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Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

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Title: How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?

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Abstract

The purpose of this self-study action research project was to assess the impact of implementing the Reading Workshop on fostering independent reading skills. The initiative was enacted in response to an opportunity to change the researcher's practice, to improve literacy instruction. The work focused on the use of a "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention, involving differentiated, explicit teaching of reading strategies. The researcher undertook the study in her own classroom, with her students. The research sample included twenty nine children attending second class of primary school, two critical friends and two validation groups.

The research goal was to evaluate the impact of the intervention on the independent reading skills exhibited by the children. A secondary goal was to ascertain the extent to which motivation, engagement and confidence in reading was affected by the intervention. The intervention signified a change in researcher practice and thus, the learning experienced throughout will also be discussed. As such, the content of the thesis incorporates a reflective perspective on the self-study element of the project.

The theoretical aspect of the thesis acquaints readers with the main concepts related to literacy development, with support from available literature sources. The relevant literature identified focuses primarily on; the use of a balanced approach to literacy instruction (NEPS, 2016), reading strategies, reading comprehension, reading teaching methods, self-evaluation of reading, the reading environment and reading diagnostics.

In alignment with the research goals, a mixed-methods approach was employed for data collection. Data was gathered with the aim of forming a triangulated baseline demonstrating an initial level of literacy skills. The qualitative methods employed to collect data included; the use of a research journal, student questionnaires and teacher observation.

The quantitative methodologies used involved; the administration of 2 pre and post-tests, analysing sight words, reading accuracy, reading rate, reading comprehension and reading ages, and recording the reading stamina of the child participants. All appropriate ethical considerations were adhered to.

The findings from the research were interrogated under various lenses, in order to expose thematic elements of the research results. It was concluded that the aims of the research intervention were achieved as children were more motivated to adopt independent reading skills in the classroom, according to teacher observation, student feedback and reflective data. Similarly, observational results indicated a correlation between improved reading skills and an increase in the children's motivation to read, engagement in reading and confidence when reading. The quantitative results supported the qualitative conclusions as the literacy attainment of students increased in all assessed aspects of literacy in the post-tests. According to the research, the subsequent claim to knowledge is that implementing the reading workshop is an effective way to differentiate reading instruction with the aim of fostering independence in a second class. The main contributions to the researcher's practice have been; the improvement in literacy instruction practices as well as the enhancement of reflective practice skills through the research process.

Keywords*:* Literacy, Reading, Reading Workshop, Reading Strategies, Differentiation strategies, Independent Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading Self-Evaluation, Reading Diagnostic Tests, Motivation, Confidence.

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Declaration of Authenticity

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I hereby declare that this project, which I now submit in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice) is entirely my own work; that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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List of Abbreviations

CF1	Critical Friend 1
CF2	Critical Friend 2
CIDREE	Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe
CP	Child Participant
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ELN	European Literacy Network
ePIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (online version)
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers; Organisation
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers Professional Development Service for Teachers
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PLC	Primary Language Curriculum
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SSE	School Self Evaluation
SWRT	Sight Word Reading Test
US NRP	United States National Reading Panel

VG1	Validation Group 1
VG2	Validation Group 2
YARC	York Analysis of Reading Comprehension

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

Personal Context and Motivation associated with Research

Educational values are used as "overarching principles that help you teach and learn, but also to help…to gauge that…everyday practice is as it should be", (Sullivan et al., 2016: 51). In terms of professional values, differentiation is a practice that the researcher aims to employ effectively in the classroom. Upon reflection, the researcher identified how the current assessment practices, employed at the behest of systematic hegemony, currently disrupt differentiation practices and impact learner autonomy in the research context. For example, the discrepancy between implementing a differentiated curriculum and subsequently issuing a standardised test, is a norm that the researcher admits to perpetuating but does not agree with. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, Whitehead and McNiff (2006:25) identifies this paradoxical practice as a "living contradiction". This issue particularly resonates with researcher practice in relation to the teaching of literacy. Therefore, the "living contradiction" identified influenced the decision to effect a change in researcher practice and to undertake this project with the aim of differentiating literacy instruction to foster independence. In correspondence with the professional values identified, the assessment of the impact of the intervention will not be solely standardised, but will incorporate a range of assessment strategies to ensure that the approach to literacy instruction is comprehensively differentiated, from the point of view of teaching and assessment.

