploy effort appropriately while also reminding students that intelligence is not fixed (Pressley, 2006).

After years of research on effective classrooms and numerous opportunities to see teachers and students engaged in reading and writing in the classroom, Pressley (2006) summarized the work on student motivation by developing teacher guidelines.

- Ensure student success. This can be accomplished by making certain that students are attempting tasks that are within their reach. Tasks are motivating when they are appropriately challenging, rather than too easy or too hard.

- Be a teacher who scaffolds student learning. Be a teacher who monitors when students are having difficulties, and provide enough support so that students are able to make progress.

- Encourage students to attribute their successes to expending appropriate efforts and their failures to lack of effort or failing to deploy effort appropriately.

- Encourage students to believe that intelligence is not fixed.

- Encourage student cooperation and interaction over literacy tasks. Students can scaffold each other.

- Make certain students have access to a wide range of interesting books.

- As much as possible, permit student choice with respect to what students read and to what topics are the conceptual focus of instruction.

- Integrate literacy instruction with content learning.

- Favor depth over breadth, choosing a few exceptionally motivating topics as the conceptual focus for the school year.

McKenna, Ellsworth, and Kear (1995) found that even the best readers are less enthusiastic about reading with every additional year they are in school. Since academic motivation declines as students proceed through school, teachers must work to follow the guidelines created by Pressley (2006) and determine how to deliver the best literacy instruction and keep students motivated throughout the school day.

What's Missing from the Research on Effective Literacy Teaching?

While the extensive studies of Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, and others help define what effective literacy teaching is, these studies do not look specifically at small group instruction and how to effectively teach this challenging block

of time. Doyle (1983) established that academic work is often sacrificed in order to achieve and sustain classroom management. Unfortunately, teachers often reduce the threats to the order of the class by excluding challenging academic work or work involving higher level cognitive processes by simplifying task demands, lowering the risk for mistakes and assigning seatwork that is relatively simple and routine (Doyle, 1983). Jorgenson (1977) determined that elementary students tended to be assigned material that fell below their abilities and that conduct was better when assigned work was easier for students. This study on the implementation of literacy work stations, addressed effective teaching strategies during small group instruction, while also incorporating classroom management that allows students to be engaged in higher level literacy activities.

THE ROLE OF WHOLE GROUP AND SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM

Whole Group Instruction

Whole group classroom instruction can be used to effectively teach the critical components of the literacy process to all of the children. Often explicit, direct, and systematic skill and strategy instruction takes place using the whole class format. The material is taught at grade level, but the exclusive use of whole-class instruction fails to address students who have diverse individual needs. In the joint position statement of the IRA and NAEYC (1998) one characteristic of excellent instruction includes opportunities to work in small groups for focused instruction and collaboration with other children.

Small Group Instruction

Through a variety of small group formations, teachers can begin to effectively meet the individual needs, skill levels and motivation of students necessary to become readers and writers (Reutzal, 2007).

Guided reading. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) are frequently referenced when describing guided reading, one form of small group instruction. Their description of guided reading within a social constructivist program has influenced many teachers interested in meeting the specific needs of students within the classroom. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996) guided reading gives children the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in a socially supported activity, it gives teachers the opportunity to observe individuals as they process new texts, and it gives individual readers the opportunity to develop reading strategies in a scaffolded setting so that they can read increasingly difficult texts independently. Guided reading also helps children learn how to introduce texts to themselves when reading independently.

The essential components of guided reading include a teacher working with a small group, usually four to six children who are similar in their development of reading and are able to read about the same level of text. The children should be reading a book, at the correct level for them, with approximately $90 - 94\%$ accuracy (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Teachers introduce the stories and assist the reading of children in ways that help to develop independent reading strategies. Each child reads the whole text with the goal of reading independently and silently. The emphasis is on reading increasingly challenging books over time. Children are grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessment. The overall purpose of guided reading is to enable children to read for meaning at all times through successful experiences in reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a more recent term also used to describe small group work designed to meet the different needs of learners in a given

classroom. Kasanovich, Ladinsky, Nelson, and Torgeson (2006) provide guidance to teachers through their work in developing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students in a classroom. The size of the group, number of days each week the group will meet, number of minutes per day, type of lesson structure and content and level of the lesson all depend on the data received by the teacher in initial assessments and observations. Guided reading is one of the structures used and the teacher's role is to provide support to students in the appropriate use of strategies to identify words and construct meaning for the selected passages. The lessons allow the teacher to see how well students are applying skills and strategies to the text, to encourage and support application of both, to engage the students in thinking about the meaning and to help students find reading to be a meaningful and enjoyable activity.

Skill focus groups. Struggling readers may need more of a skills-focused lesson structure as well as work in reading fluency. Skills-focused lessons are provided to help insure mastery of elements like letter-sound knowledge, phonemic decoding strategies, critical vocabulary, or reading comprehension strategies. The lessons are more systematic and focused. In order to be successful, it is suggested that the "lessons are fast-paced, interactive, and target appropriately on critical skills for each reading group" (Kasanovich, Ladinisky, Nelson, Torgeson, 2006, p. 2).

Diller (2007) encourages teachers to not be consumed with strictly following only the characteristics of guided reading groups, which requires the use of leveled readers, but instead incorporate more of a focused small-group instruction. That focus is on something the group needs to learn or practice next; it should not be things that the

students in the group can do independently. Students need to walk away from the instruction feeling successful.

Regardless of specific guided reading instruction or more general focus groups, strategy use and problem solving behaviors are key factors that teachers look for. Self-monitoring, checking predictions, decoding unfamiliar words, determining if the word makes sense, checking that a word is appropriate in the syntax of the sentence, using all sources of information, and chunking phrases to read more fluently are all areas that the teacher observes during reading opportunities, takes notes on, and uses for follow-up instruction (Tompkins, 2007).

Tier two instruction: response to intervention. "Focused classroom reading instruction is not sufficient to meet the needs of some children. To accelerate their progress and ensure that they do not slip further behind, these students, require more strategic intervention in addition to the time allotted for their core reading instruction" (Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan-Thompson, 2007, p. 19). Tier 2 instruction is designed to meet the needs of these students by providing them with an additional 30 minutes of intensive, small group instruction daily. The aim is to support and reinforce the skills being taught within the core reading program. The instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher, a specialized reading teacher or another support person trained for Tier 2 intervention.

Other small group instruction formats. Other small group instruction formats may include flexible grouping, literature circles, cooperative learning groups and assessment data groupings (Reutzal, 2007). Many teachers begin with a simple, limited and manageable small-group differentiated instructional plan and then gradually expand

toward effectively using an increasing range of instructional differentiation strategies. This model "allows for free choice within a clear, bounded and explicit framework that allocates space and determines rules, directions, schedules, and familiar routine; that foster social collaboration and interaction; that provide access to coherent knowledge domains and structures; that supports individual literacy learners' development; and that encourages children to become self-regulated and independent literacy learners"(Reutzal, 2007, p. 314).

Summary of small group instruction. Regardless of the type of small group instruction implemented, strategies to engage the students not currently participating in the small group instruction are necessary. Without a solid management system in place, small group instruction of any type will lose its effectiveness. "A decision to use a particular literacy grouping strategy in order to reduce management problems in the classroom must be made in full appreciation of the potential social, instructional psychological, and moral outcomes of such a choice on children, not based solely on the ease or convenience for the teacher. On the other hand, an overtaxed, stressed-out teacher with too many small-group or individual literacy learning activities may not be emotionally available to sensitively respond to the diverse needs of all children" (Reutzal, 2007, p. 314).

MANAGEMENT

Theory and research on classroom management have largely concentrated on how teachers control student behavior rather than on how teachers can develop self-guidance in their students. Small group instruction requires that students work independently while the teacher works with a few students at a time. Kounin's (1970) seminal work

provides systematic research on effective classroom management. His initial approach was to compare teachers on their responses to student misbehavior, but after there was significant differences found in how teachers - both effective and ineffective - react to handling disruptive incidents, Kounin's focus changed to instead see how teachers actually prepare or proactively manage their classrooms before behavior occurred. Kounin developed theories about classroom management that were based around a teacher's ability to organize and plan in their classrooms using proactive behavior and high student involvement. With-it-ness (aware of what is happening in all parts of the room at all times), overlapping (doing more than one thing at a time), momentum (well prepared and briskly paced lessons), smoothness (signals used to focus students' attention), and group focus (student engagement) are the five main points that result in lesson movement and an effective connection between management and teaching. These main points require the teacher to be aware of what is going on around the classroom, to quickly intervene when an inappropriate behavior surfaces, be able to do several things at the same time, prepare lessons that allow students to participate in group work and become involved in the subject, provide assignments that are at the right level of difficulty and sustain the interest of the students, and encourage accountability in all students through clear expectations communicated. Kounin (1970) found that effective classroom managers succeed because they are good at preventing disruption from occurring, and the focus is more on establishing the classroom as an effective learning environment.

Management During Small Group Instruction

When teachers determine to differentiate literacy instruction, and add some type

of small group instruction to their daily schedule, they add to the complexity of managing

the classroom environment while at the same time providing necessary accommodations

to meet diverse student needs. Meeting the diverse needs of students requires a more

complex management system and becomes a balancing act for the teacher (Tomlinson,

2001).

When initiating any type of small group instruction, the first challenge for the

teacher is to manage the classroom and to be able to work in a focused, uninterrupted

way with small clusters of students. Students must be able to work without teacher

assistance and be able to maintain and manage their own learning. Research does not

support children doing "seat work" or "busy work" like coloring or fill in the blank

worksheets (Allington, 2002; Schmoker, 2001). Student achievement does not increase

due to completing worksheets and in many classrooms almost two-thirds of the reading

instructional time is spent on activities that likely will not increase their reading and

writing abilities (Allington, 1983).

Centers and stations. According to Gregory and Chapman (2007) a center is a

collection of materials designed purposely with a goal in mind. Students are responsible

for their learning during center time and work with the materials to develop, discover,

create, and learn a task at their own pace. The hands-on experiences in centers provide

opportunities for learners to:

- Remediate, enhance, or extend knowledge on a skill, concept, standard or topic

- Pursue interests and explore the world of knowledge

- Work at the level of need and be challenged

- Be creative and critical problem solvers

- Make choices, establish their own pace, and build persistence

- Manipulate a variety of different types of materials

- Facilitate complex thinking and dendritic growth (p.133)

Centers can be set up in a variety of different ways including: (a) topic or theme based, (b) interest centers for further investigation of a topic, (c) resource centers that contain a wide variety of reading materials, (d) role-playing centers to demonstrate characters and sequence of events, (e) manipulatives centers for hands-on learning, (f) skills centers for adjustable assignments, (g) writing centers, and (h) listening centers for music or fictional and factual reading (Gregory & Chapman, 2007).

Tomlinson (1999) distinguishes centers and stations. Centers are flexible enough to address variable learning needs, but they are distinct and students don't need to move to all of them to achieve proficiency with a topic or set of skills. Stations work together with one another and students rotate among all of them to become competent in a concept or skill. Stations allow different students to work with different tasks, providing for differentiated instruction. Tomlinson (1999) notes that different teachers use centers in different ways, and they define them differently as well. These varied explanations often increase the confusion of the practice taking place in the classroom. Dramatic play centers, such as the "house center", or the "block center" typically used in preschools and kindergartens are often recognized as traditional centers but centers and stations can take place in any grade level, in any subject area, and with all levels of student ability (Mendoza & Katz, 2008; Tomlinson, 1999).

Literacy work stations. Literacy work stations are one way to provide students a classroom environment that meets the characteristics of effective literacy classrooms, allows the teacher to work with small groups and keeps students engaged in literacy throughout the day. Diller (2003) defines it as "…an area within the classroom where students work alone or interact with one another, using instructional materials to explore and expand their literacy. It is a place where a variety of activities reinforce and/or extend learning, often without the assistance of the classroom teacher. It is a time for children to practice reading, writing, speaking, listening, and working with letters and words" (Diller, 2003, p.3)

The teacher is stationed in the reading area of the classroom prepared to offer differentiated reading instruction to reading groups. The small group is a homogenous group that comes from the larger mixed ability group of students that are working at stations. Literacy work stations are teacher selected, - designed, and - provisioned; they focus on follow-up activities and tasks drawn from previously taught word work, fluency, comprehension strategies, and writing lessons. For example, in the Pocket Chart Work Station students may put the lines of poems in the correct order and practice reading for fluency; in the ABC/Word Study Work Station students may practice spelling high-frequency words correctly with magnetic letters or use a stamp pad to make and read word wall words. Student practice in the stations is directly tied to instruction. Management of literacy work stations is a central concern for all teachers. The stations must be designed so that the activities and tasks are clearly understood, they are independent of teacher supervision, and able to be completed within the time allowed. It

is also important that tasks completed in literacy work stations have a component of accountability and performance (Reutzel, 2007; Diller, 2003).

Managing the small-group differentiated reading instruction time block is a complex effort for most teachers. In the early part of the year, fewer stations or centers are easier for both teachers and students to handle. Then as the year progresses, adding a few new stations, especially optional stations, can add variety to the reading block time. Very little flexibility is desirable in the group rotation schedule early in the year, but as time progresses and children acquire more experience with the rotation between literacy work stations, teachers may decide to assign children specific tasks to be completed during this time period rather than a time-controlled rotation through various stations (Reutzal, 2007).

Diller (2003) encourages teachers to incorporate literacy work stations during small group instruction as a management tool with hands on learning that engages students. The emphasis in literacy work stations is on initial teacher modeling and students taking responsibility for their own learning. All students get to participate for equal amounts of time at the literacy work stations with materials that are differentiated for students with different needs and reading levels. The materials are taught with and used for instruction first. The stations remain all year long with changes made to reflect children's reading levels, strategies currently being taught and topics being studied. Through (a) modeling, (b) a gradual release of responsibility, (c) creating a risk free environment, (d) independent work levels and (3) clear, explicit expectations, students can successfully engage in literacy work stations and allow the teacher to work with students in small group instruction without interruptions.

The difference between literacy work stations and traditional learning

centers. The emphasis in literacy work stations is on teacher modeling and students

taking responsibility for their own learning. In traditional learning centers, teachers often

do too much of the work involved including thinking up ideas for the materials, making

the materials, laminating them, cutting them out, explaining them, explaining them again,

and cleaning up after the materials were used (Diller, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999). In

addition, teachers decide when to change the materials, often Friday afternoon, storing

them away until the following year. In literacy work stations, students share in the

decision making. They help decide when to change materials, and they negotiate ideas

for what they would like to practice at each station. All students have equal access to the

engagement that literacy work stations provide (Diller, 2003).

Differentiation is also a key difference in literacy stations as compared to learning

centers. Instead of assigning the same tasks to all children, the teacher can suggest

different activities or materials for particular children to better meet their needs at a

particular station. Through Diller's (2003) observations, improved student behavior is an

additional plus. When students, usually two to a station, are involved in hands-on

activities, such as making words with magnetic letters rather than filling out spelling

worksheets, they generally behave better and interrupt the teacher less. Discipline

problems arise during independent time when students are asked to do things that they do

not find interesting or useful to their learning. Work stations internalize what is taught

because students have a direct opportunity to practice a task just as the teacher modeled it

and they are continually reading and writing (Diller, 2003).

CURRENT STUDY

The final section of this chapter outlines the purpose of the current study and the research questions.

