

2007

The What, the Why, and the How of using repeated readings of poetry to increase reading fluency

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The What, the Why, and the How of using repeated readings of poetry to increase reading fluency

Abstract

This literature review concludes that repeated readings of poetry will increase student reading fluency. The use of repeated readings to increase fluency is a common classroom practice; its effectiveness has been firmly established. The daily use of poems for rereading purposes can enhance several literacy skills including fluent reading. Although there are limitations of the study, it can be concluded that when poems are read repeatedly in a variety of ways, students are able to read fluently while comprehending the text. The research that does exist clearly suggests that classroom teachers might use repeated readings of poetry to help students increase fluency.

The What, the Why, and the How of Using Repeated Readings of Poetry to Increase
Reading Fluency

A Graduate Literature Review Analysis

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

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May, 2007

ABSTRACT

This literature review concludes that repeated readings of poetry will increase student reading fluency. The use of repeated readings to increase fluency is a common classroom practice; its effectiveness has been firmly established. The daily use of poems for rereading purposes can enhance several literacy skills including fluent reading.

Although there are limitations of the study, it can be concluded that when poems are read repeatedly in a variety of ways, students are able to read fluently while comprehending the text. The research that does exist clearly suggests that classroom teachers might use repeated readings of poetry to help students increase fluency.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the foundation for all other learning in life. A person needs to read to drive, get a job, order from a menu, and learn new things. Constructing meaning is the most important aspect and the main purpose of reading (Kuhn, 2004; NRP, 2000; Opitz & Rasinski, 1998; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Reading fluency can help increase comprehension, making it an essential aspect of reading instruction (Johns & Berglund, 2006; Kuhn; NRP; Rasinski, 1988; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Prater). Fluent readers typically possess better comprehension skills than less fluent readers (Tyler & Chard; Winn, Skinner, Oliver, Hale & Ziegler, 2006). Fluent reading provides evidence that the reader comprehends the text (Worthy & Prater). It has been shown that when the flow of a reading is disrupted, so is the understanding of that text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; NRP). These research findings have major implications for teachers in today's classrooms. Because the importance of fluency has been demonstrated so clearly by the research, classroom teachers are interested in knowing ways they can help their students increase their fluency. In what engaging and meaningful ways can teachers develop fluency in the elementary classroom?

There are countless materials for children to read in order to increase fluency. Typically, teachers have used short text passages or specific grade level passages designed for a fluency program, such as Read Naturally, in which the readings are timed and graphed to show growth. Poetry is another convenient and motivating tool that can be used for fluency development. Sekeres and Gregg (2007) report that traditionally, poetry is used purely as an aesthetic genre. However they found that poetry could contribute in

various ways to reading achievement and enjoyment, especially fluency. This paper will review the research related to the use of poetry in the development of fluency in order to increase comprehension and thus, reading achievement.

Rationale

Reading success is an essential element to building future knowledge in all academic areas later in life, and fluency is one important element of reading proficiency (NRP, 2000; Rasinski, 2004). After attending a fluency workshop presented by Colleen Politano in conjunction with The Bureau of Educational Research in 2006, my interest was piqued. Could a direct relationship between the use of poetry in the classroom and the development of fluency be established based on research? Repeated readings are recognized as an appropriate method to increase fluency, but do repeated readings specifically of poetry offer the same result? A related question pertained to methodology-what methods for rereading poetry would keep students engaged in beneficial activities? Classroom teachers complain that children can get easily bored reading the same material repeatedly, in the same manner, without clear purpose and feedback. Colleagues in the educational field have advised using poetry with repeated readings, but what does the current research recommend?

When using repeated readings in the classroom, a concern arises regarding the method to do this in an engaging and meaningful way. Providing a variety of instruction to meet the needs of all individuals in the classroom is crucial. Teachers are constantly striving to find multiple methods to meet instructional goals, standards, and benchmarks in the classroom. Most students prefer new and meaningful activities to keep them

engaged while learning new skills and knowledge, so there is a need to uncover ways to do this with repeated reading of poetry.