External Contextual Factors

Literacy education in Ireland has undergone significant change in many respects, since 2011. This change was prompted by a nationwide decline in results achieved on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, as conducted by the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011). Despite the significance attributed to the PISA results, Sjøberg (2016:15) explores the prevalence of "a widespread critique of many aspects of PISA", specifically focusing on the "alliance between PISA and Pearson Inc., the largest global providers of educational services and products, [which] is a matter of grave concern for Education". This alludes to the commodification of education, as is discussed further in Section 2.1. Nonetheless, the decline in Irish student results has led to substantial curricular reform in recent years. This reform has been categorised by an increased emphasis on literacy, numeracy and assessment.

The proportion of curricular time allocated to core academic subjects such as numeracy and literacy has increased significantly, with the aim of increasing educational attainment in these areas, as per the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy, (2011). Similarly, assessment is promoted to a greater extent under the revised current curricular guidelines, (O'Duibhir and Cummins, 2012). A significant aspect of the changes observed has been the introduction of the New Primary Language Curriculum, (PLC) (NCCA, 2015). A further notable change was the promotion of a specific approach for literacy instruction – "The Balanced Approach to Literacy" (National Educational Psychological Service, (NEPS) 2016). These changes are particularly relevant to this research study because the research topic is dedicated to advancing the literacy instruction and increasing literacy attainment, with a secondary aim of assessing progression in literacy.

The context for the research was a mixed second class, in a large, suburban, middle-class school. The researcher was the mainstream teacher for this class. The research participants were; the researcher, twenty-nine child participants - fourteen boys and fifteen girls - two critical friends, one in the school setting, and one external person, and two validation groups.

1.2 Aims and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to improve effective teaching methodologies for implementing differentiated literacy instruction, with the aim of fostering independent literacy skills. In this context, 'effective' instruction was interpreted as the identification and use of an approach that would;

(a) Enable children to develop independent literacy skills
(b) Enable the researcher to differentiate accordingly in order to facilitate engagement, motivation and encouragement in reading.

Table 1.1: Aims of Research

The professional development involved in undertaking a novel approach to literacy instruction afforded the researcher the opportunity to participate in critical reflective practice as part of the self-study research, as advocated for by Sullivan et al. (2016). Therefore, the research was designed under the paradigm of self-study action research, (Sullivan et al., 2016; Hartog, 2018).

In alignment with the overall purpose of the research, a specific aim of the research intervention was to improve the teaching of independent reading strategies to second class students through use of an explicit reading intervention, in the format of the "Reading Workshop", (Calkins, 2001). The extent to which the reading intervention impacted on the independence, motivation, engagement and confidence, and the academic results, displayed by the child participants was measured to ascertain if the purpose of the intervention was achieved.

Afflerbach (2016: 415) affirms the researcher's initial hypothesis, ascertaining that "a major goal of reading instruction is fostering the development of independent, successful

student readers". Learner autonomy is the goal of education and therefore increasing independence and accountability for learning must be fostered in the classroom. Jeftic (2014: 61) articulates how "learner autonomy in the classroom necessitates an extension of the role of the teacher to…developing differentiated programs of instruction". As mentioned, autonomy is a central goal for literacy instruction, and therefore, instruction must be differentiated. This definition of effective instruction aligns with Afflerbach's (2016: 414) assertion that two aspects that are "vital for students reading success are students' motivation to read and students' self-efficacy". As the researcher was concerned with developing these aspects to enhance reading success, the primary research question directing the study was:

How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?