Purpose of This Study

The research by Allington (2002) and Pressley (2006) and others on effective literacy classrooms has determined that the teacher makes the difference in student achievement and there are specific characteristics exhibited by exemplary literacy teachers. The question now is how to increase the number of classrooms with teachers that possess these characteristics. While small group instruction in the classroom continues to grow, management of students away from the small group, while still engaged in quality literacy activities, is a concern. Through interviews and observations, this study looked at the implementation of literacy work stations and the teacher perceptions of managing small group instruction following the professional development. Research on effective literacy classrooms is already present, but how to implement these key characteristics during small group instruction and increase engagement during this time while still upholding these necessary elements, is lacking.

This case study explored the journey of four primary grade teachers in their pursuit to improve the quality of their small group instruction time through increased engagement of students away from the small group, thus allowing for more quality instruction taking place in the small group.

Research Questions

The central question guiding this study:

- Following professional development in literacy work stations, how does the implementation process change a teacher's small group instruction block, if at all?

Two subquestions were investigated in this study:

- o What relationship do teachers believe exists between literacy work stations as a management system and the small group literacy instruction block of time?
- o Do teachers perceive the productivity of small group instruction time as different after the implementation of literacy work stations when compared to previous years' small group practices? If so, what differences are perceived?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This case study research examined the instructional practices of four first grade teachers as they implemented literacy work stations during the small group instruction time in their classrooms. The purpose of this study was to explore the feelings, beliefs and impressions of the teachers after implementing literacy work stations as a form of management during the small group instruction block.

The case study design included (a) an initial interview of each participant prior to professional development, (b) an initial observation of the four classrooms prior to professional development, (c) an additional interview with each teacher - midway through the implementation, (d) email interviews at two weeks and ten weeks implementation, (e) a sampling of the teachers' brief daily notes including thoughts, feelings, or tally marks of interruptions related to the small group instruction time, and (f) two additional observations of each participating classroom during the small group instruction time – midway and post implementation.

Participants

Participants were recruited from one school district in a mid-sized Midwestern town. The school district is made up of one high school, two middle schools, and eleven elementary schools. The district reports 37.06% of their students' families at the poverty level; 4.55% of the students have been identified as English Language Learners. The elementary population is approximately 2500 kindergarten – fifth grade students and has a range of socio-economic levels and diversity as evidenced in one elementary school with a poverty percentage of 76.98% and an English Language Learners population of

20.24%. On the other end of the spectrum a school within the same district has only

14.18% of its students' families living in poverty with 0.36% identified as English

Language Learners (Nebraska Department of Education, 2009).   Table 3.1 displays the

demographics represented by the three schools in the study.

Table 3.1
School A, B, and C

School	# Students	White	Hispanic	Black	Native American	Asian	Migrant	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
School A	234	88%	5.6%	5.6%	.9%	0%	0%	29.1%	7.3%
School B	230	90.4%	7.8%	.4%	0%	1.3%	.4%	49.1%	14.8%
School C	249	62.2%	26.5%	7.6%	1.6%	2%	16.9%	49.4%	4.8%

Table 3.1 www.zipskinny.com

Four first grade teachers from the school district took part in the study. Table 3.2

shows the participant data.

Table 3.2
Participant Data

Teacher	School	Total Years Teaching	Years Teaching First Grade	Master's Degree
Mrs. Bailey	A	14	13	Yes
Mrs. Soper	A	22	15	No
Mrs. Jergens	B	6	4	No
Mrs. Vanek	C	2	2	No

MATERIALS

The video, *Launching Literacy Stations, Mini Lessons for Managing and

Sustaining Independent Work, K-3* (Diller, 2006) was viewed by each of the four teachers

as part of the professional development. In this two-hour video, a first grade teacher and

second grade teacher launch new work stations, develop lessons and strategies for

managing stations, and help students sustain interest and high quality work in ongoing stations.

Program One of the video provides basic principles and guidelines for launching literacy work stations in the primary grades. The participating teachers viewed the start up of two stations, the drama station in first grade, and the science station in second grade. Student participation in the mini-lesson, work in stations, and a teacher/student discussion during sharing session was also included in the video.

Program Two focuses on managing literacy work stations. This program is designed to help teachers ensure that materials are in their proper place, that students know where they need to be, and what they need to be doing. Mini-lessons can be used to reduce management issues, and a brief teacher "walk-around" allows for monitoring and assessing students and stations. Different types of management boards are also introduced.

Program Three covers the sustained use of literacy work stations. Mini-lessons are shared to demonstrate how to keep stations engaging through the introduction of new materials, linking stations to current events or student interests, and continually building connections between the literacy curriculum and stations.

Each of the four teachers that participated in the study also received a copy of Diller's (2003) *Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work*. This resource book includes ten chapters: 1) What is a Literacy Work Station? 2) How Do I Use Literacy Work Stations? 3) Classroom Library, 4) Big Book Work Station, 5) Writing Work Station, 6) Drama Work Station, 7) ABC/Word Study Work Station, 8) Poetry Work Station, 9) Other Work Stations, 10) Planning for Practice at Literacy Work Stations.

The Appendixes of the book feature icons and resources for the different work stations. The resource book allowed the participating teachers to refer back to the text for any possible questions or concerns. The DVD was also available to all participants for further review if requested, and I was available to answer any questions that arose.

Interviews

I conducted two face to face interviews and two mini-email interviews with each of the four participants to give me an opportunity to explore the experiences of the participants and "uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds," (Hatch, 2002, p.91).   The interviews offered (a) explanations of events, activities, feelings, motivations, and concerns related to how teachers managed small group instruction prior to the professional development and how small group instruction changed as teachers implemented literacy stations; (b) explanations of past events and experiences regarding why teachers chose to manage the small group instruction time in the way that they had in the past; (c) explanations of the anticipated changes teachers were hoping would take place after implementation, and (d) verification or extension of information that developed throughout the study through my initial interviews and observations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I took notes as well as audio taped and transcribed the face to face interviews. Each series of questions was open-ended with follow-up questions used if needed to prompt or clarify the original questions. See Appendix C and D for all of the interview questions.

Observations

I conducted a series of observations in this study. "The goal of observations is to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives

of the participants," (Hatch, 2002, p. 72). Observations allowed me to: (a) directly observe the implementation of literacy work stations which allowed me to have a better understanding of the contexts in which it occurred, (b) discover how the teachers understand the setting through firsthand experience, (c) see things that are taken for granted by the teachers and may not come out in an interview, (d) learn information that the teachers may be reluctant to discuss in the interview, and (e) add a personal experience to the analysis of what was happening (Patton, 1990). For this study, observations took place prior to the professional development and the implementation process, three or four weeks after literacy stations were introduced in the classroom, followed by an additional observation at seven or eight weeks when the literacy stations were fully functional. Observations at these times allowed me to witness the implementation from start to finish, allowed a before and after analysis, and served as a fidelity check.

My initial observation examined the management format used during small group instruction prior to professional development and included detailed field notes examining (a) student activities taking place while the teacher is working with a small group, (b) student engagement levels, (c) the flow of the small group instruction time, and (d) teacher interruptions from the small group instruction. The post professional development observations examined: (a) the levels of implementation of literacy stations including the number of literacy stations functioning, (b) the presence of an *I Can List*, (c) flow of the small group instruction time, (d) student engagement levels, and (e) the number and type of student interruptions during the small group instruction. I also created classroom maps indicating the relative space and location of students, teacher, literacy

work stations, desks, chairs, books, and other available material. Pianta, La Paro,and Hamre (2008) found that observations provide rich and descriptive information about teachers' practices and students' experiences in classrooms, but the results often tend to be very idiosyncratic making it difficult to determine if the patterns detected can be generalized. To address this concern I also used formal instruments for classroom observation.

Formal Instruments

To allow for a more standardized classroom observational measure, I used components of two instruments, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System K-3 (CLASS; Pianta et al., 2008) and the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO; Smith & Dickinson, 2002). Both instruments are commercially provided assessments and are available upon request.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The CLASS K-3 (Pianta et al., 2008) examines the emotional instructional climate of the classroom and includes three domains: (a) Emotional Supports, (b) Classroom Organization, and (c) Instructional Supports. Each domain has specific dimensions with detailed indicators for each element (Figure 3.1). *Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Sensitivity,* and *Regard for Student Perspective* are the four dimensions of the Emotional Supports domain. *Behavior Management, Productivity,* and *Instructional Learning Formats* are the dimensions for the Classroom Organization domain; the three dimensions for Instructional Supports are *Concept Development, Quality of Feedback,* and *Language Modeling* (Pianta et al.,2008).
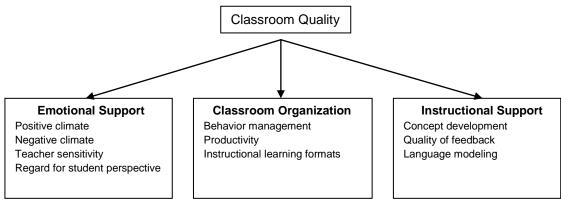
Figure 3.1. Overview of CLASS domains and dimensions (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)

The CLASS was developed based on an extensive literature review as well as on scales used in large-scale classroom observation studies in the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Care (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002; Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox & Bradley, 2002) and the National Center for Early Development and Learning MultiState Pre-K Study (Early et al., 2005). The dimensions assessed by the CLASS were derived from a review of constructs assessed in classroom observation instruments used in elementary school research, literature on effective teaching practices, focus groups, and extensive piloting. The CLASS was designed to create a common metric and vocabulary that could be used to describe various aspects of classroom quality across the early childhood and elementary grades (Pianta et al.,2008).

For this study, one dimension from the Emotional Support domain: *Regard for Student Perspectives*, and two components from the Classroom Organization domain: *Behavior Management* and *Productivity* were scored. *Regard for Student Perspectives* captured the degree of teacher interaction with students and classroom activities and explored the emphasis placed on students' interests, motivations, and points of view as

well as student responsibility and autonomy. Teachers received a low, middle or high

score on Flexibility and Student Focus (see Table 3.3 for an example of the scoring),

Support for Autonomy and Leadership, Student Expression, and Restriction of

Movement.

Table 3.3
Regard for Student Perspectives

	Low (1,2)	Middle (3,4,5)	High (6,7)
Flexibility and Student Focus • Shows flexibility • Incorporates student's ideas • Follows lead	The teacher is rigid, inflexible, and controlling in his plans and /or rarely goes along with students' ideas; most classroom activities are teacher driven.	The teacher may follow the students' lead during some periods and be more controlling during others.	The teacher is flexible in his plans, goes along with students' ideas, and organizes instruction around students' interests.

From Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) by Pianta, LaPara, & Hamre, 2008.

Behavior Management encompasses the teacher's ability to provide clear

behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior.

Teachers were scored on Clear Behavior Expectations, being Proactive, Redirection of

Misbehavior, and Student Behavior in the *Behavior Management* section.

Productivity considers how well the teacher managed instructional time and

routines and provided activities for students so that they had the opportunity to be

involved in the learning activities. In the *Productivity* section of the CLASS, teachers

were scored low, middle or high on Maximizing Learning Time, Routines, Transitions,

and Preparation (Pianta et al.,2008). These dimensions were chosen because the

observations took place during a specific instructional time of the day, small group time,

and many of the other dimensions were more appropriate for whole group instruction.

Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). The ELLCO

K-3 (Smith & Dickinson, 2002) measured the quality of the language and literacy

experiences in the classrooms by examining literacy practices and environmental

supports. It consists of an observation instrument and a teacher interview. The

observation contains a total of 18 items, organized into five main sections: Classroom

Structure, Curriculum, The Language Environment, Books and Reading, and Print and

Writing (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4
Structure of the ELLCO K-3, Research Edition   (Smith, Brady, Clark-Chiarelli, 2008)
GENERAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
Section I: Classroom Structure
Item 1: Organization of the Classroom
Item 2: Contents of the Classroom
Item 3: Classroom Management
Item 4: Professional Focus

Section II: Curriculum
Item 5: Integrations of Language and Literacy
Item 6: Opportunities for Independence in Learning
Item 7: Recognizing Diversity in the Classroom

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
Section III: The Language Environment
Item 8: Discourse Climate
Item 9: Opportunities for Extended Conversations
Item 10: Efforts to Build Vocabulary

Section IV: Books and Reading
Item 11: Characteristics of Books
Item 12: Development of Reading Fluency
Item 13: Sounds to Print
Item 14: Strategies to Build Reading Vocabulary
Item 15: Strategies to Build Reading Comprehension

Section V: Print and Writing
Item 16: Writing Environment
Item 17: Focused Writing Instruction
Item 18: Students' Writing Products

The ELLCO K-3 is based on several central assumptions about the nature of students' literacy development and the conditions and opportunities in classrooms that either support or detract from such development:

- Opportunities to use and practice oral language and literacy skills are fostered in classrooms that are structured to support students' initiative, actively engage students in learning experiences, and blend goals for other content areas with literacy learning.

- Teachers are responsible for instructing students in the key components of literacy that teach and reinforce appropriate reading and writing development.

- Teacher have a responsibility to understand, evaluate, and respond appropriately to individuals' differing literacy skills and learning needs.

- Connections are made among students' oral language use, the opportunities students have to engage in extended talk, and their developing capacities as readers and writers.

- Decisions about classroom organization, provision of materials, and scheduling of time are made thoughtfully, with the intent of fostering language, literacy and learning.

- Teachers plan curricula that support students in developing their language, reading and writing proficiencies while engaging them in cognitively challenging learning.

- Teachers use a range of assessment techniques to evaluate learning and adjust their instruction accordingly (Smith, Brady, Clark-Chiarelli, 2008, p. 6-7).

For this study, I used three of the four items (*Organization of the Classroom, Contents of the Classroom, and Classroom Management*) from Section I: Classroom Structure and one item, *Integration of Language and Literacy*, from Section II: Curriculum (See Table 3.5).

Table 3.5
ELLCO items being used in Literacy Stations Study
<u>Section I</u>
    Item 1: Organization of the Classroom
    Item 2: Contents of the Classroom
    Item 3: Classroom Management
<u>Section II</u>
    Item 5: Integrations of Language and Literacy

       Teachers were scored from one to five on all items with one signifying a

deficient, two – inadequate, three – basic, four – strong, and five scored as exemplary

(See Table 3.6). When scoring *Organization of the Classroom*, attention was given to the

status and organization of the furnishings, observation of traffic flow, and independent

access for children to activities and materials. The *Contents of the Classroom* component

looked for organization and content of materials, accessibility and student-generated

work. The final item of section I being scored was *Classroom Management*. Sources of

evidence for *Classroom Management* include: (a) internalization of rules, (b)

communication of expectations, and (c) teacher intervention.

Table 3.6
Contents of the Classroom

5 Exemplary	4 Strong	3 Basic	2 Inadequate	1 Deficient
There is **compelling** evidence that classroom materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals.	There is **sufficient** evidence that classroom materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals.	There is **some** evidence that classroom materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals.	There is **limited** evidence that classroom materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals.	There is **minimal** evidence that classroom materials are well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals.

From Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation K-3 Tool (ELLCO K-3) by Smith et al., 2008.

       One item, *Integration of Language and Literacy*, from Section II: Curriculum

(Refer back to Table 3.5) was also scored during observation periods. Embedded

opportunities, support of individual student learning, and encouragement of students' self

assessment and reflection were key sources of evidence in this component. *Organization of the Classroom, Contents of the Classroom, Classroom Management, and Integration of Language and Literacy* were selected because they represent the type of instruction that took place during the small group instruction time. The remaining sections of the ELLCO would be more appropriate for lengthy observations with a number of transitions between subject areas taking place.