Importance

No Child Left Behind (2002) is putting pressure on teachers to be accountable for their students' learning and to ensure all children are able to read. Reading is an everyday event for all children, throughout their school years and beyond, and is an essential skill for success later in life (NRP, 2000). Today's society requires all members to be literate, and often times reading achievement is associated with success. The hallmark of reading achievement is comprehension, and comprehension is linked to fluency. In fact, the link is so strong that many researchers view it to be self-evident and reciprocal (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Rasinski and Padak (2005) concluded that a great deal "of reading performance, including comprehension, could be due to students' fluency or lack of fluency in reading (pp. 36). Although this relationship has been established, fluency is often neglected in the classroom (Foster, 1998; Kuhn, 2004; Miccinati, 1985; NRP; Rasinski, 1988; Rasinski, 2004; Samuels, 2002).

Investigating the possible relationship between the use of poetry in the classroom and the development of fluency could provide teachers with important methodologies for helping their students become more fluent and consequently better at understanding what they read.

Definitions

The word "fluency" suggests somewhat different meanings and implications for different people. Colleen Politano (2005) made a vivid analogy when she compared developing fluency to making a cake. "If you leave one (ingredient) out the cake won't

taste or look the way you wanted. Fluent readers use all the ingredients, they have the skills to figure out words quickly and the understanding of what they are reading, to read in phrases with expression and volume to convey the writer's meaning" (p. 6, 2005).

According to the National Reading Panel's Report (2000), fluency includes much more than speed. Fluent readers not only read at an appropriate rate, they are also accurate and use expression. Kuhn (2004) describes fluency as automatic and accurate word recognition read with appropriate prosody. In addition to the elements in Kuhn's definition, Johns and Berglund (2006) include comprehension and speed also as important elements of fluency. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) take this definition a step further by explaining that fluent reading is "using smoothly integrated operations to process the meaning, language, and print" (p. 62). Accuracy, automatic processing, and prosody are all important elements of fluency (Rasinski, 2004). Appropriate phrasing and chunking are heard in a reader's fluent use of expression, pausing, emphasis, and enthusiasm while reading (Rasinski & Padak, 2005).

No single definition can be agreed upon across the field, and for the purpose of clarity and understanding throughout this study, the following definition of fluency from Timothy Rasinski (2004) will be used.

- Fluency is "the reader's ability to develop control over surface-level text processing so that he or she can focus on understanding the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text" (p. 46).

Other terms used throughout this study are included below.

- Prosody is expressive oral reading including, "pitch, stress, and the use of appropriate phrasing" (Kuhn, 2004).

- Comprehension is described by Foster (1998) as a reader constructing meaning from text.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to review the literature examining repeatedly reading poetry and its effects on reading fluency. The primary research question guiding this project was: Does repeatedly reading poetry in the classroom influence student reading fluency? There were several secondary questions that stemmed from the primary question, and they are as follows:

- What, if any, impact does poetry have on a child's reading fluency?
- Why is fluency an important part of comprehension?
- What role does poetry play in the elementary classroom?
- Will reading of poetry and the use of poetry related activities sustain student attention and improve reading fluency?
- How do repeated readings affect fluency?

These questions are explored in the review of current literature regarding the connection between poetry and fluency.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will review the methods conducted in selection and review of literature that led to the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter IV. The study focuses on the connection between repeatedly reading poetry and fluency. An examination of journal articles and books helped the researcher gain a better understanding for how poetry increases fluency, and validates the current findings. The research was cross-referenced between different authors and sources. Literature pertaining to the present study was gathered and analyzed.

Method to Locate Sources

Journal articles and professional books consulted for the study were located by searching databases. The University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library book collection, and the Wilson Web and ERIC (EBSCO) databases of educational documents, were accessed through Rod Library. A variety of keywords and authors such as Timothy Rasinski and Kuhn were used to limit the searches and are listed below.