Table 1.2: Research Question

1.3 Values-based Research

The researcher endeavoured to undertake a research study that pertained to personal and professional values, to current educational issues in Ireland, and to the requirements of the school self-evaluation plan in the research context. As emphasised above, literacy instruction is perhaps one of the most topical current issues in the Irish education system and therefore was a key educational consideration in the research context.

The personal and professional values upheld by the researcher contributed to the motivation to undertake this project. Reading, from the researcher's perspective, is not simply a critical learning tool. Rather, it is a process that awakens life-long curiosity and that helps children develop a sense of self-discovery, connection and belonging. It is from this ideological position that the current project extends.

The child-centred, professional values attributed to Friedrich Froebel strongly resonate with the researcher's values. Froebel upheld that the learning environment should be safe but intellectually challenging, promoting; curiosity, enquiry, sensory stimulation and aesthetic awareness, (cited in Nawrotzski, 2006). The professional values that particularly resonate with this research are; care, independence, differentiation, and collaborative learning (Gregory, 2000). The researcher subscribes to the ideal of providing an education that makes the world more accessible for children, valuing the potential for literacy to advance learning. As highlighted by Clay (1991; 2013) and the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) (2011), literacy skills are central to the provision of, and engagement with learning opportunities.

1.4 Potential Contribution of the Study

There was significant potential for this research to address the different learning needs in the research context. The development of the researcher-designed reading intervention responded specifically to the sample population's identified learning needs. Within this group, a wide range of literacy abilities were identified. The literacy difficulties identified were negatively affecting the overall engagement of the participants in other aspects of the primary curriculum. Therefore, differentiation needs significantly influenced the design and analysis of this project. In this way, the study has potential to contribute to differentiated learning and practice in the primary school context. The claim to knowledge is also potentially transferrable to other primary, and special education contexts.

1.5 Overview of Research

The change in the researcher's practice was the implementation of a teacher-designed reading intervention programme, aligned with the Balanced Approach (NEPS, 2016). The researcher values a multi-faceted approach to teaching reading as there is a plethora of international evidence to suggest that children benefit significantly from a balanced, blended

approach to learning (Calkins, 2001, Burke and Welsch, 2018, and Venegas, 2018). On a national level, in response to the Numeracy and Literacy Strategy (DES, 2011), Cowen (2003:10) cited in the Reading Association of Ireland (2011:5) advocates for "a balanced reading approach [that] is research-based, assessment-based, comprehensive, integrated and dynamic". Calkins (2001:3) also subscribes to this approach, advocating how "each one of us must, in our classroom, author a comprehensive approach to teaching reading". By consequence, the significant change in the researcher's practice was the implementation of a harmonious "Balanced Approach" based, teacher-designed reading intervention programme, (NEPS, 2016).

The "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) programme designed for this intervention was the collation of a number of practices that were undertaken to enhance differentiated literacy instruction. These practices included:

(1) Assessment of reading, undertaken before, during and after the intervention.
(2) The explicit teaching of reading strategies.

Table 1.3: Intervention Practices

The reading workshop lessons were undertaken three times weekly for fourteen weeks. The researcher also engaged in pre and post testing over the course of the intervention. The intervention will be discussed at length in Section 2.5.

1.6 Thesis Overview

This research study begins with a review of existing, current, relevant literature presented in Chapter 2. It will explore current national and international best practice in relation to literacy instruction. Chapter 2 examines reading instruction, the research to date and its role in language education. In this study, the researcher aims to critically examine some of the key issues in the area of literacy instruction and development, acquiring a broad

perspective on literacy in the current educational climate. The discussion of the literature will observe the concept of reading instruction and the historical conflict pertaining to the most effective forms of literacy instruction. The author will discuss the arguments promoted by the main advocates of the "Reading Workshop approach", Atwell (2007; 2009) and Calkins, (2001). This will be followed by an evaluation of the primary methodologies used for assessing reading. The role of the teacher and the school setting, as important elements for learning reading skills and competencies, are explored in the context of the research. Furthermore, with a focus on the main research question, and through the exploration of relevant literature, the author will examine these three questions;

What are effective methodologies for literacy instruction?
What is reading independence and how can it be fostered?
Can the Reading Workshop approach positively impact reading attainment, motivation, confidence and engagement?