Informal instruments

Student Engagement. An informal instrument was used to document student engagement. Wharton-McDonald, et al. (1998) coded students as "engaged" if they were actively involved in a learning activity. If students were reading, writing, listening, or talking about a relevant topic, they were coded as "engaged". Students were coded as "non-engaged" if they were staring out the window, engaging in idle chatter, or fiddling with items in their desk. Every 5 to 10 minutes observers surveyed the classroom and counted the number of children who appeared to be engaged. For this study, I surveyed the room every 3 minutes during small group instruction time to count the number of engaged students. Non-engaged students were tallied with a short note describing their actions (See Appendix A). Student engagement was recorded at all three observations.

Daily notes. Note generating by the teachers was built into this study as an optional supplement to the interviews and observations. Teachers were asked to take brief notes on information they found pertinent during small group instruction. The notes could include tally marks recording the number of interruptions, areas of concern in the literacy stations or teacher comments from the literacy block time.

Johnstone (1994) encourages individuals to write things down, because the act of writing will produce a different result than just thinking or talking about experiences. Asking participants to reflect through daily written notes would allow for another perspective on the experiences of implementing literacy stations in the classroom. I supplied each participating teacher with a three ring notebook with a skeleton copy (see Appendix B) for each day to keep near their small group instruction area to take brief notes in before, during, and after small group instruction when literacy stations took place. The skeleton copy included space for the date, an area to tally interruptions, and a space for brief comments about the small group instruction time.

PROCEDURES

I contacted the superintendent and assistant superintendent from one school district in a mid-sized Midwestern town through email to propose a professional development session on the topic of literacy stations during small group instruction. Both the superintendent and the assistant superintendent gave their support and the assistant superintendent was named as my contact person. I met with the assistant superintendent to go over the details of the study and answer any questions.

A discussion with the assistant superintendent took place on the best way to get the information about the professional development for small group instruction time to the teachers. She requested that I send the teacher invitation letter to her via email and let the assistant superintendent's office forward it on to all first grade teachers in the district instead of sending the letter hard copy through school mail. Four first grade teachers interested in attending the initial professional development in small group instruction management strategies and participating in the study sent a response of interest through

email and provided their school site, years of education, years of overall experience and years teaching first grade.

The assistant superintendent of the school district submitted a letter granting approval for the study which was submitted with the Institutional Review Board proposal. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, written permission from each of the participants was obtained. The participant consent form (See Appendix E) included (a) the purpose of the study, (b) confidentiality procedures, (c) any risks and/or benefits associated with participation, (d) the right to voluntarily withdraw from the study, and (e) the signature of the participant.

Once permission was granted to work with the four first grade teachers, I began collecting data. I had the opportunity to establish baseline information first, then introduce professional development and determine the effects the professional development had on small group instructional time. Through interviews and observations, both formal and informal, I was able to better understand the role that the professional development had on the classroom instruction.

Table 3.7 establishes my timeline, with the steps that were followed along with the data sources gathered at each step. Following the table are descriptions of the steps and the data sources.

Table 3.7
Research Procedures and Data Sources

Month	Step	Data Source
Month 1	1. Initial Interviews (4)	Transcription of Interviews
	2. Initial Observations (4)	Informal Observations Student Engagement CLASS K-3 ELLCO K-3
	3. Professional Development	Launching Literacy Stations (Diller, 2006)
Month 2 2 weeks implementation	1. Teacher Mini Interviews (4)	Email
3 /4 weeks implementation	1. Classroom Observations (4)	Informal Observations Student Engagement CLASS K-3 ELLCO K-3
Month 3 6 weeks implementation	1. Interviews (4)	Transcription of interviews
7 /8 weeks implementation	1. Classroom observations (4)	Informal Observations Student Engagement CLASS K-3 ELLCO K-3
Month 4 10 weeks implementation	1. Teacher mini interviews (4)	Email

Initial Interviews and Observations

Once IRB approval was granted and four teachers agreed to participate in the

study, I conducted an initial interview and observation in each classroom. The initial

interview took place prior to the professional development and allowed me to better

understand the feelings and experiences the teachers had during small group instruction.

The interviews were held at each teacher's classroom. A follow-up mini interview

(email) was held two weeks after the initial implementation, followed by a formal

interview six weeks after implementation and another mini-interview at ten weeks. The

initial interview allowed me to gather information before implementation and the post

professional development interviews provided additional information during the

implementation process and after full implementation had been accomplished. My initial

interview (See Appendix C) provided a baseline for the practices and reactions that

teachers had toward small group instruction time. At the initial interview I established a

time to observe the teachers. This initial observation allowed me to see what practices

were being implemented before the professional development so that I could make

comparisons after the intervention. The observation included informal notes, student

engagement ratings, and the formal instruments, CLASS and ELLCO.

Professional Development

Following the completion of the baseline interviews and observations, I scheduled

a time to conduct a 2 ½ hour professional development. The professional development

was to take place in one setting and include viewing a DVD, discussion groups following

each section of the DVD, and a question and answer session if needed. Due to a

significant winter storm the professional development had to be cancelled and since the

semester was near the end it was necessary to restructure the professional development.

Each of the four participants received the DVD for viewing as well as Diller's (2003)

book, *Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work.* The book reinforces the key

concepts of literacy stations outlined in the video and provides explicit information on

implementing seven stations. A detailed description of the professional development

content was provided in the materials section of this chapter. On the first day back of the

second semester, the four participating teachers and I met and discussed questions and

concerns over the materials. The questions focused on the structure of the classrooms in

the video compared to the structure and scheduling in the classrooms of the participating

teachers and the number of stations implemented in the video as well as the "I Can…" lists.

Interviews

Two weeks following the initial implementation of literacy stations, a mini interview took place using email. Waiting two weeks gave the teacher an opportunity to add several literacy stations and begin the transition from the previous routine to the new one. The interview questions (See Appendix D) focused on the struggles and rewards of adding the stations to the classroom routine. The questions were open-ended and allowed teachers to add any additional comments if they desired. Six weeks after the professional development and implementation I sat down with each teacher for a formal interview followed by another mini interview at ten weeks. At this point the teachers were maintaining their literacy stations and no longer making significant changes in the classroom.

Observations

The second observations took place either three or four weeks following the initial implementation. Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Soper were observed in week three and Mrs. Jergens and Mrs. Vanek were observed in week four. The second observation followed the format of the initial observation and included both formal and informal instruments. The third observation took place seven or eight weeks (Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Soper, seven weeks; Mrs. Jergens and Mrs. Vanek, eight weeks) after literacy work station implementation and again followed the same format. At this time, literacy stations were fully functioning, so it was an appropriate time to see if: a) the participating teachers

committed to the implementation process, b) they were able to successfully set up a variety of literacy stations, and c) the students adjusted to a new system in the classroom.

Continuing Professional Development

The professional development in literacy work stations did not end after the initial viewing of the DVD and the first conversation held to discuss the video and the book. Email played a larger role than anticipated. Teachers wanted feedback on the process and had questions and concerns so I sent an email to each teacher after observations and offered compliments, suggestions and attempted to answer questions. Several times emails were sent to all four teachers in response to the concerns or to share a great idea demonstrated in one of the classrooms.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Analysis and Representation

For a case study, analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 2007). Through categorical aggregation (Stake, 1995) this study sought to gather a collection of teacher instances from the data, with the hope that relevant meanings would emerge about teacher implementation of literacy stations during small group instruction. Using four teachers enabled me to look for similarities and differences among the cases and establish patterns. Naturalistic generalizations developed following analysis that will empower teachers, principals, and teacher educators to learn from the case study (Stake, 1995).

Strategies for Validation

A synthesis of validation perspectives comes from Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001). They organized their findings into four primary criteria: credibility (Are

the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?); authenticity (Are different voices heard?); criticality (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?); and integrity (Are the investigators self - critical?). Secondary criteria included explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity.

Keeping these interpretations in mind, validation strategies were implemented to document the accuracy of the study. Eight strategies are frequently used by qualitative researchers, including: (a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, (b) triangulation (making use of multiple and different sources and methods), (c) peer review or debriefing, (d) refining working hypotheses as the inquiry advances in negative case analysis, (e) clarifying researcher bias from the onset of the study, (f) member checking (the researcher shares the preliminary analyses with the participants to determine the accuracy and credibility), (g) rich, thick description (this allows the readers to transfer the information to other settings),and (h) external audits (allowing an external consultant to examine the accuracy of both the process and the product) (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Creswell (2007) recommends that researchers engage in at least two of the strategies in any given study.

For this study, triangulation, member checking, and clarifying researcher bias ensured that the case study was thoroughly examined. Since I was on a timeline to complete my dissertation, I spent a significant amount of time in the field thus providing me with a clear picture of the implementation of literacy stations. I acknowledge that it was not the prolonged engagement that many case studies require. My follow-up study will allow for additional time in the classroom observing and interviewing teachers.

Triangulation. In this study triangulation occurred through the examination of multiple teachers each involved in four interviews, three observations, emails and daily note taking. Themes emerged across the sources and were cross checked.

Member Checking. Member checking served as another strategy for validation. I sought the participants' feedback in relation to the themes generated (Creswell, 2007). Participants in this study were asked to electronically review the preliminary analyses consisting of the themes comprised and judge the accuracy and credibility of each. All four participants in the study also shared their findings with colleagues at a professional development conference.

Clarifying Researcher Bias. It is imperative that the reader understand both the background and biases the researcher may bring to the research question. Hatch (2002) refers to this as self disclosure and recommends the author includes a statement for the reader. Comments on my past experiences, biases, prejudices that have likely shaped the interpretation of the findings are included in this study in the following section.

From 1992 – 2005, I was a primary classroom teacher spending five years in the kindergarten classroom, four years in first grade, two years in second grade, one in third and one as a substitute teacher in a variety of grade levels and school environments. The five years spent as a kindergarten teacher were in the school district involved in this study, although the school I taught in was not one of the three schools represented.

One of my most difficult times of the school day in the primary classroom was the reading block time. The daily expectation to meet with small groups, either guided reading groups or focus groups, was often a challenge. It was not the small group instruction that was difficult but the management of the other students not involved with

the teacher instructed group. Too often students were not engaged in literacy activities -

but instead were involved in some type of "busy work" to keep them working quietly and

not cause a distraction to the small group instruction. Regardless of the amount of time

allotted for reading instruction, students were realistically only getting 20-30 minutes of

quality reading time.

As a college professor and observer of field experiences in reading instruction

from 2005 to the present, an awareness that other teachers also struggle with student

engagement during reading block time has reinforced the need of a management system

that also increases access to literacy. At the 2008 Nebraska Reading Conference, Debbie

Diller (2003) presented her model of literacy work stations, highlighting how to

implement them as well as sustain them. While the literacy stations seemed like an easy

fix to the management of the small group instruction time, I wanted to explore the

implementation through the eyes of teachers and as a researcher.

All of the beliefs and experiences described in this section serve to bracket my

perceptions of the study. I used knowledge gained through professional development in

literacy stations, as well as my graduate courses in literacy, along with my prior

experience as a primary grade teacher to interpret the findings provided by the

participants.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Four first grade teachers participated in the professional development and

implementation of literacy work stations. Each teacher was observed during small group

instruction prior to viewing Diller's (2006) video and reading the book on Literacy

Stations (Diller, 2003). Once implementation of the literacy stations started,

observations, mini email interviews, and formal interviews were conducted to monitor

the progress of the participating teachers and allow for triangulation to check for the

accuracy of themes. Two of the teachers, Mrs. Bailey (all names are pseudonyms) and

Mrs. Soper work in the same building and followed similar paths during the

implementation process while the other two teachers, Mrs. Jergens and Mrs.Vanek, each

took very different approaches to the implementation of literacy stations. Each teacher's

story is told using authentic examples taken from the observation field notes and specific

quotes collected in observations, mini email interviews, and /or formal interviews. It

should also be noted that my role in the study became more than just the researcher. It is

important to note that the four teachers, who participated in the professional development

and implementation of literacy stations, wanted my suggestions and advice on how to

improve their small group instruction. Since my role became more than an observer, I

believe it allowed me to significantly contribute to the study although it also increased the

bias.

MRS. BAILEY

Mrs. Bailey is a first grade teacher from School A with 25 students in her

classroom. She has taught first grade for 13 of her 14 full time teaching years. Mrs.

Bailey scheduled her small group instruction time from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m., but she indicated that she sometimes does not finish until closer to 9:45 a.m. Each day she guides five small groups varying in size from three to six students. A number of students leave the classroom for different interventions including: Reading Recovery, Response to Intervention (RtI), Targeted Reading Intervention (TRI), and Special Education (SPED). Reading Recovery, RtI and TRI are individual or small group reading interventions for students reading below grade level. The students that leave the room also meet with Mrs. Bailey each day, allowing them to get small group instruction two times each day. Mrs. Bailey's highest ability readers read with the paraprofessional each day if they do not meet with her. Each small group receives a combination of skills and guided reading that lasts about 10 to 15 minutes. Mrs. Bailey believes that small group instruction allows her to target specific skills with specific children thus going beyond reading level requirements. This instructional choice enhances her ability to meet the individual needs of students.

Mrs. Bailey expressed frustration when executing small group instruction time. She has a paraprofessional in the classroom for just 15 minutes during the one hour block, so the students working at their seats or in a center are routinely required to work independently while Mrs. Bailey works with the small groups. She has difficulty finding time to organize materials for small group centers. Mrs. Bailey believes that management plays a significant role in the effectiveness of the small group time. Because of this evaluation she does not start guided reading and skill instruction until after the first month of the school year. This choice allows her to set up the expectations for each center.

Pre-Implementation/Initial Observation

My first visit to Mrs. Bailey's classroom was in December prior to the professional development on literacy stations. The students were completing a worksheet on Wants and Needs from the Social Studies curriculum as seatwork when I entered. Once Mrs. Bailey got the students working independently at their desks, she started the first reading group. The paraprofessional arrived fifteen minutes after the block started. An apple chart in front of the classroom had pictures of seven centers with three or four cards behind each picture, each of which had the name of a student written on it. The seven centers included: Puzzles, Games, Computer, ABC, Write/Illustrate, Library, and Spelling.

Once the students finished their seatwork they placed it in a basket on the teacher's desk and then went to the apple chart to see which center was the next one in their progression. Mrs. Bailey set a timer when she started the first reading group. After 12 minutes the timer went off, signifying a switch in stations although the reading group continued working with Mrs. Bailey. Depending on when the seatwork was finished some students were able to spend close to 10 minutes in the first center while others spent 1 to 2 minutes. Other students never did make it to the first center. After each 12 minute cycle, students rotated to the next station clockwise in the classroom. Students who did not finish the seatwork in the first twelve minutes had missed out on the first station; the expectation is that they should move to the second station since one rotation had already taken place. This system seemed to cause a lot of confusion.

Throughout the one-hour small group block students left and entered the classroom for reading interventions. These students were confused about which center

they should enter when they returned to the room. Four students never participated in the centers because they never completed their seatwork. The cards in the apple chart were not moved for each 12 minute time frame, so the students needed to rotate around the room from one station to the next on their own. On the day of the initial observation, students went to three centers, since the small group block started late. Students worked quietly in the centers, with only one student or rarely two in a center at a time. In the 60 minutes of observation, the teacher was interrupted during reading group instruction 13 times. A child having difficulty with a glue bottle caused two interruptions and remained off-task for almost 15 minutes picking at the glue bottle trying to get it to work.