- Poetry and reading achievement
- Poetry and fluency
- Poems and fluency
- Poetry and struggling readers
- Poetry use in the elementary classroom
- Poetry activities or lessons
- Poetry impact on student achievement
- Poetry and reading scores
- Poetry and assessment
- Poetry and teaching methods
- Poetry teaching
- Repeated reading
- Repeated poetry reading
- Not using poetry
- Not fluency

Initially, over 500 books and articles were screened. The abstracts were reviewed and literature was collected based on relevance to the topic. The most successful of the searches used the keywords, “poetry” and “teach”, which uncovered more than 245 possible entries. Countless books were included in this search; however, the books focused too much on fluency in general or on reading and writing poetry in the classroom, rather than more specifically on the relationship between repeated readings of poetry and fluency.

After realizing many books were too general or focused in a different direction, WilsonWeb and EBSCO databases were searched. A search was completed looking for articles with both keywords, “poetry” and “fluency,” which resulted in 45 citations. Articles by Foster (1998) and Padak (2001) were some articles uncovered with this search. These authors provided the study with additional support because of the direct connection made between the use of poetry and fluency improvement. In addition, other searches using the same keywords as listed above resulted in over 100 journal articles and full-length documents.

References listed in previously read journals and books were also consulted in order to gather more information and cross-check sources. At this point, the data collection began to yield significant results. Non-primary journal articles sited similar references or common authors, which led to revised searches, looking for those specific sources. The above methods combined together, provided a more complete collection of appropriate and current research regarding the connection between poetry and fluency.

Method to Select Sources

Sources were selected based on relevance concerning the topics of poetry, fluency, comprehension and repeated readings. In determining the selection of articles and books, an evident connection repeated reading of poetry and fluency was sought. The findings seemed logical, applicable, and consistent with other findings. Sources were selected based on credibility of the journals. A variety of peer-review and well-known established journals were used to add to the validity of the study. The information was then synthesized and conclusions were made regarding using repeated poetry readings to increase reading fluency and the ability to implement them in the classroom.

Procedures to Analyze Sources

In reviewing the literature chosen, the primary and secondary questions guided reasoning. The research reviewed the information regarding repeated poetry readings in relation to increased fluency. A combination of twenty-seven studies, books, and research articles were reviewed to determine that rereadings of poetry could increase a reader's fluency. Notes were taken while reading the literature based on the main ideas of the specific study, as well as information relevant to teachers. Notes from the first five resources were then compared in order to find the main ideas of the final research paper. The subsections were thus titled, with two more subsections emerging after the review of subsequent readings. The study's findings were organized to first demonstrate the importance of fluency, and more specifically the use of repeated readings to increase reading fluency and the importance of keeping students engaged in repeated readings. Information about how poetry can help students develop fluency through repeated

readings was included in the next section. Lastly, specific activities to use with repeated readings of poetry to increase fluency were listed.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of Fluency

In the current review, multiple studies have shown fluency to correlate with reading comprehension. When students lack comprehending skills and are not gaining meaning from a piece of text, fluency can aid them in their ability to store more information in their working memory. Readers need to be fluent decoders in order to understand the text being read (Foster, 1998). Fluent readers are able to control the internal thought processes taking place during a reading, because less attention to the actual decoding of words is necessary (Rasinski, 2004; Vogt & Shearer, 2003; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Winn, et al., 2006). It is necessary for the reader to devote attention to making meaning, rather than decoding words (Johns & Berglund, 2006). Overall, this was very simply articulated by Sekeres and Gregg (2007) when they wrote, “meaning making depends on fluency” (p. 468).

Because fluency is so important to effective comprehension, it is a crucial element of reading instruction (Foster, 1998; Johns & Berglund, 2006; Kuhn, 2004; NRP, 2000; Rasinski, 2004; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Padak (2001) agrees that beginning readers possess a true need to develop their reading fluency. The National Reading Panel Report, a respected and research-based document guiding educational initiatives today, lists fluency as one of the five essential factors contributing to reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (2000) recognizes the need to include fluency instruction in today’s classrooms. Recommendations for the elementary classroom include guided repeated oral reading and independent silent reading. To determine that guided repeated

oral reading was an effective method for improving fluency, the NRP examined 37 studies. Many of their findings are summarized in the following section.