Table 1.4: Questions for Literature Review

Chapter 3 will document the research design and the methodology that was used in order to gather data from the sample of students, the critical friends and the validation group.

The findings from the data collected will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 4. The findings will be explored using thematic analysis, (Braun et al., 2014). The findings aligned with each theme will be outlined primarily from a qualitative perspective, and further explored using a quantitative lens, where appropriate. These findings will be discussed and critiqued with reference to relevant literature in the field.

Finally in Chapter 5, the researcher will outline practical recommendations arising from the thesis findings, while considering the implications for policy, the amendments to future practice and the opportunities for further research that may arise as a result.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This Literature Review investigates current perspectives on literacy instruction. More specifically, it considers the implementation of literacy interventions to foster reading independence in primary schools. An additional focus of the literature review is to explore differentiation practices associated with literacy instruction, and the impact of increased differentiation, i.e. on motivation, engagement and confidence. All literature will be reviewed in the context of the research question, *How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?*

The literature reviewed discusses the implementation of content-oriented reading interventions (CORI) (Van Rijk, 2007) such as the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001). As discussed in Chapter 1, the initial researcher hypothesis maintained that the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention could enhance independence, engagement, motivation and confidence in reading. Van Rijk et al. (2007:330) support this initial hypothesis, asserting that "content-oriented reading interventions that focus on the integration of motivational enhancement and strategy instruction have been found to have positive effects". The literature was interrogated with a view to informing and reviewing the evolving researcher hypothesis.

2.2 A Brief History of the Approaches to Teaching Reading

Teachers have employed the workshop format for teaching literacy internationally since the late 1980s. The precepts underpinning the workshop approach, such as; choice-based reading, modelling and the provision of extensive authentic reading opportunities, have continued to be supported by evolving international research over the past decades,

(Allington, 2006; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Farnan & Dahl, 2003; Krashen, 2004, cited in Porath, 2016). Many of the precepts associated with the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) align with the values attributed to revolutionary theorists from the past, i.e. Friedrich Froebel, (cited in Liebschner, 1992; Weston, 1998; Smedley and Hoskins, 2019, and Vygotsky, 1978).

Child-centred ideals have been fundamental to the approaches to teaching reading in recent times, informed by the historical values exhibited by Froebel, cited in; Liebschner (1992), Weston (1998), Smedley and Hoskins (2019), Vygotsky (1978), Bruce (2012), Bruce et al., 2019), Brehony (1994; 2000), and Tovey (2016). The principles of Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist concept of the zone of proximal development, as a measurement for assessing readiness to learn, significantly influenced the principles of the workshop approach for teaching reading. These theoretical influences have contributed to gradually changing the traditional paradigm of teacher-directed literacy instruction. This paradigm shift has led to a transformative learning experience for students involving the collaborative construction of knowledge, achieved through active learning (Porath, 2016). The "Reading Workshop" approach (Calkins, 2001), as adapted for this intervention, is based on these contemporary ideals of collaboration, active engagement and authentic learning experiences.

As has been the case since the 1980s, there continues to be consistent, enduring research investigating the best practice for literacy instruction. The research has led to the development of many international initiatives, most notably; the UK initiative, 'Raising Standards' (2005; 2009) and the US initiative, 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) (2001). Both initiatives were concerned with increasing educational attainment, particularly in literacy, and making schools legally accountable for children's academic progress. As is discussed in Section 2.2, the Irish education system is currently operating under similar initiative, as part of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011). While, increased emphasis on