As mentioned before, the classroom had several students coming in and out. At one point, only nine of the 25 students remained in the classroom due to students taking part in reading intervention groups (Reading Recovery, SPED, ESL, RtI) outside of the classroom. Student engagement varied. There were two times in the 60 minutes when all students were engaged. Conversely, during other times students visited with each other, wandered the classroom, played with scissors or glue bottles, watched the computer, or just sat. Students at their desks doing seatwork seemed to be more disengaged than students active in a center.

Two Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

Two weeks following the professional development, at the start of the third quarter of school, Mrs. Bailey reported adding two additional centers to her small group time for a total of nine stations. She commented that she "added to some of the others… So far adding to each station has not been that hard, just looking around to see what I already have." Mrs. Bailey remarked that the students had enjoyed creating the "I can…"

lists and that all students were successful in the centers. "For some, given the fact that they have more choices and the 'now what?' is out of the equation, there is not so much horseplay. I feel that having less students at each station is helpful. I now have students into groups of equal or close to ability." Mrs. Bailey also reported that she was attempting 15 minutes in each center instead of 12, but that it seemed a little long for them.

Three/Four Weeks of Implementation/Observation

When I returned to the classroom in January, Mrs. Bailey had nine centers in the apple chart with two to three names behind each center card. The centers included: Clocks, Computer, Letter Tiles, Writing and Illustrating, Library, Spelling, Making Words, Puzzles, and Games. Another change was the addition of an "I can…" list to four of the nine centers (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
"I Can…" Lists in Mrs. Bailey's Classroom

Writing	Spelling
Write a Thank you and decorate I can… • Write another thank you • Read the word wall • Read my letter to a friend • Read the room A skeleton letter was included in the writing center for help in writing the thank you letter.	I can… • Vocabulary • Words I know • Do again
Library	Puzzles
I can… • Read a book • Read to a friend quietly • Read with a telephone • Read to a stuffed animal • Read in my brain • Read a book by telling about the pictures • Look at the pictures • Read favorite parts and tell a friend about it	I can… • Do the puzzle • Do the spoons • Read the states

When I first entered the classroom, Mrs. Bailey had the students gathered together near the library center, and they were reviewing the "I can…" lists and directions for each station before starting with small group instruction. She was excited about the "I can…" list that the students had helped create in the library center the day before and asked the students if they had any questions about centers before getting started. Mrs. Bailey mentioned to the students that she had a concern based on behaviors from the day before with the "telephone" (PVC pipe) in the library. "My biggest concern in the library today is how to use the telephone. No megaphone – telephone." Mrs. Bailey reminded students that they had an ABC order worksheet, and a clock paper to complete before going to their first center. Mrs. Bailey also announced to me that she had tried the 15 minutes in each station but it seemed a little long; she returned to 12 minutes.

Students were dismissed from the large group to go back to seatwork or start at their first center. The transition of kids in and out of the room started as well. A quick survey of the classroom at 9:05 revealed 12 students: one child at the library reading, one student writing a thank you, one spelling with magnets, one at the puzzle center, two students at the clock center, two at seatwork, one student on the computer and three students working with the teacher. The remaining students were out of the classroom working with reading teachers, ESL teachers or with a paraprofessional reading. As students reentered the classroom, many of them went to their seats to finish seatwork. For those who were ready to go to a center, there was a lot of confusion regarding where to start. The returning students were not aware of how many times the timer had gone off since they had been gone from the classroom.

Mrs. Bailey was interrupted twelve times during the small group time. Most of the interruptions were to remind students at seatwork to continue working or to help students find their centers when they returned to the classroom. Students were engaged in the centers throughout the hour. Most of the disengagement seemed to take place at seatwork with students just sitting or watching other students in centers. One student was off task in the clock station as he watched the two students playing Memory in the game station.

Mrs. Bailey concluded the small group time by asking the students "What worked well today in centers?" and "What didn't?" She asked students if there were any comments about centers today. The students did not give much for responses but one student said, "Some of the centers weren't very quiet." I asked Mrs. Bailey about having nine centers and only four "I can…" lists. She mentioned that the students knew what to do at the other ones so they just talked about them instead of creating a list of what to do.

After my January observation of Mrs. Bailey's classroom I thought about how she could help manage the confusion with students coming back into the room not knowing which center to go to. The apple chart had all of the centers listed with two - three names behind each one. The students started where their name were listed and then rotated clockwise in the classroom after the timer went off. Students, who left the room and then re-entered later in the period, struggled with where to start. I suggested to Mrs. Bailey that she or a student helper could move the center cards down one spot each time the timer rings, so the student names are always on the center they should currently be in. Mrs. Bailey took full advantage of my suggestion and emailed me to let me know that she put the suggestion into action right away. "Yes, I have a little boy doing that. I always

thought about it, but I never really did anything about it. I picked out one of my taller boys, so when the timer goes off, he physically goes over and he changes the centers. And that really has helped, especially since I have so many kids in and out."

Six Weeks of Implementation/Interview

Three weeks after the observation and six weeks of literacy stations implementation, Mrs. Bailey commented to me that she wanted to make additional changes to her small group instruction time. "I've added another center. It's the money center right now, because we're doing coins. And right now, they've just been using the magnifying glass to look at the different coins. And then, on Monday, I want to add this Three in a Row, Tic Tac Toe game, where they have to identify what the coin is. And then after a day or two, I'm going to tell them they have to tell how much – what the value is, just to change it up a little bit. Then we can add an "I can…" in the money center."

When I asked Mrs. Bailey about the morning meeting and wrap up she said, "Sometimes, if I add a new center or I think we need to review, go over some things, then we'll have a quick little meeting.   I know I should do it at the end, but I figure in the morning they'll say, 'Remember yesterday.' We kind of take care of it that way."

Seven/Eight Weeks of Implementation/Observation

Approximately seven weeks after the initial implementation, Mrs. Bailey had added three more "I can…" lists to the centers in her classroom and had updated the Writing Center (See Table 4.2). She commented, "I didn't think they would come up with much of a list for the math center. I was really surprised." Mrs. Bailey added the Math Center to her classroom, because she had mentioned that the students were really struggling with money and she wanted them to have more practice.

Table 4.2
Additional "I Can…" Lists in Mrs. Bailey's Classroom

Computer	Big Book
I can…	I can…
• Go to Game Goo	• Read the rhymes
• Go to Between the Lions	• Read different letter words
• Go to Starfall	• Find the rhyming words
• Go to Spelling City	• Count the words
Math	Writing
I can…	I can…
• Count the money	• Draw a picture of what I see outside
• Look for the year it was made	• Write 2 sentences about what I drew
• Sort the coins 1¢, 5¢, 10¢, 25¢	o See or saw
• Sort by: color, size, smooth, rough, year	• Read the word wall
• Trade in	• Read the room!
• Line up and count	
• Play 3 in a Row	
o Name or value	
• Name the president on each coin	

On this visit, Mrs. Bailey started her small group instruction with four students. One student went to the Puzzle, one to the Library and fifteen students to their desks to finish seatwork. As students finished their seatwork, they went to the chart to find out which center to start at. When the timer rang after 12 minutes, Mrs. Bailey said, "Reece, do your job." A boy went to the apple chart and moved the center headings - Library, Computer, Math, etc.up one spot. Throughout the morning students were engaged in the centers and the teacher was rarely interrupted. Students seated at their desks seemed to be the most disengaged with two students playing with their crayons and one student gazing around the room. However, there were three times during the observation when all students were on-task.

Ten Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

In the third month of implementation, Mrs. Bailey added another new station -- Frog and Toad. She pulled some of the Frog and Toad books off of her bookshelf and added

stuffed animals to the center. Mrs. Bailey commented that she believes she will need to make some of the centers more challenging as the school year progresses because the students are learning so much. It is something she has never had to do before but is excited about. Mrs. Bailey stated that the centers that worked the best were the ones with the "I can…" list; it allowed all of her students to be successful. "I feel the students are all on the same page with the centers. They are more fully engaged in the stations. I do like the idea of the children having the same ability for grouping. It seems to be a healthier challenge for them. My children are more engaged then before because they have choices!!! Centers were a PAIN to figure out so that children are engaged. I did not want to do the I Can list, but once I gave the children choices, they became engaged by themselves…..Yeah!!!"

Mrs. Bailey also commented that she is working hard to include the opening and closing pieces to the literacy stations. "We meet when we have a new center to create an "I can…" list for. We begin each day with 'What do we need for centers today? Any issues we need to talk about before beginning?' For closure we talk about what went well and do we need to change anything for tomorrow."

I asked Mrs. Bailey the role literacy stations will play next fall when school begins. "Next year, instead of teaching the centers, we will be learning together about the stations. This will be nice. I will be able to tell much quicker which modality the students are by their "I can…" lists." The school district Mrs. Bailey teaches in is focusing on Differentiated Instruction and a teacher emphasis has been placed on a better understanding of student readiness, interest and learning profiles.

Summary

Mrs. Bailey started with seven stations in her classroom, three to four students of mixed ability in each station, and a classroom with constant mobility. While the mobility of the students throughout the reading block did not change, Mrs. Bailey implemented additional stations in her classroom that allowed for fewer students in each station, students with the same ability to work together, and a chart that allowed students to monitor the correct station at any time point where they should be working. Interruptions in the class decreased, student engagement increased and Mrs. Bailey was able to devote more instructional time to the small group of students she worked with.

MRS. SOPER

Mrs. Soper is in the same school (School A) as Mrs. Bailey and follows the same format for centers. She has taught in a first grade-only room the last six years, but has 22 years of total teaching experience with 16 years experience teaching in a multiage classroom that included first grade.   Mrs. Soper has small group instruction time from 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. and has five groups receiving instruction each day. Mrs. Soper did say her goal is to have small groups five days a week, but realistically it is often only four days. She has a large number of students pulled out of the room during this block of time for reading interventions, but is still required to meet with all of these students in her own small groups to provide the regular classroom instruction along with an enhanced intervention experience. Mrs. Soper has a paraprofessional in the classroom for the first ten – fifteen minutes of the literacy instruction block of time, but the paraprofessional's assignment is to work one-on-one with an autistic child in the classroom. Mrs. Soper

said the paraprofessional will help out when needed elsewhere in the classroom, but she is only in the room for a short period of time.

Mrs. Soper described her small group instruction as a combination of word work, guided reading, rereading for fluency, and writing. She believes that small group instruction allows her to focus on the needs of her students and provides a less risky environment that builds their confidence. While she sees many benefits in small group instruction, she is frustrated with keeping the rest of classroom quiet and busy and often has to leave the small group to take care of problems in the centers.

Pre-Implementation/ Initial Observation

During my first observation in Mrs. Soper's classroom prior to professional development in literacy stations, students started with seatwork and then moved to one of the six stations posted in the front of the room in a blue pocket chart with four student names behind each station heading. On this day, students were to make a paper chain at their desk and then do a worksheet with pieces that needed to be colored, cut and put in a "baggie" for later use. Once they finished these projects they could start centers. I entered the room at 8:26 a.m. while Mrs. Soper was finishing up on the directions for the morning. It was 8:43 a.m. when the first students went to centers. No one had started at a center during the first reading group time, so there was a lot of confusion about which center to go to after the seatwork was completed. The timer had gone off once. Should students go to the first center with their names as indicated on the chart, or should they rotate one center since that is what they normally do after the timer goes off?

The teacher was interrupted 28 times in the 60 minute small group instruction block. The listening center seemed to cause a lot of frustration for the students and

teacher. Three times the teacher had to leave the small group to help get the listening

center functioning due to technical problems.

Throughout the literacy block several students were nonengaged. At one point

four students were just sitting during seatwork.   Other nonengaged behavior included

students with their hand up waiting, visiting with a neighbor, watching a student on the

computer, and roaming. As in Mrs. Bailey's classroom, many students move in and out

of the classroom to read with paraprofessionals and reading teachers. At one point only

14 students out of 24 were left in the classroom. The volume level went down and more

students were engaged as the number of children in the classroom decreased. As students

reentered the classroom though, there was confusion about where to start their center

activities. One student came in and just stood and looked around trying to figure out

where to go. She watched students in the library for several minutes. Finally, the teacher

noticed and asked her what center she should be in. She did not know, so Mrs. Soper had

another student help her.

Two Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

When the teachers and I gathered on the teacher workshop day following the

holiday break, Mrs. Soper was very concerned about the number of stations Diller (2003,

2006) suggested implementing in the classroom. She didn't think she would change that

in her classroom. Two weeks after the initial implementation, Mrs. Soper said, "I haven't

introduced new stations, just tried to improve on what we had. The 'I can…' lists and the

'Instead Of' basket have been great. It has been a good way to give the higher students

more choices." Diller (2006) introduces the Instead Box or Basket in the video and

suggests having one in the classroom so when technology or another problem arises,

students may go to the Instead Basket. This allows the teacher to continue teaching in the small group without interruption. Mrs. Soper added a notebook for each student at the writing table and stated that the students really liked it. "I think it gives them a stronger feeling of ownership."

Three/Four Weeks of Implementation/ Observation

When I observed Mrs. Soper's room four weeks after the implementation, she did still have six stations in her classroom: Listening, Puzzle, Library, Computer, Writing, and Games, but she had worked with the students to add two "I can…" lists (See Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Mrs. Soper's "I Can…" Lists

Library	Listening
I can….	I can…
• Read by myself	• Draw a picture about the story
• Practice new words	• Listen to the story
• Look at pictures	• Fill out my paper
• EEKK with a friend (Elbow, Elbow, Knee, Knee)	• Listen again
• Quiet read with a friend	

Mrs. Soper had added an Instead Box, a plastic basket, in the Computer station, since the computer station often caused her to leave the small group to help problem solve. Now if there was trouble with the computer, students could do something "instead". Inside the basket were several different rings with sight words for students to practice reading, and clocks for practice with time.

At 8:30 a.m. Mrs. Soper called her first group of five students to the table. All of the remaining students were still at their desks doing seatwork, consisting of a cut and paste worksheet on clocks. Throughout the visit students in the centers were more engaged than students who remained at their desks doing seatwork. The only time

students were not on-task in the centers was when three students at the puzzle were "playing around" and four students in the library were visiting instead of reading. When there was only one or two students in a center, students were engaged in the activities. The centers that had three students had more off-task behavior. During the one hour block, all students in the classroom were engaged two separate times.

On this visit, Mrs. Soper was interrupted eleven times from the small group instruction to take care of student issues that included either problems from students visiting instead of working or having to help a student find the correct center to go to begin work after returning to the classroom. Just as in Mrs. Bailey's classroom there was confusion for students that reentered the room. They did not know which center was the correct one for them to use and spent time looking and wandering around finding other people from their group. This indecision was also evident in one student who had finished his seatwork and did not know where to begin his center time. Mrs. Soper set the timer for 15 minutes, and students rotated after it went off. Reading groups did not always finish at the same time so students rotated centers, but the ones in the reading group stayed and worked with Mrs. Soper.

Mrs. Soper did provide closure to the block. "One thing I saw this morning that we didn't follow through on was in the listening center. It was really loud. You need to be a problem solver. What could you do if something isn't working?" One student said, "Go to your 'I can…' list." Mrs. Soper reread the "I can…" list to the students. Another student said, "Can we make more 'I can…'lists?"

Just as with Mrs. Bailey I suggested to Mrs. Soper that moving the heading each time the students transition to a new center might help students who finish seatwork or

reenter the room to find their correct center. She said she was willing to give it a try and was going to visit with Mrs. Bailey about it.