Repeated Readings as an Important Method for Improving Fluency

Given that fluency is an important instructional goal, what teaching methods can best ensure that students become fluent readers? Countless professionals in the educational field have suggested using repeated readings. Specifically, Dowhower (1987) explains that rereading consists of “rereading a meaningful passage until oral production is fluid, flowing, and facile” (p. 390). Fluent readers develop skills through repeated readings of familiar text, focusing on accuracy, speed, and expression (Samuels, 2002; Vogt & Shearer, 2003). “Repeated reading is a powerful technique for improving reading fluency, word recognition, and comprehension” (Foster, 1998).

Several researches have found that fluency is often improved through the use of repeated readings (Blau, 2001; Foster, 1998; Rasinski, 1988; Rasinski, 2004, Samuels, 2002; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Winn, et al., 2006). Rasinski (2004) notes that repeated readings are one of the leading methods used to improve reading fluency. In addition, the NRP (2000) reported that repeated readings guided by teachers, parents, or peers, “had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension across a range of grade levels.” (p. 12) Through repeated readings, students are able to increase their reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension. Repeatedly reading the same text allows students to automatically read text and achieve higher comprehension (Foster, 1998). In fact, not only does research demonstrate that repeated readings improve fluency on the passage being practiced, but it also improves fluent reading of new texts (Dowhower, 1987; Rasinski, 2004; Rasinski & Padak, 2005).

Dowhower (1987) investigated the effect of repeated reading procedures on second-grade readers. Average decoders who demonstrated a below-average reading rate were given repeated reading instruction with a read-along or through independent practice. Results of the study demonstrated the readers' reading rate, accuracy, comprehension, and prosody improved through the repeated readings. Not only did the students show a fluency increase on the practiced passages, but also demonstrated improvements with unpracticed, similar texts.

Miccinati (1985) observes that modeling is another very important part of repeated readings. Blau (2001) concurs that in order for students to become fluent readers, they must first hear and understand what fluent reading sounds like. Blau (2001) says that reading aloud provides the powerful modeling new readers need in order to transfer these experiences into their own reading. After the modeling and repeated readings, the errors decrease and speed increases, resulting in a more automatic reading (Miccinati, 1985).

A specific type of repeated reading is Guided Repeated Reading. Guided repeated readings involve rereading material and receiving feedback from the teacher or as self-evaluation. Students have the opportunity to develop a metacognitive awareness of what a fluent reader sounds like and a definition of fluency (Rasinski & Padak, 2005). Through the evaluation of their readings, students must consciously think about what they or their peer did well, and what they can improve upon. Individual students are taking on the traditional role of the teacher and assessing their own reading. Students are able to judge how they read and set specific goals for future rereadings. Students need multiple experiences with evaluating their own reading as well as giving feedback to others

(Politano, 2005; Rasinski & Padak). This encouragement and support may result in more fluent readings in the future, because of an increase in awareness of the importance of fluent reading.

Winn, Skinner, Oliver, Hale, and Ziegler (2006) looked into the validity of transferring these findings to the adult reader with reading skills deficits as well. In their primary study, Winn, et, al. studied the effects of repeated readings on an adult's fluency, which they described as "rapid and accurate reading" (p. 196). The study showed that adults, who have deficits in reading, increased their rate of words correctly read per minute after repeatedly reading passages at their readability level. Although the sample size of this study only consisted of 12 participants, the researchers were able to make the conclusion that indeed, adult fluency can be improved through repeated readings. As shown repeated readings have been proven to advance fluency for readers of all ages. Repeated readings have a "clear and positive effect on fluency at a variety of grade levels" (Samuels, p. 175, 2002).