literacy is inherently positive, these initiatives were highly critiqued. In the context of each of these initiatives, is important to be cognisant of the political climate influencing educational policy, i.e. the advancement of neoliberalism. All three initiatives, (UK, US and Irish), were part of respective political agendas focusing on manipulating the education system to serve wider societal needs and to prepare children to meet the demands of a politically cultivated workforce, as is further discussed in an Irish context in Section 2.2.2. Therefore, a consequence of all of these initiatives was that each contributed to hegemonic pressure on educators to raise standards in order to satisfy predetermined criteria that was not solely focused on educational enhancement. For example, in the context of the NCLB initiative, deemed "one of the most significant educational reform policies of the 21st century" (Husband and Hunt, 2015:212) the influence of the policy continues to be relevant nationally, and internationally. NCLB was strongly critiqued (Dennis, 2016, Hunt, 2015; Steinberg and Quinn, 2017) because it commodified education, and penalized schools that did not demonstrate sufficient improvement, a seemingly hypocritical practice in a child-centred policy. Dever and Carlston (2009, cited in Hunt, 2015:12) outline a summary of the critiques, explaining that "as a result of NCLB…teachers; felt more restricted in their classrooms, were concerned over the effects of high-stakes testing, were concerned over meeting the needs of young children given the curricular mandates, and believed that the law was not achieving its intended goal". As is further discussed in Sections 2.2.3-2.2.6, these critiques echo some of the observations made about Irish literacy reforms in recent years.

The issue of the best practice for teaching reading continues to be controversial. Hessler and Morrison (2016:41) refer to "The Reading War" which is "the ongoing philosophical debate about the best approach for teaching reading that historically has been referred to…as phonics versus whole language". Fundamentally, the opposing views respectively advocate for an emphasis on "skill-building" and conversely, an initial emphasis

on “comprehension” (Krashen, 2002:1). The skill-building approach is a constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978; Porath, 2016) methodology that involves children learning to read by first learning letter-sound correspondence knowledge. It is implemented “through explicit instruction, practice, and correction” (Krashen, 2002:1). This approach views the teaching of reading as constructing knowledge and advocates for using prior knowledge to support new knowledge. Conversely, the comprehension hypothesis advocates for an immersive education where all literacy skills are developed simultaneously and then subsequently some literacy skills are isolated when needed for comprehension. The focus is on manipulating a text using a variety of literacy skills concurrently to aid comprehension.

A parallel can be drawn between the goals attributed to each approach. “The comprehension hypothesis and whole language approach are [both] characterized by many curricular goals, including lifelong love of literature, interesting and authentic texts, and problem-solving and critical thinking”, (Krashen, 2002). Therefore, it is internationally accepted that there is merit in both hypothesises (Hessler and Morrison, 2016). A pivotal document, the US National Reading Panel Report (US NRP Report) (2000: 297), drew the conclusion that “systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program”. Consequently, a blended approach was advocated as best practice for literacy instruction. Marinak et al,. (2015) affirm that the approach advocated in the US NRP Report (2000) was enacted as was instructed, concluding that since 2000, a balanced approach to teaching reading, emphasizing comprehension and motivation was undertaken. In the Irish context, this approach is also currently presented as best practice, as described by Burke and Welsch (2018), and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) (2016). Consequently, this enduring approach of promoting balanced literacy instruction, is an underlying precept of the new National Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2015).

2.2.1 Current Best Practice for Teaching Reading– International Recommendations

Upon development of the goal to enhance the teaching of reading in the research context, the following characteristics were considered, as outlined by the International Reading Association [IRA] (2000:1), cited in Griffith et al., (2015), This perspective identified six qualities embodied by excellent reading teachers that "address multiple forms of specialized knowledge as well as dispositions about children as readers", (see Table 2.1).

Excellent reading teachers share several critical qualities of knowledge and practice:
1. They understand reading and writing development, and believe all children can learn to read and write.
2. They continually assess children's individual progress and relate reading instruction to children's previous experiences.
3. They know a variety of ways to teach reading, when to use each method, and how to combine the methods into an effective instructional program
4. They offer a variety of materials and texts for children to read.
5. They use flexible grouping strategies to tailor instruction to individual students.
6. They are good reading 'coaches', (that is, they provide help strategically).