Six weeks of Implementation/Interview

When I checked in with Mrs. Soper a few weeks later, I asked her about changes she had made. Mrs. Soper said, "I went to more stations, changed my chart system so that I have fewer kids per station, which I even want to add a couple more so that my sizes can get smaller. And now, I have a movable chart that I move to the center of the board every morning. One of the students rotates those picture cards every time the timer goes off and that has worked marvelously."

I asked Mrs. Soper if she had made any more "I can…" lists, and she said they were meeting every morning to go over all of the options at the station. She said it seems to be "another really good management thing because it kind of gets them thinking more on-task. So I haven't really added any formal "I can…" lists, but we're kind of verbally just going over that."

Mrs. Soper did say that she has been really motivated to go back and dig through some of her old materials and books that she had good intentions of adding to centers but never did. This process has motivated her to add to her centers and create new ones.

"I think the kids are enjoying it (the small group time) better. Back at the writing table it is more creative, and so some of the choices have been to do the writing that goes with the flip chart. Or like this week, you could write a valentine. Or I had out some supplies, and they could create a valentine. Just giving them those options, the choices, has been good. And they love the idea of here's the supplies, make what you want. You know, no big boundaries other than these are the things you can use."

Mrs. Soper mentioned that she has changed the way that she groups the students. "I was grouping kids of high, medium, and low, thinking that that way the higher students could sort of help, but after watching the DVD and going through the book, it makes sense then that that student is going to take over. So now, I'm trying to group so they are more of a team, helping each other. And another phrase I use a lot with my kids is problem solver, and so they're helping one another become better problem solvers."

Mrs. Soper mentioned she has a lot of ideas in her head about the vision of her small group instruction for the remaining of this school year as well as the beginning of next year. She had really struggled with the concept from the video. In the examples provided, students only went to two stations a day and she knew that wasn't going to work for her. She said that once she "mentally got past the idea of my room has to look like that room," she was able to make changes in the room, add more stations and allow choice for students to become engaged.

Seven/Eight Weeks of Implementation/Observation

Seven weeks after the initial implementation in the classroom, Mrs. Soper had nine stations in her classroom: Fluency Chart, Computer, Money, Listening, Library, Sorting, Spelling, Game, and Puzzle. The Library and Listening Center were the initial stations with "I can…" lists posted, but Mrs. Soper and the students had created "I can…" lists to accompany the remaining stations as well (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Mrs. Soper's "I Can…"Lists

Game	Math
I can…	I can…

• Follow the rules
• Help a friend
	• Play 3 in a row
	• Use a magnifying glass to:
	   o Find the date
	   o Find where it was made
	   o Look for words and symbols
	   o Count the coins
	   o Look for states

Computer	Sorting
I can…	I can…
• Share a computer with a friend • Do the Instead Box	• Sort the words the long e words by myself • Sort the words long e words with a friend
Puzzle	Fluency Chart
I can…	I can…
• Choose a new puzzle when one is finished	• Read the words • Make the words • Look for letter patterns • Find rhymes

The addition of the chart and the moveable headings made a significant difference in the classroom. When students reentered the room after working with a teacher or paraprofessional on reading interventions outside of the classroom, they went right to the chart and looked to see which station to go to. At 9:09 a.m. the classroom had four students working in the small group with Mrs. Soper, one student in the Computer station, one student in the Spelling station, two students in the Math/Money station, one in the Fluency chart station, two in Sorting, two in Listening, one at the Puzzle, three students in the Game station, and one in the Library.

The off-task behavior was minimal. At one point two students in the Library were loudly talking instead of reading and at another time, one student at the Computers was talking to one student in the Library. The next three scheduled checks of on-task behavior during the period revealed all students engaged in their stations.

Ten Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

Mrs. Soper now maintains ten stations in her classroom. She continually changes a couple of the stations to reflect the current skills the students are working on. "I've been rotating word work with contractions, compound words, and adjectives. I've switched math from coins to subtraction." She has a meeting every Monday to go over the stations and a mini lesson anytime she changes a station. She continues to use the phrase "working like a good reader," so the kids see the connection between what they are doing at the centers and reading.

Summary

Mrs. Soper is looking forward to starting the new school year in August with the literacy stations playing a role. She hopes to be firm stating the expectations from the beginning of the school year in order for the stations to run more smoothly throughout the year. Mrs. Soper transitioned from reluctance in adding new stations, reducing the number of students in each station and creating "I can…" lists to increasing the number of stations in the classroom, decreasing the number of students per station to two and creating a written "I can…" list for each station – all of which appeared to generate positive results.

<center>**MRS. JERGENS**</center>

Mrs. Jergens has six years of teaching experience. The first two years of her career she taught in a combination Kindergarten – fourth grade classroom and the last four years have been in a first grade room in School B. Mrs. Jergens reported that she implements small group instruction three to four days per week but would like to do it all five days. She has four groups in her room based on reading levels with four to six

students in each group but often breaks down the groups even smaller if necessary. Mrs. Jergens mentioned that her higher level students work on reading and writing and her lower level students do more skill focused instruction with making words, rhyming and fluency practice through repetition. She said implementing small groups allows her to know a lot about her students and which ones are struggling, but she is frustrated in how to make the group time more meaningful to her students.

Pre-Implementation/Initial Observation

Mrs. Jergens' small group block started at 9:45 a.m. and lasted thirty minutes. In the afternoon she had another thirty minute time devoted to small group instruction. Twenty-five students were in the class, but a group immediately left for reading intervention leaving 16 children in the class. Mrs. Jergens has students work at centers while she teaches the small group. Before starting instruction with her first group she announced to the students which center to go to. It appeared she had a chart near her desk, but it was not visible to the students. A group of four students went to the library to work on the computers; the classroom did not have any computers in it. Mrs. Jergens asked four students to join her at the back of the room at the reading table. In the thirty minute block, Mrs. Jergens was interrupted 17 times during reading group instruction. The Library station seemed to cause a lot of the problems. The teacher had a claw foot tub in the library, but the four students in the library never did sit and read. The students looked out the window, visited and flipped through the pages, but never read; it appeared that there was no accountability for reading the book. Throughout the block there was only one time when all of the students were engaged. At one point eight students were nonengaged: tying shoes, looking out the window, standing and looking around or just

sitting.   The transition between reading groups and stations was about five minutes, so the teacher met with two groups -- the first lasted fifteen minutes and the second group lasted approximately ten minutes. Mrs. Jergens planned to meet with the remaining reading groups during the afternoon.

Two Weeks of Implementation/Mini interview

Two weeks after the professional development Mrs. Jergens had four stations (Big Books, Writing, ABC/Word Study, and Poetry). She had set up two of each station available so that all students had an assigned station. She had reduced the number of students per station from four to two students. Mrs. Jergens mentioned that some of the stations were similar to the centers she already had in her classroom, but she reintroduced them the same way as the new ones so students were able to practice the new positive habits she implemented. Mrs. Jergens felt that after two weeks the stations were working very well, but she was really excited about starting out the school year with the stations next year.

Mrs. Jergens completely surprised me when she said she had quit her small group instruction to monitor the students in their new stations and would start up with the groups again once all of the stations were fully implemented. Diller (2003, 2006) introduces literacy stations in the same way. In August, when school starts, guided reading groups have not been created yet, so the teacher is free to introduce and monitor the literacy stations. By the time reading levels and group placements have been established all of the literacy stations have been implemented and running smoothly. I wasn't expecting any teachers to begin mid-year with centers this way, but Mrs. Jergens

had expressed a lot of concern with her small group block and was desperate for improvement of some kind.

Three/Four Weeks of Implementation/Observation

When I visited Mrs. Jergens' room in January I was shocked at the level of implementation she had. As mentioned before, Mrs. Jergens felt it was most beneficial to stop small group instruction and devote her time to introducing and setting the expectations for each literacy station as if it were August. Mrs. Jergens had a large chart near her desk with the names of two students on a card followed by the first station they would go to and then the second station they would go to. The stations included: Listening, Buddy Reading, Overhead, Computer, Handwriting, ABC/Word Study, Writing, Big Book, Games and Puzzles. Each station, except for the Buddy Reading and the Computer station (the students leave the room to work on computers) had an "I can…" list clearly visible to the students (see Table 4.5).

The students came in from recess at 9:45 a.m. and went straight to the chart listing their names and station assignments. All of the students immediately went to their station and got started. Mrs. Jergens set a timer and monitored the activity at the stations. Two students were at the Writing station, two at Spelling, two at Overhead, two at Games/Puzzles and two at Handwriting. As in December, a large group of students left the classroom for reading interventions and gifted education. Four students also left for computer time in the library. Students were engaged in their literacy station activities and Mrs. Jergens monitored their activity by walking around the classroom. The two students in the handwriting station took their activities to separate desks to practice writing letters

Table 4.5
Mrs. Jergens' "I Can…" Lists

Big Book	Writing
I Can… • Read the book with my partner • Take turns reading the story with my partner • Look at the story and find sight words from our word wall • Make connections and write them on a sticky note. The Big book was placed on a big book easel and students had made connections and added them to the easel. One student had written, "The horse made a friend. I had to make new friends when I came to (this school)."	I Can • Write a friendly letter • Make a birthday card • Write a story • Write in my journal • Make a thank you card • Write about a picture in a magazine • Share my writing with my partner • Make a card • Write a poem Near the writing center were two charts: Places I can write about and People I can write about
Handwriting	Listening
I Can… • Practice writing letters with a pencil • Practice writing letters with a pen • Circle my best letter • Use a vis a vis and complete a handwriting page	I Can… • Turn the page with the beep • Read along with the book • Talk to my partner about the tape when we're finished listening • Retell the story I heard today • Complete a listening log after listening to the story
Overhead	Games and Puzzles
I can… • Read a poem on a transparency • Circle and read sight words in a poem • Make words with magnetic letters • Complete a phonics activity transparency	I Can… • Cooperate with my partner • Take turns • Put a puzzle together • Play the game
Library	ABC/Word Study
I can… • Read a book with my buddy • Read a story backwards • I read a page then you read a page • I read the whole book then you read the whole book • I read a sentence then you read a sentence • I could read a book then talk about it -illustrator, characters, authors, favorite part, like or dislike, setting, problem, solution	I can… • Use magnetic letters and spell sight words • Use magnetic letters and spell spelling words • Spell names of students • Put names in ABC order • Do a word sort • Use wiki sticks to spell sight words or spelling words • Write words in salt A list of the spelling words for the week was attached to the wall near the spelling station.

on a laminated worksheet. After fifteen minutes, the timer went off, and Mrs. Jergens started a song on her computer, "Give Me a Clap" to signify clean up time of the first station.

Once students finished cleaning up in their first station, they went to the chart near the teacher's desk and looked to see what their second station was. Students transitioned quickly to their second station and started on the "I can…" list. All of the students were engaged in their stations, but the volume level was high. Mrs. Jergens expressed her concern about resuming her small group instruction.

Six Weeks of Implementation/Interview

Six weeks after the implementation of literacy stations I visited with Mrs. Jergens. She had added two more stations (Poetry and Drama) and "I can…" lists (see Table 4.6) to the classroom. All of the "I can…" Lists were created by the students during a mini lesson, but Mrs. Jergens steered their suggestions to meet the needs of the students.

Table 4.6
Mrs. Jergens' "I Can…" Lists

Poetry	Drama
I can….	I can…
• Read so it sounds like talking	• Read and retell a book
• Find rhyming words	• Use puppets to retell a story
• Find words I know	• Read a play with a friend
• Read poems with good expression	• Write a play
• Read poems with my partner	
• Copy a poem I really like in my best handwriting	
• Put a poem in my poetry notebook and illustrate it	

Mrs. Jergens had started meeting with her small groups again and was concerned with the attitude of the students that left the stations to meet with her. "Students are mad to leave the station to come work with me." Diller (2006) suggests that instead of placing

a station card behind a student's name, place a "Meet with Me" card. Students do not go to a station first and then get reassigned before the time block is over, they go straight to the small group. Mrs. Jergens mentioned she would need to regroup her partners, but thought that the card would be the best solution.

Mrs. Jergens believed her class was academically benefitting from the implementation of literacy stations, but also felt that the overall classroom management was improving as well. Mrs. Jergens serves on a variety of district committees and said the literacy stations have been wonderful for substitute teachers. Instead of writing out what students can and cannot do, she now writes in her lesson plans, "Read the 'I can…' lists."

Seven/Eight Weeks of Implementation/Observation

Because Mrs. Jergens has 2 thirty minute small group instruction blocks - one in the morning and one in the afternoon, I scheduled to observe from 2:15p.m. – 2:45p.m., but stayed until 2:55 p.m. when small group time was complete. Twenty-four students were in the classroom - 14 boys and 10 girls. Mrs. Jergens dismissed the students row by row to check the chart and find their stations. Four students went to the table for small group instruction with Mrs. Jergens, since their card said "Meet with Me". There were two students in each of the following stations: Poetry, Big Book, Listening, Drama, Game, and Spelling. One student was in the Library and one student took materials from the Handwriting station to work at his desk. Two students left the room for Computers and four students left the classroom for reading interventions with a different teacher.

Mrs. Jergens was immediately interrupted by the two students in the Listening Center. There was a loud disagreement between the two students over holding the book.

Mrs. Jergens assigned the students in the small group to continue reading while she called

one of the students from the Listening Center back to discuss what the problem was.

Mrs. Jergens discussed how to solve the problem with the student and sent her back to

work quietly with the partner. She mentioned to me that she was not sure that she had all

of the right partners working together.

Despite the early interruption to her reading group, there were only three teacher

interruptions in the thirty minute block of time.   One student came to the small group

instruction to ask to use the restroom. Mrs. Jergens reminded her that during small group

time students do not have to ask to use the restroom but instead place their name on the

board. At 2:30 p.m. Mrs. Jergens sent one student back to his desk after he just sat and

picked at his fingers in his station and didn't engage with his partner. Following small

group time, Mrs. Jergens and I discussed that maybe the use of the "Instead Box" would

work well for students sent to their desks, so they were still involved in some type of

activity instead of just sitting.

At 2:35p.m. Mrs. Jergens sent the first reading group back to their desks and

played a song on the computer to signify clean up time for the students working in the

stations. She asked the students to return to their desks before going to their second

station. Once they all returned to their desks, Mrs. Jergens went over the bathroom

policy with the students. She reminded them that, when she is teaching a reading group,

students do not need to ask to use the bathroom or get a drink but instead need to place

their name with the magnet under the girl or boy heading on the markerboard to notify

others of their absence from the classroom. After a short discussion, Mrs. Jergens asked

four students to join her at the reading table and the remaining students dispersed to their

respective second station. Students worked from 2:20 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.; all students were engaged in literacy stations at four separate observation times. Non-engaged behavior during the first half of the time included one student looking around the classroom, one student watching students in another station, and one student just sitting, picking at his fingers. At 2:55 p.m., Mrs. Jergens played "Hi Ho Helper" on the computer, and students quickly cleaned their stations and returned to their desks to load backpacks and get ready for dismissal from school.

Mrs. Jergens was still concerned with the interaction volume level of her students and the partner combinations. She asked for suggestions, and I informed her that the student engagement was significantly higher than before the implementation of the stations. Although the volume level was still fairly high, students were involved in literacy activities. One solution for decreasing the volume may be to have headphones to go with the listening station. Students had the volume high to hear it, and it seemed to cause other students to talk over it.