Engagement

Rasinski and Padak (2005) point out that it is important to engage students in meaningful repeated readings. "To make repeated readings interesting and to provide a variety of opportunities for repeated readings, students can read independently or with small cooperative groups, parents, grandparents, or siblings" (Foster, p. 12, 1998). Using a variety of instructional strategies to make repeated readings interesting is definitely a necessity in order to keep the students engaged. Teachers strive to present repeated readings in motivating ways that allow students to see the purpose and naturalness of the strategy (Rasinski, 1988; Tyler & Chard, 2000). Repeated readings have been shown to

positively affect students' reading fluency (Dowhower, 1987). However, the activities associated with the repeated reading methodology are most beneficial when children see an evident purpose for rereading that is both functional and meaningful to them (Rasinski, 1988). Students need to clearly understand the real purpose for reading, and even more so for repeated readings. When teachers give students a purpose for repeatedly reading the same text, such as an audience, it provides them with motivation and the activity is authentically able to increase fluency. Poetry is one possible solution to engage students in purposeful and motivating rereadings.

Why Poetry?

Using poetry to increase reading fluency could be one way to reach individual students by providing new and exciting ways of repeated readings through meaningful activities that are authentic (Blau, 2001; Krehel, 2003; Padak, 2001). Miccinati (1985) suggests using poetry to help develop fluency in reading. Poetry can be a useful vehicle for repeated practice and pleasure in the elementary classroom (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2001).

Foster conducted a 1998 primary study examining the effects of using daily poems as primary literacy instruction with supplemental support from the basal. Her study is especially relevant to examining the possible connections between the motivational attributes of poetry and development of fluency through the use of repeated readings. She reported in her literature review that repeated readings are helpful for both high and low ability students. While researching background information regarding repeated readings, Foster found that students at all levels are able to increase fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. She went on to suggest using poetry as a means to

meet the literacy needs of first grade students. The study focused on using poetry readings each day in a first grade classroom in order to help develop characteristics of good readers. Foster examined one first grade class of 22 students' fluency and comprehension with the use of the basal for primary instruction. She compared these results to that of another first grade class of 24 students' fluency and comprehension, whose similar primary instruction was met through the use of poetry. Foster provided experiences stemming from her literature review that helped increase fluency and therefore her students' reading comprehension. Foster used poetry chosen based on "rhyme, rhythm, predictability, thematic relevance, student interest, and applicability" to literacy skills (p. 13). She used the chosen poems on large chart paper and the students received individual copies to refer to when Foster modeled fluent reading, conducted shared reading, choral reading, and most relevant to this research, repeated readings. She stated, "Children seem to have a natural interest in listening to poems read orally and a natural willingness to chant and sing" (p. 13). Foster found that the very nature of poetry drew the students into the text and allowed them to gain important reading skills. At the conclusion of the study, Foster compared the students' comprehension, reading level, and reading rates, along with informal written reflections as well as student and parent responses. Of the students receiving the basal instruction alone, 5 children remained at a pre-primer level and 3 were reading at a third grade level. On the other hand, only 1 student from the poetry group was still reading at the pre-primer level and 6 students were at the third grade level. Foster concluded that even with limitations, the study she conducted suggests that integrating poetry readings each day into the curriculum may have enhanced the first grade students' fluency and comprehension.

As Foster (1998) explains, poetry lends itself very easily to meaningful repeated readings and requires a special focus on the phrasing and expression (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Rasinski, 1988). Students often see poetry as unthreatening, inviting, and fun (Demille, 2004; Hadaway, et al., 2001). It is accessible to all students because it is often short (Demille; Foster; Hadaway, et al.). The rich language can convey deep meaning in fewer words and can be more spatially appealing to readers (Foster; Scala, 1997; Sekeres & Gregg, 2007). There are also several more affective benefits of using poetry in the classroom because it is easily enjoyed and the rhythm, rhyme, humor, and patterning or repetition involved create a natural desire to read aloud over and over (Foster; Gill, 1996; Hadaway, et al.; Scala; Sekeres & Gregg; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

Poetry related to different content areas also integrates new information into the activity (Worthy & Prater, 2002). The content is usually more focused and using content related poetry to introduce new concepts and integrate cross-curricular objectives is convenient.