Table 2.1: Effective Reading Teachers (IRA, 2000:1)

There is evidence of a strong correlation between international best practice and the advised practice in Ireland. One contrasting, internationally acclaimed approach, is the use of the workshop methodology, as is discussed in Section 2.5.1 [Calkins, (2001), Atwell, (2009), Gunning, (2010), Clay (1993), Fountas and Pinnell, (2006)]. Another international approach to teaching reading is a focus on "explicit instruction in vocabulary development", (Roskos and Newman, 2014: 501). This view is corroborated by Grabe and Stoller, (2018:1) who

advocate that "a coherent approach to direct vocabulary learning that promotes reading success combines seven key components", (See Table 2.2). This is a more in depth consideration of the value of vocabulary instruction as a central component of a multi-faceted approach to teaching literacy. For the purpose of this research, vocabulary acquisition was a key component of the teacher-designed framework for teaching reading. Both approaches were incorporated into the teacher-designed teaching framework that is central to this research.

Seven Key Components for Direct Vocabulary Learning
(a) a framework for understanding how students learn words as a result of direct instruction
(b) a systematic approach to appropriate word selection
(c) effective ways to introduce words
(d) provisions for meaningful practice
(e) a commitment to teaching word-learning strategies
(f) the maintenance of a vocabulary-rich classroom environment
(g) A commitment to vocabulary recycling (reinforcing target vocabulary through repetition).

Table 2.2: Seven Key Components for Direct Vocabulary Learning (Grabe and Stoller, 2018:1)

2.2.2 Current Best Practice for Teaching Reading in Ireland – National Recommendations

In the Irish context, Literacy is defined as "the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media" (DES, 2011:8). Therefore, these skills are central to wider literacy assessment. For the purpose of this research, "the capacity to read and

understand…printed text" was the main focus of assessment for attainment. The Irish Department of Education and Skills (DES) have undertaken significant curriculum reform in recent years, with an increased emphasis on literacy, numeracy and assessment. In 2011, The Department of Education and Skills, published, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, with the objective:

> "*that all young people will leave school able to read, communicate orally, in writing and in digital media, and able to understand and use mathematics in their everyday lives and in further learning",* (Quinn, 2011:5)

As this research was undertaken in an Irish context, with reference to international literature, it is the researcher's intention to focus on four main aspects of literacy education, recommended on a national level. Therefore, the following Sections 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.2.5 and 2.2.6 will discuss; The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, (NCCA, 2011), The Balanced Approach to Literacy (NEPS, 2016), The New Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2015) and Assessment in The New Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2015.).

2.2.3 National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, (2011) and Associated Literacy Reforms

The report outlines a nine-year strategy to develop literacy and numeracy through; allocating increased time to these core subjects, advocating the development of three-year school improvement plans and enforcing compulsory standardised testing. It is acknowledged that this report gleaned information from current requirements in the Irish work force, highlighting the importance of literacy skills for lifelong learning. "Representatives of business, industry and enterprise pointed to the increasing demands for high levels of literacy and numeracy in all sectors of employment. They emphasised the importance of raising standards…in order to continue to grow our indigenous knowledge economy and continue to attract high-value jobs through inward investment", (DES, 2011:8). The goals of this initiative were designed to purposefully equip children with the literacy skills that are

necessary for full engagement in future study and eventually in employment. The time allocated for literacy in primary school is pivotal in terms of skills development. This concept is not novel, Hiebert (1983:233) instructs that learning to read is not an "exclusively instructional phenomenon". This is explored further in Section 2.4 of this Chapter. As second class is the final year of the junior school cycle of primary school, the research initiative is timely, particularly for children that are under-achieving in terms of literacy attainment. This is corroborated by Schiefele et al., (2016), Learned et al., (2019), and Hiebert, (1983:240) who expressed that 'the discrepancy between good and poor readers increases dramatically as children progress through the elementary grades'. Therefore, from the researcher's perspective, second class was an opportune time to provide a targeted intervention for children perceived as struggling readers.