10 Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

Ten weeks after the initial implementation of literacy stations, Mrs. Jergens had continued with 12 stations and stated, "The students really enjoy all of them. They seem to be the most engaged in overhead, listening, ABC, puzzles and games and computer." Mrs. Jergens felt that "having small groups has allowed ALL of my students to be successful. They were more interested in the stations when they got to pick their own partner. However, they are learning to work with their new partner, and things are back on track!"

Mrs. Jergens continued to struggle with the opening and closing segments of literacy stations. Mrs. Jergens has an opening meeting when something has changed in the station. "For example, I put a new game in the games and puzzles station, so we had a meeting to state the rules of the game and show an example of how to play." Otherwise to open the block, students look at the chart, locate the station where they need to go and get to work. Mrs. Jergens stated that for closure "we are much better with this during our afternoon block. The morning block is very rushed to finish to be to our next destination, so we don't always have time to talk. In the afternoon I include it with the end of the day EEKK (Elbow,Elbow, Knee, Knee) review. Every day before packing up our bags we have EEKK time. I ask them to discuss 3 questions about our day. One question is always about our time in stations. The other questions will focus on the other curriculum we studied for the day." Mrs. Jergens continued to struggle with the question, "Am I taking a huge piece out of it (literacy stations) by not always having the discussion?" Her schedule of 2 - thirty minute blocks of small group instruction instead of one sixty minute block may contribute to her lack of time to end with a quick discussion as well as the constant flow of students in and out of the classroom.

When thinking about next year, Mrs. Jergens stated, "We will introduce 2 (stations) a week and have a great set up by the time we are halfway through the first quarter. I love everything I have tried. I still wish I would have had this 6 years ago when I started teaching! It really isn't that difficult once your stations are set up and the "I can…" lists are made. I struggled during my first 3 years (of teaching), changing my centers every week and spent hours putting them together. My students were NEVER as engaged as they are now. I really am excited to start off with a bang next year!!

Summary

Mrs. Jergens followed Diller's (2003, 2006) literacy station model the closest of the four teachers in the study. She stopped small group reading instruction for six weeks while she implemented the literacy stations. Mrs. Jergens had 12 stations at the end of the implementation period with two students assigned to each one. The reading block schedule was one of the most difficult obstacles for Mrs. Jergens; two 30 minute blocks of time with no paraprofessional made it difficult for her to manage small group instruction while also keeping the students away from the group engaged in quality literacy activities. Reducing the number of students working in each station and clearly defining the expectations at the stations appeared to support Mrs. Jergens' availability to provide higher quality instruction with her designated small groups.

MRS. VANEK

Mrs. Vanek is a first grade teacher at School C. She has 23 students and has taught for two years, each year in a different school district. She incorporates small group instruction everyday of the school week and is very consistent in meeting with groups unless the paraprofessional in her room is absent. Having a paraprofessional for the entire seventy-five minutes of her small group time is a unique feature of Mrs. Vanek's classroom compared to the other classrooms in the study. The paraprofessional has an important role in the classroom, since Mrs. Vanek organizes her room using a Bingo-like card management system. Each student gets a card at the beginning of the week with twenty-five squares on it. The names of centers that the students need to complete independently are each featured several times on the card. After a student

finishes a center or activity, the paraprofessional initials the square. When a blackout is achieved, the student starts over with a new card.

Mrs. Vanek has five to six groups in the classroom with an average of five in a group depending on the skill being worked on. As in the other classrooms, some students get additional help outside of the classroom, but all students meet with the classroom teacher during small group instruction time. Mrs. Vanek believes that small group instruction allows students to read at their own level and participate in the centers to reinforce skills being taught in the classroom, but she is frustrated with the time factor of setting up centers. Additionally, if the paraprofessional is gone, no small group instruction takes place because Mrs. Vanek has to monitor the "Bingo" cards.

Pre-Implementation/Initial Observation

Mrs. Vanek told me prior to my initial visit that she is not interrupted during small group time because students know not to interrupt her and the paraprofessional is available to handle any situations. During my first visit she was only interrupted three times, first by a reading teacher, then twice when the paraprofessional conferenced with her regarding a student that was having a lot of difficulty staying focused and needing to leave the room to be "brushed" – a non-invasive technique often used for students with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

The small group instruction time started with the students sitting at their desks while Mrs. Vanek walked around the room explaining each center for the day. When she explained the Computer Center, the students gathered around the floor to see the screen. All of the students stood and chanted, "Centers on 3. 1..2..3." Students quickly went back to their desks and then started spreading out to centers or working at their desks

while the first reading group meet with Mrs. Vanek. One student went to the Listening

Center, but without headphones it caused several other students to be distracted and

watch the child in the center instead of work on the activity at their desk. The students

continued to watch until the paraprofessional noticed and redirected them to the work on

their desks. The paraprofessional was in charge of the rotation at the computer. When

one student left, she checked to see which child was next on the list and asked if they

wanted to go to one of the two computers in the room.

Throughout the one hour block there were two times when all of the students were

engaged. The listening center seemed to cause the greatest distraction as well as students

just sitting and waiting with their hands up for the paraprofessional to initial the box on

the Bingo card indicating that they had finished the activity. On average, two students

were off-task waiting, visiting or just sitting.

Two Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

Following the implementation of literacy stations, Mrs. Vanek immediately

developed three "I can…" lists for centers already present in the room and added

additional "to do" items in the Buddy Read and Listening centers including " thinking

about things like characters, setting, title, author after reading or listening to the story."

Mrs. Vanek created a new station - a Poetry Station - and felt that the Listening, Buddy

Read, and Spelling stations were the most successful running stations. She reported that

independent learners were doing the best at the centers and the "students that need more

attention or who have the routine of centers interrupted by pull-outs have the hardest

time." Mrs. Vanek had a celebration to share just weeks after implementing literacy

stations. "Mrs. Hatcher (the paraprofessional) was unexpectedly gone one day last week

due to her son's illness. I put the students fully in charge of running centers. There was

no one there to sign their bingo cards. I missed that because I like that the signature

holds the kids accountable. However, I was soooo excited because the kids followed the

"I can…" lists and were able to stay focused and on task, because they knew what was

expected of them. I did my normal guided reading groups for seventy-five minutes with

very few interruptions."

Three/Four Weeks of Implementation/Observation

The basic routine of Mrs. Vanek's small group instruction time remained

consistent from the initial observation to four weeks after the implementation of literacy

stations. When I entered the classroom at 8:30 a.m. the entire class was listening as Mrs.

Vanek gave a brief explanation of each station. She had a student share one thing off of

the "I can…" lists for the three stations that had lists created (see Table 4.7). Once all of

the stations had been discussed, Mrs. Vanek asked her first reading group to join her.

Four students went to the reading group one went to Prediction Place, two to the listening

center, one to Buddy Reading, two to computers, and 12 students worked independently

at their desks.

Table 4.7
Mrs. Vanek's "I Can…" Lists

Fluency Center: I Can…	Buddy Reading: I can…	Listening Center: I can…
• Read the chart with a partner • Read the cards • Write the words that are on the cards • Say the words in a sentence	• Read a story to a stuffed animal • Write the title • Write or draw the characters • Write or draw the setting	• Listen to the story • Tell my friend my favorite part of the story • Write the title • I can write what happened first, middle, last

Throughout the block of time students transitioned to different stations and in and out of the classroom. At one point in the morning only seven students were left in the classroom. Mrs. Vanek switched reading groups at fifteen minute intervals.

Mrs. Vanek had added a new center – Poetry - but there was not an "I can…" list to go with it. From my observation, students went to the Poetry station, quickly read the poem and went back to their desk, raised their hand and got the poetry square initialed from the paraprofessional. The majority of the students that went to the Poetry station were there for no more than one to two minutes. The other three teachers in the study have designated times that the students spend in each station; Mrs. Vanek's students have the ability to move freely from one station to another. This prompted the question of the organization of Mrs. Vanek's small group time. For many students, the Bingo-like card incorrectly encouraged students to hurry and get things done in the station with the goal only to have the square marked off instead of promoting engagement in the station. Additionally, the requirement of having the paraprofessional sign off with initials after students complete a station often caused students to sit and wait until she was available. At 8:37 a.m., three students were sitting at their desks with their hands up waiting for the paraprofessional to check off their square on their Bingo card. At 8:46 a.m., three more students sat with their hands up until 8:48 a.m. waiting. Throughout the entire block there was at least one student with a hand up waiting except for one point when all students were engaged.

Mrs. Vanek's small group time was interrupted only once, when the reading teacher came in and briefly spoke with her before taking several children to work outside

of the classroom. Mrs. Hatcher, the paraprofessional, dealt with any behavior problems or questions during the reading block.

When the block ended, Mrs. Vanek had the students quickly line up for recess. There was not any closure to the block time. When I asked Mrs. Vanek about closure she said that she has not been doing any since they move right to recess but knew that closure was a key part of the literacy stations. I suggested that students could turn to their neighbor in the line and share something they did in stations. Mrs. Vanek thought this would help to create closure to the block and allow students to discuss any successes or concerns with literacy stations.

Six Weeks of Implementation/Interview

When I visited with Mrs. Vanek six weeks into the implementation of literacy stations we discussed adding "I can…" lists to more stations and managing the rotation between stations. Mrs. Vanek said she planned to add lists to her math and spelling stations. In spelling, she was going to try to keep the "I can…" list somewhat generic so the list didn't change from week to week.

Mrs. Vanek felt that the "I can…" lists were a lot more effective for her kids. "I mean, with the "I can…" list, they know what to do. I feel like I can really focus on my reading groups instead of wondering what's going on out there, you know." Mrs. Vanek added that, "Isn't that nice 'cause then they're not like, 'What do I do?' I don't hear that in my room. And they have a lot going on. I don't hear them say, "What do I do?"

We also discussed the Bingo card and the number of non-engaged students waiting for the paraprofessional. Mrs. Vanek asked if I had any suggestions about the management of the block. My main question was "How can we eliminate students

waiting at their desks with their hands up waiting for the paraprofessional?" We both

agreed that the Bingo card helps manage the students leaving and returning to the

classroom throughout the morning. When students reenter the classroom, they can look

at their Bingo card and decide which station they want to work at. However, the Bingo

cards also prompt many students to rush through the stations to get all of the boxes

marked off, requiring the paraprofessional to sign them. We discussed if the students

could be held accountable to check their own cards while the paraprofessional still

supervises. Mrs. Vanek and I also discussed some type of a checklist either in the station

or for each student if they no longer used the Bingo card. From my observation, the least

"used" stations were the writing station and the spelling station. If students were allowed

to move freely without the Bingo card how would students still be held accountable to

spend time in all of the stations?

Seven/Eight Weeks of Implementation/Observation

Mrs. Vanek started the small group block by introducing the stations. One new "I

can… list" had been added in the Fluency station (see Table 4.8). Of the nine stations in

the classroom, four of them had "I can…" lists. Before starting the small group work,

Table 4.8
Mrs. Vanek's "I Can…" List

Fluency I Can… • Read the chart with a pointer • Read the cards • Write the words that are on the cards • Say the words in sentences

Mrs. Vanek told me that she had eliminated the Bingo cards and that students

independently move to stations on their own with the paraprofessional no longer signing

off the cards. Mrs. Vanek reported that the students showed less stress with getting the

cards filled out and spent more time at each station. She debated if the students could do

the stations on their own if the paraprofessional was gone, and if she should use the

Bingo cards again with the students signing off on the card by themselves. If a worksheet

was involved at a station, the paraprofessional still checked it before students moved to

another station.

At 8:45 a.m., six students worked with Mrs. Vanek in a small group, two students

worked in the Fluency station, two in Listening, nine students worked at their desks and

five students left the classroom for ELL.   One student who was just sitting at his desk

prompted Mrs. Hatcher to say, "Pick a station or what's the rule?" The student

responded, "You pick one." "Yes, I get to pick and you might not like it," responded Mrs.

Hatcher.

At 9:00 a.m., five new students transitioned to the small group to work with Mrs.

Vanek. Two students worked in Buddy Reading, two in Listening, three students worked

at their desk and two students worked at the Computers. Students did not seem to go to

the Word Work station or the Spelling station. These two stations do not have "I can…"

lists. With the students no longer required to fill out the Bingo card, the question of

accountability to go to all of the stations surfaced.

During the block, students were fully engaged five times. At 9:00 a.m. two

students had their hands up waiting for the paraprofessional to check their worksheet, but

that was the only time that students were waiting. Other off-task behavior included:

roaming the classroom, laying head down on the table, watching a student in another

station and looking around the classroom. As in prior observations, Mrs. Vanek was not interrupted by students.

Ten Weeks of Implementation/Mini Interview

Ten weeks after implementation, Mrs. Vanek had nine stations in her classroom. She responded that the Listening Center, Computers, and Spelling Stations worked the best of the nine. "I added a poetry folder to my poetry station instead of just having a poem posted on the wall. They love to go through the folder and check for the new poems, which I keep pretty simple so the kids are reading for fluency. I have added "I can…" lists to the Spelling and Math centers. The Spelling center "I can… "list just says *I can do the new spelling activity*, *I can write the spelling words on a markerboard*. The Math centers says *I can do the new math activity*, *then I can do flash cards or math wrap ups*. I added bookmarks to the Buddy Read center. At the beginning of the semester, I was having kids write the title, author, and characters. Now they fill out the book information on bookmarks that I have run on colored paper. When they get done with the info, they can decorate and keep their bookmark."

Mrs. Vanek continued to quickly review each center every morning. "If there is a new one, I make sure to give all the directions for it. My kids are into the routine of listening to what centers are that this only takes about five minutes to do. Then throughout the center time, Mrs. Hatcher just reminds them by saying, 'Did you do the I can list?' When we do have closure, I keep it brief. Sometimes I just say, 'Tell me one thing that was great during centers today. Tell me one problem you had and how you fixed it."

Mrs. Vanek's main concern is the amount of time students have working in centers. "With our reading blitz going on at the same time as centers, sometimes kids feel frustrated with their lack of center time. I think this is a good thing though! Kids obviously benefit from the one-on-one help of blitz, and it's a great thing that kids enjoy centers so much that they want more time doing it!" Reading blitz refers to an additional pull out intervention for students reading below grade level.

Mrs. Vanek is excited about starting the new school year with literacy stations, although she will be teaching kindergarten. "…in the back of my head, I'm already thinking how literacy centers would look in kindergarten. Would the centers be run the same, but with more basic center activities?" She continues to question the best format for organizing the transition to centers; free flowing or timed movement from station to station.

Summary

Mrs. Vanek was the only first grade teacher in the study that had a 75 minute reading block with a paraprofessional in the classroom the entire time. From the beginning of the study, Mrs. Vanek said that she was rarely interrupted from her small group instruction and that proved true on all observations. However, the question of engagement in high quality literacy activities for the students away from the small group surfaced. Mrs. Vanek sought out ways to increase student accountability and independence while continuing to provide meaningful activities that supported the literacy instruction taking place in the classroom.

TEACHER SUMMARY

Table 4.9 summarizes several of the key features of the four first grade teachers in the study and compares their paraprofessional time, small group instruction time, and number of literacy stations pre- and post-implementation.