Padak (2001) states that poems can offer “engaging, successful reading experiences” (p. 3). She went on to say that poems are easy to read because of the wide variety of readability of so many poems. Sekeres and Gregg (2007) noted that because poems are often simpler pieces of text, they are more accessible to a wider variety of readers. “Struggling readers were empowered by being able to read the words of the poems fluently; competent readers were captivated by the multiple interpretations of ideas that poems offered” (Sekeres & Gregg, p. 473). Poetry is also often predictable which ensures success and can help readers gain confidence in their reading abilities (Foster, 1998; Scala, 2004)

Most of all, poetry is meant to be read aloud over and over again, while searching for meaning within the context of the poem (Gill, 1996; Hadaway, et al., 2001; Scala, 2004). Students are engaged in the short and purposeful rereadings while maintaining multiple understandings. Readers are able to make a personal or emotional connection, which allows for a meaningful activity to experience over and over (Hadaway, et al., 2001).

Miccinati (1985) and Pennock (1984) have both found that poetry can be used in choral reading to increase reading fluency. In Miccinati's 1985 literature review, she states that choral reading requires students to pay close attention and respond to the prosodic qualities in language to convey meaning and poetry's strong rhythm and melody lends itself well to this goal. Miccinati reported that when the prosodic qualities of choral reading such as sound, stress, duration, and pitch, are focused on, it leads to an increase in oral reading fluency. She found that through modeling fluent reading and repetitive readings, students' fluency increases. Choral reading is a beneficial strategy for improving students' fluency because when they listen and respond to the text, as well as copy a fluent reader, they are able to create a more fluent reading as a result. Miccinati further recommends using choral reading of poetry with a variety of techniques such as a refrain, line-a-child, dialogue, and in unison.

In a closely related review of literature, Pennock (1984) noted the beneficial evidence that oral reading fluency can increase with the use of new and innovative techniques. However, he studied more specifically whether these new techniques were functional and natural to use in the classroom. Pennock takes note that qualities of language available in reading aloud can be found easily in poetry. He further explains

that poetry is a functional and natural method that will meet classroom needs to develop more proficient reading fluency. Choral reading of poetry allows for a natural audience due to the nature of the genre. Modeling takes place with choral reading and students practice the reading by repeating the lines. Overall, Pennock concludes that, “choral reading of poetry appears to be the best small-group or even whole-class approach to building oral reading fluency in terms of both theoretical support and also feasibility in classroom teaching situations” (p. 22). If this has been found to be true with choral reading, other methods of repeated readings with poetry might logically be presumed to result in the same fluency benefits.

Specific Activities in the Classroom

Susan Foster (1998) found that using poetry to supplement the first grade basal in skill and fluency development helped to increase the students’ comprehension and fluent reading. She was able to use modeling, shared readings, guided readings, repeated readings, and performances of poetry in order to increase fluency. The work Foster completed demonstrated, “that incorporating daily poetry readings, activities, and skills instruction into the regular reading program may have enhanced students’ fluency and comprehension” (p. 14). After examining Basic Reading Inventory results as well as observations and personal responses of both students and parents, Foster noticed that children receiving the poetry instruction were overall more fluent readers, comprehending more of what they read. Daily use of poems allowed students to review sight words, conventions of print, sentence structure, phonics, punctuation, alliteration, decoding strategies, and exposure to new vocabulary, all while building their fluency, without boring drill and practice, or dull rereading (Foster).

Politano (2005) suggests rereading a piece of text or poem at least four times before it is ready for a polished, fluent reading. The first reading should be simply to gain understanding of the text. During the second and third readings, focused practice on specific goals should take place. After appropriate modeling and training, students are able to set their own goals such as reading smoothly with good expression, reading at a good rate; not too fast and too slow, speaking loudly, sounding like the character, etc. Students can evaluate their success to meet the desired goal and continue practice from there. Finally, the fourth reading is the motivating performance in which the student is meaningfully and personally engaged, because of the multiple practices and presence of an audience. Sekeres and Gregg (2007) found that performances truly challenge students to enunciate well and practice to gain fluency and confidence.

