THE IMPACTS OF READERS THEATER ON FLUENCY
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ABSTRACT

This action research study describes a problem of practice derived from the identification of several students in fifth-grade that lack the reading skills necessary to be classified fluent readers as identified by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF). The identification of the problem of practice led to the development of an action research study, which examined the impact of fluency instruction that used readers theater texts on students’ overall fluency performance.

Through a convergent mixed methods design, the study addressed three research questions, which explored the impact of using readers theater texts on students’ overall fluency performance, the perceptions of student-participants, and the perceptions of the teacher-participant on the fluency intervention. Quantitative data collection instruments of pre-and post-tests and qualitative instruments of field notes, open-ended questionnaires, and a one-on-one semi-structured interview were used in this study.

The study revealed that the prescribed fluency intervention using readers theater texts with a combination of research-based fluency instructional strategies was statistically significant in improving students’ accuracy percentages, showed promising impacts on fluency rate, and had a positive effect on the way in which students’ view themselves as readers. The findings and supporting themes suggest implications for professional development at the research site to increase the awareness of the impacts of fluency on students’ reading performance, to effectively analyze fluency data to make a plan of action to support struggling students within each teachers’ classroom, and to
support teachers as they begin to use fluency instructional strategies and appropriate texts in their classrooms. Future research will determine if the fluency text type of poetry is effective in the same type of intervention used in this action research study and if students’ retell of the text becomes more sophisticated in nature as fluency rate and accuracy percentages increase.

Keywords: action research, fluency, reader’s theater, instruction, reading behaviors