Table 4.9
Teacher Summary

Teacher	School	Para. Time	Block Time	# of Stations Pre	# of Stations Post
Mrs. Bailey	A	15min.	60 min.	7	11
Mrs. Soper	A	15 min.	60 min.	6	10
Mrs. Jergens	B	0 min.	2x30 min.	5	12
Mrs. Vanek	C	75 min.	75 min.	6	8

The difference in paraprofessional support is significant as well as the scheduling formats that teachers use to organize their small group instruction. Mrs. Vanek has a paraprofessional the entire 75 minutes of small group instruction. Her only interruptions pre- and post- implementation of literacy stations were by adults. The paraprofessional in her classroom is charge of monitoring all of the students not participating in small group instruction. In comparison, Mrs. Jergens does not have a paraprofessional at all in her classroom and her small group instruction is split into 2 – thirty minute blocks of time due to scheduling conflicts with PE, Music, reading interventions and Art. Mrs. Jergens implemented literacy stations in close comparison to Diller's (2006) video and increased the number of stations in her classroom from five to twelve.

Table 4.10 charts the implementation of literacy work station components by observation points. All four teachers increased the number of stations in their classrooms from pre-implementation until the final observation, increased the number of "I can…"

lists to accompany the stations, and decreased the number of students per station. The

number of interruptions to the small group instruction decreased over the implementation

period for Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Soper, and Mrs. Jergens. Mrs. Vanek never was interrupted

by students during her small group instruction block.

Table 4.10

Teacher Summary by Observation

	Pre Implementation	3-4 Weeks	7-8 Weeks
# of Stations			
Mrs. Bailey	7	9	10
Mrs. Soper	6	6	9
Mrs. Jergens	5	9	12
Mrs. Vanek	6	7	9
# of "I can…" Lists			
Mrs. Bailey	0	4	7
Mrs. Soper	0	2	9
Mrs. Jergens	0	7	10
Mrs. Vanek	0	3	4
# of students/station			
Mrs. Bailey	3-4	2-3	2-3
Mrs. Soper	4	4	2
Mrs. Jergens	4	2	2
Mrs. Vanek	1-2	1-2	1-2
# of Interruptions			
Mrs. Bailey	13/60 min.	12/60 min.	3/60 min.
Mrs. Soper	28/60 min.	11/60 min.	4/60 min.
Mrs. Jergens	17/30 min.	no small group	3/30 min.
Mrs. Vanek	3/75 min.	1/75 min.	0/75 min.

**RESULTS OF THE EARLY LANGUAGE & LITERACY
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION (ELLCO)AND
THE CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS)**

All four teachers were assigned a score using the ELLCO and CLASS that rated their pre and post implementation of the literacy stations. The ELLCO uses a 5 point scoring guide: 1 – Deficient, 2 – Inadequate, 3 – Basic, 4 – Strong, and 5 – Exemplary (see Table 3. 4 in the methodology chapter for a detailed scoring guide). Three teachers in the study earned scores in the strong category on the ELLCO on the first observation prior to the professional development, demonstrating sufficient evidence that (a) language and literacy development was meaningfully integrated into content-area learning, (b) the physical environment was well organized for learning, (c) materials were well organized, appealing, accessible, and coordinated with ongoing learning goals, and (d) classroom management strategies existed and are enforced in ways that respect children's input and encourage their purposeful engagement in learning. One teacher, Mrs. Jergens scored in the Basic range demonstrating some evidence of the same characteristics. Following the professional development on literacy stations, all teachers scored in the strong to compelling category. Significant growth in Classroom Management was demonstrated following the professional development and implementation.

On the CLASS, teachers are observed and given a score of Low (1, 2), Middle (3, 4, 5), or High (6, 7) (see Table 3.1 in the methodology chapter for a detailed scoring guide). Three teachers scored at the top of the middle category while one teacher, Mrs. Vanek, scored high in: (a) Productivity (maximizing learning time, routines, transitions, and preparation), (b) Behavior Management (clear behavior expectations, proactive,

redirection of misbehavior, and student behavior), and (c) Regard for Student

Perspectives (flexibility and student focus, support for autonomy and leadership, student

expression, and restriction of movement). Following the professional development and

implementation, all teachers earned scores in the high range with their addition of (a)

clear, behavior expectations, (b) reduction of misbehavior, (c) choice of activities with

few disruptions, and (d) quick and efficient transitions.

The pre-implementation and post-implementation scores of all four teachers, on

the ELLCO and CLASS, may be found in the Appendices.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This case study examined the instructional practices of four first grade teachers as they implemented literacy stations during the small group instruction time in their classrooms. The purpose of this study was to explore the feelings, beliefs and impressions of the teachers after implementing literacy stations as a form of management during the small group instruction block.

The central question guiding this study:

- Following professional development in literacy work stations, how does the implementation process change a teacher's small group instruction block? If at all?

Two subquestions were investigated in this study:

- What relationship do teachers believe exists between literacy work stations as a management system and the small group literacy instruction block of time?

- Do teachers perceive the productivity of small group instruction time as different after the implementation of literacy work stations when compared to previous years' small group practices? If so, what differences are perceived?

Overall, the findings indicated that teachers believed that their small group instruction block did improve after incorporating Diller's (2003, 2006) Literacy Work Stations model. In addition, they experienced fewer distractions and interruptions while working with small groups. The findings also indicated that the level of on-task activity for

students working away from the small group instruction increased. Three themes emerged from the research: the "I can…" list, schedule issues, and group numbers. This chapter discusses each theme and its relationship to the purpose of the study and the research questions.

Themes

The "I Can…" List. The findings of this study indicated all four teachers overwhelmingly supported the "I can…" list as the most influential piece of Diller's (2003, 2006) literacy work stations and noticed an increase in engagement and student motivation due to the choices the students were able to make. Teachers believed that small group instruction improved because students outside of the small groups were more engaged and therefore interrupted the small group instruction less. Student involvement in the creation of the list and the subsequent participation in their chosen activities are the primary reasons for increased motivation to engage in literacy work stations.

The four teachers in the study all had some type of centers in their classroom prior to the professional development in literacy stations. Baseline data showed that, despite the presence of the centers, students still struggled with engagement and problem solving. Teachers were often interrupted from the small group instruction to redirect students or assist them in a problem. The inclusion of the "I can…" lists made notable differences in their classrooms.

These differences can be explained by reviewing findings in achievement motivation. Following the initial professional development, all four teachers created classroom contexts that allowed students to have control over their own learning by providing them with choices, which in turn can foster intrinsic motivation (Wigfield,

2000). Teachers who are overly controlling and do not provide students with opportunities to be autonomous and self-regulated over their own learning can undermine their students' intrinsic motivation and engagement (Ryan & Stiller, 1991). As students learn to value learning, they become intrinsically motivated and self-directed (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Stiller, 1991). When using the "I Can …" List students are self-directed learners; they choose to be involved in learning. Building choice into the reading curriculum is a good way to facilitate children's intrinsic motivation in reading and sense of ownership over their reading (Wigfield, 2000).

Turner (1995, 1997) determined that classroom contexts during literacy activities, including closed and open activities, influence the motivation of young students. Open literacy activities are ones that allow students choice, require strategy use, and facilitate student involvement. Students are interested in these types of activities, because they choose which ones to participate in. Closed activities are more constrained, both in terms of students' choices about whether and how to engage in them and the cognitive demands required to complete the task. Turner (1995) found that in classrooms where more tasks were open, students were more engaged in literacy activities, used more elaborative strategies, and were much more interested in literacy activities compared to the students in classrooms where closed tasks were used more frequently. Similar findings were evident in the present study's classrooms that continued to use some closed activities. Two teachers required seatwork to be completed before students could transition to centers. Student engagement was higher for students involved in the centers with open activities, compared to the level of engagement when seatwork and closed activities were required.

Although seatwork was required of all students in two of the classrooms, most students were able to participate in some center time. However, struggling students required more time to finish the seatwork and were often pulled out of the classroom for reading interventions as well, leaving limited time for them to participate in centers. Brophy (1998) found that high achievers are often provided more opportunities for choice and self-direction within classrooms, whereas lower achievers are often micromanaged by their teachers. Research supports the use of choice for *all* students as a way to increase their motivation to learn (Brophy, 1998).

Teachers perceived an increase in productivity during small group instruction over previous years' due to the implementation of the "I Can…" list component of the literacy work stations model. The "I Can…" lists allowed students to make decisions, work independently, increase engagement, and allowed the teacher to teach in the small group without interruptions.

Schedule Issues. Teachers in the study were impressed that schedule issues impacted the effectiveness of the small group instruction block and the implementation of literacy stations. Teachers believed that the quality of the small group instruction block could be improved with longer periods of uninterrupted instruction, a decrease in the flow of students in and out of the class, and the inclusion of a paraprofessional in the classroom. These factors played a critical role in the implementation of literacy work stations as a management system.

The four teachers viewed Diller's (2006) video, which demonstrated two systems of small group instruction. In her example of the first grade room, students spent 30 minutes in two different stations; in the second grade classroom students spent the entire

one hour block in one station.   After viewing the video and reading the book, but prior to implementing the stations, I met with the teachers. The literacy stations framework that Diller demonstrated was an immediate area of concern. Mrs. Soper was skeptical that her students could spend 30 minutes in one station productively. I encouraged the teachers to use the video as a reference only and adapt the system to fit their individual needs. The videos demonstrated self-contained classrooms with all students present for the entire block of time. The four teachers in the study did not have extended blocks for reading instruction that were consistent across teachers. Additionally, they had students leaving and re-entering the classroom for reading interventions. Because Diller's (2003, 2006) system did not acknowledge children leaving the classroom, the teachers had some initial doubts about how to accommodate the schedule.

Long blocks of uninterrupted learning time are generally required for students to engage in meaningful learning (Byrnes, 2000). For example, Shanahan (2004) recommends that a minimum of 120 minutes of the available daily instructional time in the elementary classroom be allocated to the literacy block with the goal of that time being a single uninterrupted block. Shanahan suggests dedicating 60 minutes of the 120 minute block to small group, differentiated, reading instruction. These recommended blocks were not the reality for the teachers in the study. The schedules ranged from two 30-minutes blocks in one classroom to an uninterrupted 75 minutes block with the teacher and an additional paraprofessional in another.

All four classrooms had approximately 25 students in a room, but at times the number of students present in the room was in the single digits. Knapp and associates (1995) discovered in their study of classrooms in high-poverty communities that

"programmatic connections between pullout services and regular classroom instruction were often weak or nonexistent" (p. 164). Not even the most highly skilled and dedicated classroom teachers can make a difference when special programs constantly pull students out of the room, making coherent classroom instruction impossible to achieve. Because "pull-out" students still spend 90% of their time in regular classrooms, supplementary programs cannot substitute or compensate for classroom reading instruction (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Schools may need to investigate the supplemental programs and the amount of time students spend in and out of the classroom more seriously, otherwise teachers will continue to have a situation "in which students who are in most need of instruction support may actually receive less of it…because classroom teachers…may not actually know how to provide this support, even if they wanted to" (Wamsley & Allington, 1995, p. 25).   Perhaps inviting the reading specialist to come into the classroom and work with students instead of pulling them out of the room will allow for more continuity of reading instruction. Regardless, it is important to ensure that, as much as possible, the reading instruction outside of the classroom is philosophically in line with the literacy practice within the regular classroom and that the classroom teacher is part of a collaborative, coordinated instructional effort (Vogt & Shearer, 2011).

Despite the scheduling issues that teachers had, they perceived an increase in the productivity during small group instruction over previous years' due to the implementation of literacy stations. By the end of the implementation period, the three teachers that used the chart system were able to manage students that left the classroom and later re-enter, without stopping their small group instruction to direct the students to the appropriate station.

Group Numbers. Deciding the appropriate number of students working together in a literacy station was a particular interest of the teachers in the study and emerged as a theme from the beginning of the study. Prior to the study, one teacher in the study, Mrs. Vanek, did not have students work in groups at the centers but rather, the students in her classroom transitioned independently to the stations. Occasionally, two students in Mrs. Vanek's classroom would be in a center at the same time. The remaining three teachers in the study, Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Soper, and Mrs. Jergens, designed their small group instruction blocks to have students working in centers while small groups of homogenous students worked with the teacher on specific reading skills and strategies. Three to four students were assigned to each center. Four students "working" in each center often caused a considerable level of noise.

Diller (2003, 2006) suggested that no more than two students work together in a station and that the two students be comparable in ability. Working independently is also an option and may be less distracting for many students. In the initial meeting following the professional development, reducing the number of students in a center was a major concern for Mrs. Soper. Not only did she not have enough stations to break her classroom down to just two students – she did not believe that students at the same ability level should work together. Mrs. Soper relied on the higher ability students to help the lower ability students succeed at the stations. Four weeks following implementation of the literacy stations, Mrs. Soper still had her original six stations in her classroom, but just two weeks later, after reviewing the Diller (2003, 2006) text and DVD as well as observing Mrs. Bailey's success in reducing group numbers, Mrs. Soper added several additional stations to change the number of students per station to two or three. Mrs.

Soper also moved away from matching high students with low students to more of a "team" approach with an emphasis on problem solving. Shell, Brooks, Trainin, et al.,(2010) suggest that teachers "consider the range of abilities within each group to avoid making the spread too wide. Some variability is good, but too much of a range can often lead to inequities, with the high performing students doing much of the actual thinking while the low performing students are assigned to the artwork" (p. 166).

Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Soper, and Mrs. Jergens all allowed students their choice of partners every few weeks on a given day, and reported that the students really enjoyed the opportunity. The students knew if they did not work well together, they would not be able to continue as partners. Providing choice in the classroom is a central feature in supporting a child's autonomy. It creates willingness and encourages students to fully endorse what they are doing (Deci, 1995).

While there is some debate over cooperative learning and the make-up of groups; providing students the opportunity through the school week to work in both homogeneous and heterogeneous ability groups should be considered by the teacher. It should also be noted that working in literacy work stations during small group instruction is not the same as a traditional center time in many kindergarten and first grade classrooms. Cunningham and Allington (2003) describe "Assigned Centers" as a time when students rotate in 15-minute blocks through four centers. The children are assigned to groups, each of which contains "the whole range of children –from those most experienced with print to those least experienced, and from the most agreeable to the most difficult" (216). As the children work, the teacher circulates with a clipboard, making observations, taking notes, and giving help as needed. Literacy work stations

take place when the teacher is involved in providing small group instruction and is not able to closely monitor and observe the students working independently or with a partner.

The number of students working together in literacy work stations, as well as their ability level, impacted the quality of the small group instruction block. The participants in this study believed that the productivity of the small group instruction block of time increased due to smaller numbers of students working together and that engagement increased for students when similar ability levels worked together.

Additional Theme

Professional Development -Teachers Seeking Feedback. An additional theme emerged from this study on literacy work stations that should be discussed. Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Soper, Mrs. Jergens, and Mrs. Vanek all volunteered to participate in the professional development because they felt that managing small group instruction was a weakness in their classroom. After the initial professional development, teachers continued to seek my feedback during observation times and through email. The professional development did not end after viewing the videos and reading the book. All four teachers wanted confirmation on what was going well, what could be improved on, and asked questions about concerns they still had. Whether they viewed me as a peer or an expert in the field, teachers wanted coaching feedback on the implementation process.

In a 2009 study conducted by Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney teachers and leadership team members reported that opportunities to observe models of instructional strategies, practice new techniques, and receive feedback were important features of effective professional development. Teachers noted that they appreciate when they can observe a demonstration of a lesson, a new technique, or instructional strategy, and then

have the opportunity to "try it on" in their own classroom. As part of this cycle, teachers indicated the importance of immediate feedback on what they are attempting or time to reflect and debrief with their grade level colleagues on what they have learned. Opportunities for teachers to practice new skills before being evaluated on them were also cited as important by leadership team members. Teachers indicated that opportunities for modeling, practice, and feedback did not occur as often as they would have liked.