Other researchers have also noted the potential for oral performances of Reader's Theatre. This is one activity used to keep students engaged and motivated to repeatedly read the same text or more specifically, poetry (Foster, 1998; Krehel, 2003; Rasinski & Padak, 2005; Tyler & Chard, 2000). Students practice assigned roles of a script and prepare for a performance. Readers focus on interpreting the text and portraying the characters and storyline through oral expression. "Reader's theatre is a perfect way to build fluency because it is fun, it requires expression and offers a very real need for repeated readings" (Politano, p. 38, 2005). Readers Theatre with poems has been found to engage students during the repeated readings and practice (Worthy & Prater, 2002). Students rehearse the poem and convey the meaning and mood of the poem to the audience. Rasinski (2004) explains that students are able to tell the story with not only their words, but with their voice as well. Through this interpretive reading, students gain

fluency with practicing poems along with the modeling, instruction, and feedback of the teacher. The procedures allow children to reread for the purpose of performing in front of an audience. This leads to a more clear understanding and appreciation for the authentic and natural purpose of performance (Tyler & Chard, 2000). They also have the opportunity to self-evaluate and regularly provide feedback to their peers. Teachers have reported that Readers Theatre is one of the most motivating reading activities and one of the best ways to promote fluency (Blau, 2001; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

In Krehel's (2003) literature review, she reports that, "poetry is meant to be performed" (p. 20). Similar to Reader's Theatre, poems can be reread for a variety of purposes and then performed in a meaningful way to an audience. Krehel supports using poetry because of its ease of use as well as the effective way it can help further develop fluency. She states that poetry performance is a multi-sensory approach meeting the needs of the students and making the practice and performance authentic experiences. Through the review of research, Krehel concludes that poetry performance can reinforce the development of fluency in the elementary classroom. She recommends this excellent strategy for all reading levels in order to promote literacy skills.

Several professionals suggest using a poem a day or a poem a week in a variety of styles and methods in order to further develop reading fluency in students. Hadaway, et al., (2001) and Politano (2005) recommend reading the poem aloud in unison, echo reading the lines, call and response, using multiple groups reading multiple stanzas, solo lines, two voices, singing poems, silent movements, different voices, sound effects, puppets, chants, props, and using background music to engage students in a variety of different interesting activities.

Colleen Politano (1995) recommends using poetry for an activity called, The Reading Wave. In this activity, the students choose 1-2 lines from a familiar poem to practice and reread until it “sounds good.” The students build fluency through repeatedly reading these lines and then performing their lines in a class Reading Wave. The activity is performed in a way similar to a wave done at a sporting event, with students individually reading their practiced lines. As soon as one child finishes his/her lines, the next student reads, and so on. The students enjoy the activity and are excited to share part of their poem with the others.

Another recommendation from Politano (2005) to increase fluency is to let students ride the Poetry Train. For this activity the students again practice 1-2 lines of a poem, and then the class lines up in two equal lines (like a train). The students will read their practiced lines to the person across from them until the train whistle blows. One side of the train will rotate, and the readers will perform again. This provides students with a meaningful and intriguing way to participate in rereadings and perform their poems to an authentic audience.

Politano (2005) also presents Four Corners Poetry in her book. There are only four readers during this activity while the rest of the class listens and later provides comments. The four readers choose a poem they would like to share and each reader performs in one corner of the room. The poem is read after being rehearsed and the audience provides feedback. Then the audience rotates to a new corner and the reader is able to perform for a new group of peers. Again, the activity allows students to repeatedly read the same poem without boring rereads.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This literature review investigates the question of whether rereading poetry will increase student reading fluency. Search for related literature has been conducted on the specific question of whether repeated readings of poetry will contribute to improved reading fluency. While the question cannot be definitively answered by the limited literature located, it can be inferred from studies on closely related questions that the answer might be in the affirmative. Repeated readings work in many classrooms to improve reading fluency (Rasinski & Padak, 2005). Repeated readings are an established classroom practice, which has been firmly demonstrated through research and supported by the National Reading Panel (2000). The daily use of poems for rereading purposes can enhance several literacy skills, including fluent reading. The research presented suggests that repeated readings of poetry can lead to an increase in fluent reading. When poems are read repeatedly in a variety of ways, students are able to read with more accuracy and expression, while comprehending the text. It can be concluded that fluency instruction and practice in the classroom using repeated readings of poetry could lead to higher comprehension and overall reading achievement.

The activities listed in the literature review are practical and beneficial experiences that can be transferred to the classroom. Each method included in the literature review engages students in authentic, meaningful activities, and would be applicable in almost any classroom.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was a lack of clear and obviously direct connections between fluency and poetry. Much of the research focused solely on poetry or repeated readings and fluency, rather than the direct connection of using poetry for repeated readings in order to increase fluency. Most of the studies reviewed were literature reviews of already existing information. It was surprising that a greater amount of formal experimental studies examining the relationship between the use of poetry and an increase in reading fluency were not available. A minimal amount of literature that made the direct connection was available. When the direct link between the use of poetry to increase fluency was made, the recommendations were not as in depth as expected. Specific formal studies need to be conducted focusing on rereading poetry in order to increase reading fluency in readers of all ages.

The research showed that rereading poetry can be easily used with a multitude of readers at all levels. However, most of the studies regarding the effects of repeated readings on fluency, focused on struggling readers. Do these repeated reading results apply to the average or high achieving students? If so, it can be concluded that repeated readings of poetry will also help higher level students increase fluency. The effects of using repeated readings on already fluent readers was seldom addressed and more research is needed in order to clearly make the connection between repeatedly reading poems to increase fluency with higher level students. Foster (1998) and Winn, et al. (2006) found that repeated readings can increase fluency in both young and old learners as well as in high and low readers, but more research is needed in this area to make a more confident determination of the validity of the findings.

Recommendations

The findings of this literature review provide a practical application to most classrooms in order to promote fluency development using repeated reading procedures with poetry. The following sections discuss how the conclusions of this study can be applied to teacher practices in the classroom and where future research might be conducted in this field of study.

Teacher Practices

The research has implications for the classroom teacher to use new instructional strategies in the classroom in order to increase fluency through repeated poetry readings. The review inferentially supports using poetry as an exciting and varied way to repeatedly read the same text, in order to build reading fluency, and thus overall reading achievement. Poetry lends itself well to rereading because of the structure and purpose of the genre. Students can easily be engaged in a variety of meaningful repeated readings of poetry to develop fluency in reading.

Future Research

Future research is necessary for a more definitive conclusion regarding the direct link between poetry and fluency. A lack of clear and obviously direct connection between fluency and poetry was uncovered in this study. Much of the research was geared towards separate information regarding fluency and poetry. On one hand, there was a great deal of information about the importance of fluency instruction to overall reading achievement. On the other hand, there was also much information found that demonstrated the benefits of using repeated readings to promote fluency. However, there were limited numbers of studies that specifically examined using poetry in conjunction with rereadings in order to

increase fluent oral reading. More formal primary research needs to be conducted regarding the direct relationship between poetry and fluency. Specifically, long-term studies to determine the value and lasting positive effects of repeated readings of poetry on fluency and comprehension are imperative.

The literature review found that there are other instructional practices that may also increase fluency in reading. Activities such as assisted readings, read alouds, shared readings, partner reading, reader's theatre, retelling, echo reading, and listening while reading have also been suggested to further develop fluent reading (Foster, 1998; Miccinati, 1985; Politano, 2005; Rasinski, 2004, Winn, et al., 2006). Independent silent reading, storytelling, drama, cross-age tutoring, taped readings, games, and songs are more recommended approaches used to increase fluency (NRP, 2000; Rasinski, 1988). Appropriate fluent modeling, direct instruction, and parental involvement are also contributing factors affecting a reader's fluency that should be considered when focusing on fluency development (Foster; Miccinati, 1985). Further research is recommended to determine if these activities could also be used in conjunction with poetry in order to increase fluency.

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