"Coaching" from a more highly trained professional may help provide the teachers with the modeling, practice, and feedback they desire. The primary focus of a coach, in this case a reading or literacy coach, is to "support teachers in professional development, helping them reflect on their own knowledge and implementation of evidence-based instruction practice in order to improve student learning" (Vogt & Shearer, 2011, 36). Literacy coaching is becoming more prevalent in school districts and a variety of coaching models can be used, but according to The International Reading Association's 2004 position statement on reading coaches there are several key points that most educators agree on: a)The coach does not serve in an evaluative role; rather, the coach is there to support the work of the teacher in a collaborative manner; b) The role of the literacy coach is to provide the job-embedded professional development that will enhance literacy instruction in the school and ultimately improve student achievement. The belief is that the presence of a coach will enable teachers to apply more successfully "best" practices in their classroom; c) coaches must have the interpersonal and communication skills that enable them to work effectively with other

adults. They must have an understanding of adult learning and its relevance to their work.

Literacy coaches are instrumental in providing the professional development needed by teachers to continue to expand their repertoire of teaching strategies, gain new knowledge about the reading process, and examine their beliefs about at-risk readers. The professional development must be carefully designed and must continue on a long-term basis (Borko & Putnam, 1995; Hodges, 1996; Richardson, 1998). The National Research Council reminds teachers and administrators that it is an unreal expectation that everything that must be learned about teaching reading can be learned in formal preservice teaching education. Opportunities for professional development must be provided throughout the career continuum so that teachers are able to sustain "a deep and principled understanding of the reading process and its implications for instruction" (Snow et al., 1998, p. 258).

Joyce & Showers (2002) indicate that, in addition to teachers becoming more knowledgeable about a specific educational endeavor and understanding the rationale or theory for it, the following types of support strengthen teacher learning and the potential for transfer of what is learned during the professional development into classroom practice. These components include: a) Demonstration -teachers get to see the strategies, appropriately implemented ether by watching videotapes or actual teaching in classrooms; b) Practice – Teachers practice what they are learning, with their peers or with small groups of students. These opportunities enable teachers to experience what it means to use specific strategies or approaches and become aware of problems that may arise. The practice events should be accompanied with feedback that enables teachers to

get answers to their questions about actual implementation and assistance in how to implement a specific skill or strategy; and c) Coaching – Teachers receive in-classroom support from their peers that enables them to solve problems or answer questions that arise when they are teaching in their own classrooms.   In this study on literacy work stations, teachers viewed videotapes of actual classrooms going through the implementation process. As the teachers went through the practice stages, they sought out feedback and the support they received from me as well as their peers in the study seemed to make the professional development stronger.

Joyce and Showers (2002) estimate that, when a combination of components (demonstration, practice, and coaching) is employed, especially peer coaching, there is likely to be a real and strong transfer of the professional development to classroom practice by 95% of the participants.   Literacy coaches need to spend time with teachers engaged in activities such as observing, modeling, conferencing, co-teaching, and leading book study groups (Casey, 2006; Froelich & Puig, 2010). However, research synthesized by L'Allier, Elish-Piper, and Bean (2010) revealed that the focus of coaching is often lost to organizing book rooms, administering assessments, and participating in district-level meetings (Bean, et al., 2007; Bean & Zigmond, 2007; Knight, 2006). In a study of 190 coaches working in school districts funded by Reading First grants (Deussen et al., 2007) coaches spent, on average, only 28% of their time working with teachers. Additional studies (L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2006; Bean et al., 2008) have determined that classrooms supported by a literacy coach who engaged in the most interactions with teachers had the highest average student reading gains compared to the lowest average student gains in classrooms with literacy coaches that spent the lowest percentage of time with teachers.

L'Allier et al., (2010) have determined that literacy coaches must spend at least half of their time working directly with teachers in order to produce positive growth in teacher practice and student learning. This study, on literacy work stations, confirms that many teachers want professional development but desire feedback and support in order to fully implement the instructional practices.

Limitations to the Study

There were limitations associated with this study. The first limitation study is that the four teachers volunteered to be part of the study. All first grade teachers in the school district, approximately 25, were invited to participate in the professional development and the follow-up study but only four committed. By volunteering, these four teachers demonstrated their willingness to learn through professional development and implement literacy stations in their classrooms to improve learning and on-task behavior in their small group instruction block. The levels of implementation and sustainment may vary if teachers were required to be part of a school-wide teacher development process and mandated to implement literacy stations.

Participant gender and cultural characteristics may also be viewed as limitations, since all four teachers were Caucasian females. Conversely, the representation documents different socioeconomically identified schools, levels of teacher education, and levels of teacher experiences, enabling a better understanding of the implementation of literacy stations.

A third limitation is that I was the primary researcher of the study, but also developed as a consultant during the implementation phase. The teachers may not have implemented the literacy stations to the level that they did without the additional

coaching. When they asked me for feedback, I felt responsible to provide them with suggestions, praises, and concerns. Hatch (2002) reminds qualitative researchers working in educational settings to show participants respect, consideration, and concern. When I set out to do this study, I envisioned a professional development program followed by the implementation of literacy stations. I believed my role would be the observer and interviewer, but teachers had questions and concerns and wanted feedback, acknowledgement, and suggestions. I gave ideas to teachers when they asked and provided suggestions when improvement was needed. According to Stake (1995) the researcher, "deliberately or intuitively"(p. 103) makes role choices and one of the choices is whether to be a neutral observer or an evaluative, critical analyst. The researcher must also decide how much to participate personally in the activity of the case. "But perhaps the most important choice is how much will the researcher be herself? Much of the time, the researcher will have no apparent choice, the circumstances require it, or the researcher does not know how to act otherwise" (p. 103). In this study, it was my choice to provide the feedback that the teachers requested. Stake (1995) proposes that the role the researcher retains should be an ethical choice and honest choice. This increased interaction with the teachers may have biased the data, because the teachers' instructional practices continued to change; they wanted to improve their literacy stations based on my feedback. If teachers were not given feedback, the overall growth in improvement and sustainment of literacy stations may have been less than noted.

Suggestions for Future Research

Even with these limitations, the research on the implementation of literacy stations to manage small group instruction is useful. With an increased emphasis on

differentiated instruction and teaching small groups of students specific skills and strategies, an effective classroom management element is crucial. Students away from the teacher's direct instruction need to be engaged in high quality, meaningful, activities that keep them on-task. The following ideas for future research could expand the current study.

First, research needs to be conducted in other grade levels besides first grade to see if literacy stations are a beneficial management tool. Diller (2003, 2006) recommends the implementation of literacy stations for Pre-Kindergarten through the middle grades. While this study focused on four first grade teachers, teachers in all grade levels may find an increase in the literacy engagement of their students through the creation of "I Can…" lists in their classrooms.

Second, longitudinal, mixed methods and/or quantitative studies in the implementation and sustainment of literacy stations need to be conducted. Do the teachers continue with literacy stations throughout the year? Do the students continue to be engaged in the activities? What happens when teachers introduce literacy stations at the start of the school year? Do students show more academic growth throughout the school year due to activities in the literacy stations and small group work with fewer interruptions? These questions may be answered with additional studies. A quantitative study comparing the reading achievement scores of students in classrooms using literacy work stations compared to a control group of classrooms without literacy stations is needed to provide additional data to support the inclusion of an "I Can…" List, a non-interrupted schedule for the literacy block, and smaller numbers of students working together in a group. Despite the evidence of students demonstrating more engagement in

literacy work stations compared to seatwork, a follow-up study on the two teachers, Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Soper, that continued to require seatwork before students could transition to literacy stations may reveal why they did not change their seatwork policy.

Final Reflections

Effective reading instruction in the primary grades requires teachers to work with individuals and small groups of students to meet all of the different needs and ability levels. There has been a significant amount of research focused on small group instruction and its inclusion in the reading block. However, there is limited research on how to manage this block of time. Teachers work with four to five students at a time leaving 20 students to work independently.

As this research study suggests, providing students with literacy stations that include an "I can…" list, smaller group sizes, and choice, will increase student engagement and decrease the number of interruptions teachers have during their small group instruction. The teachers in this study demonstrated the desire for professional development and feedback during the implementation. The teacher is the difference-maker, so continued opportunities to not only learn about effective instructional strategies, but also improve classroom management techniques that facilitate student learning is imperative for sustained student growth.

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Appendix A

Student Engagement

Every 3 minutes look around the classroom for students that are "engaged" and "nonengaged". "Nonengaged" refers to students staring out the window, engaging in idle chatter, or fiddling with items in their desk. Put a tally mark for each student noting engagement status in literacy activities.

Minutes	Time	Number of Students Not Engaged	Non engaged behavior
0			
3			
6			
9			
12			
15			
18			
21			
24			
27			
30			
33			
36			
39			
42			
45			
48			
51			
54			
57			
60			

Appendix B

Teacher Notes during Small Group Instruction

Please fill out the section/s that provide you with the most information about the management during small group instruction.

Date:

Number of Interruptions during small group instruction: (Tally Marks)

Comments about the small group instruction time today:

Appendix C

Small Group Instruction – 1st Interview

Grade Level Currently Teaching   First Grade

Years Teaching This Grade Level   _____

Total Teaching Years   _____

Do you incorporate small group instruction in your daily schedule (this includes guided reading, RTI, skill groups, etc)?

On average, how many days do you implement small group instruction?

How long (minutes) is your small group instruction block of time?

How many groups (small groups, reading groups, etc) do you have in your classroom this school year?

On average, how many students are in each group?

Is your small group instruction self contained or do some students go to a different classroom for instruction?

Do you have any helpers/paras in the classroom during small group time?
 If yes, please explain.

Please describe what type of instruction takes place in small groups. (guided reading, skill focus, combination, etc.)

Please describe what the other students are involved in while you are conducting small group instruction?

How do you currently organize your small group instruction time?

What benefits do you see in your classroom from small group instruction?

What frustrations do you have in implementing small group instruction?

What impact does management have on the small group instruction time?

Does your district require small group instruction?

Does your principal require small group instruction?

Have you participated in any professional development on small group instruction or management of the small group instruction block?
If yes, please describe.

Appendix D

2nd Interview and 3rd Interview
Semi Structured Interview Questions

1.   What literacy stations have you implemented?

2. What do you like about literacy stations?

3. What concerns you about literacy stations?

4. How do you perceive the small group instruction time after a month/2 months of
    implementation of literacy stations in your classroom?

5. What do you want to change about your small group instruction time?

6. What has been the biggest challenge in implementing literacy stations?

7. What has been the biggest reward in implementing literacy stations?

Appendix E

College of Education and Human Sciences
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education

University **1** OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

_____

November, 2009

Dear First Grade Teachers,

You are being invited to take part in a study examining the implementation of literacy stations during small group instruction. This study is part of an effort to understand what teachers believe about the quality of the small group instructional block using literacy stations as a management component and the relationship between literacy stations and the level of on-task activity levels of the students away from the small group instruction.

This study will begin in December, 2009 and end in February, 2010. Your assistant superintendent has agreed to forward this letter to you with the details of the study. If you choose to participate you will receive professional development in literacy stations based on the work of Debbie Diller that includes a 2 ½ hour video series and a book. Prior to the professional development an initial interview and observation will take place. The interview will allow me to better understand the feelings and experiences you currently have during small group instruction and the observation will inform me of the practices that take place in your classroom during the small group instruction time. Following the professional development two more interviews and observations will occur; one in January and one in February. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will include questions regarding your experiences during the implementation period and your beliefs in the management system. The observations in your classroom will reveal any changes that have taken place after the professional development. I will also provide a notebook for you take brief notes regarding information you find pertinent during small group instruction. The notes may include tally marks recording the number of interruptions, areas of concern in the literacy stations or teacher comments about the small group instructional time.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. You are free to not participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I anticipate that your participation in the study will have a beneficial effect on your teaching as well as other teachers that may be looking for a literacy based management system to implement

during small group instruction. With effective implementation, teachers may see an increase of student engagement away from the small group instruction and less interruptions for the teacher during the small group session. The information gained from this study will also contribute to the literature on effective teachers of literacy.

All information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Interviews will be analyzed for possible themes rather than any individual's response. Any quotes used to represent a theme will be made through the use of pseudonyms to protect your privacy. Results may be reported in professional journals or at professional conferences. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet at my office at the University of Nebraska, Kearney for five years. Only a research consultant, a transcriptionist, and I will have access to the data collected during the study. The transcriptions of interviews and field notes will contain no identifying information.

You may ask any questions concerning this research before agreeing to participate in the study or you may call me at any time during the study. My office phone is (308)865-8181. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not answered by me or to report any concerns about t his study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate and that you have read and understood the information presented.

Thanks for your help with this study. Your time is greatly appreciated.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____
Participant signature

Carrie L. Kracl
Office phone: 308/865-8181
Email address: kraclcl@unk.edu

Appendix F

RESEARCH TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

All transcriptionists assisting researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are obligated to keep all discussions, and information learned during the course of the research, confidential. Accordingly, each individual is held accountable for the appropriate use of information.

Project Title:

Managing Small Group Instruction Through the
Implementation of Literacy Stations

Principal Investigator: Carrie L. Kracl

Confidentiality Agreement

1.   I will protect the confidentiality of all information, including responses by participants, provided by the principal and/or secondary investigators related to the above entitled research.

2.   I will protect the identity of those individuals contributing to the discussion of research and/or controversial issues during the course of any meetings with individuals other than the principal or secondary investigators for the above entitled research.

3. I will share confidential information pertaining to research only with the principal and secondary investigators related to the above entitled research.

I have read the information above and agree to abide by the terms of this Agreement.

_____   _____
Transcriptionist   Date

_____   _____
Witness   Date

Appendix G
ELLCO and CLASS Teacher Scores

Mrs. Banter

	Mrs. Banter Pre-Implementation	Mrs. Banter Post-Implementation
ELLCO Integration of Language and Literacy	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Organization of the Classroom	Strong	Compelling
ELLCO Contents of the Classroom	Strong	Compelling
ELLCO Classroom Management	Strong	Compelling
CLASS Regard for Student Perspective	Middle	High
CLASS Behavior Management	Middle	High
CLASS Productivity	Middle	High

Mrs. Soper

	Mrs. Soper Pre-Implementation	Mrs. Soper Post-Implementation
ELLCO Integration of Language and Literacy	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Organization of the Classroom	Strong	Compelling
ELLCO Contents of the Classroom	Strong	Compelling
ELLCO Classroom Management	Strong	Compelling
CLASS Regard for Student Perspective	Middle	High
CLASS Behavior Management	Middle	High
CLASS Productivity	Middle	High

Mrs. Jergens

	Mrs. Jergens Pre-Implementation	Mrs. Jergens Post-Implementation
ELLCO Integration of Language and Literacy	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Organization of the Classroom	Basic	Strong
ELLCO Contents of the Classroom	Basic	Strong
ELLCO Classroom Management	Basic	Strong
CLASS Regard for Student Perspective	Middle	High
CLASS Behavior Management	Middle	High
CLASS Productivity	Middle	High

Mrs. Vanek

	Mrs. Vanek Pre Implementation	Mrs. Vanek Post Implementation
ELLCO Integration of Language and Literacy	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Organization of the Classroom	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Contents of the Classroom	Strong	Strong
ELLCO Classroom Management	Strong	Strong
CLASS Regard for Student Perspective	High	High
CLASS Behavior Management	High	High
CLASS Productivity	High	High