There is strong evidence of commitment to literacy development in the Irish educational context and education policy. The Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Teaching Council [TC], 2011) advocates for increased literacy input as part of professional development. In addition, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, (NCCA) have undertaken numerous reviews of the research evidence on language and literacy. The following publications were commissioned with the aim of informing the ongoing revision of the 1999 curriculum; *Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (children aged 3–8 Years)* (NCCA; Kennedy et al., 2012); *Oral Language in Early Childhood and Primary Education (children aged 3–8 Years)* (Shiel et al., 2012); and *Towards an Integrated Language Curriculum in Primary Education (children aged 3–12 years)* (O'Duibhir & Cummins, 2012). These documents preceded an overhaul of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2015), as discussed in Section 2.2.5, setting in motion a host of new approaches in what has been a pivotal decade for language learning in the Irish context.

Therefore, in conjunction with the researcher's professional motivation, in the Irish context, this research project aligns closely with the National Strategy to improve Numeracy and Literacy among Children and Young People, (DES, 2011), and the preceding research. As outlined, the demands of the current literacy strategy measure children's reading and writing closely, with the aim of increasing attainment levels, which is a very positive attribute of this initiative. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to current educational practice in the research context because the development and assessment of reading literacy skills is currently a key focus in Irish education, and within the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) plan.

It is important to note that, in alignment with international best practice, many recent Irish literacy reforms and research were commissioned as a direct result of current international assessments involving reading literacy. For example; as mentioned in Chapter 1, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the ePIRLS assessments have all been undertaken in the Irish context over the last five years. Eivers et al., (2016:19), reported that Ireland received the "fourth highest mean result" in these assessments. This positive result is supported by the congruence between Irish policy and international advice for literacy instruction. This evidence strongly indicates that current national practices for teaching reading are successful when analysed in an international context. Mullis et al., (2015:12), cited in Eivers et al., (2016), describe the focus of the assessment in the ePIRLS reading literacy test; "reading literacy is the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual". If this definition is considered the optimum level of reading attainment, it can be inferred from the successful results, that the Balanced Approach to Literacy (NEPS, 2016) provides children with opportunities to achieve this high level of literacy.

Although, it is clear that the academic results of the implementation of these literacy reforms validate their role in Irish education, and it is widely accepted that the Literacy and

Numeracy strategy (DES, 2011) has well-developed, positive aspirations, the initiative is not without fault. A key aim of the strategy is to "foster an enjoyment of reading among children and young people" (DES, 2011:17). However, due to the increased workload and pressure to provide increased results, there is little time for differentiating practice and focusing on holistic literacy development, both of which underpin the ethos of the Irish curricula, and can contribute significantly to children's enjoyment of reading.

A significant criticism of the increase in literacy content to be taught is that the national primary curriculum is overloaded, (NCCA, 2005; 2010: np), with literacy being prioritised to the detriment of other subject areas. The concept of increasing discrete language time as a means to improving standards is debatable as it results in less time for other subjects and a lack of integration in the approach to teaching. Merely increasing subject time as a sole initiative is not evidence-based. Therefore, increasing time is not reflective of what this research aims to achieve, the focus is on the implementation of new, integrated teaching methodologies for literacy. This prevalent "issue of curriculum overload was identified by teachers and principals during two phases of review of the Primary School Curriculum" (NCCA, 2005; 2010: np) ;[(*The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People*, 2011–2020 (DES, 2011a)]. Similarly, it was identified as a challenge by the researcher, "this reflective exercise has highlighted that it is important to be cognisant of the impact of curriculum overload and time pressure", (Reflective Journal Entry 27, 17 November 2018).

Burke and Welsch (2018) address the challenge of curricular overload, advocating for an integrated approach. Their publication, *Literacy in a Broad and Balanced Primary School Curriculum: The Potential of a Disciplinary Approach in Irish Classrooms* (2018) discusses a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy in the context of the wider national curriculum, highlighting the potential for integration of literacy into other curricular areas.

This is the ultimate extension of the balanced approach – when elements of literacy are explicitly focused on in different subjects throughout curricular instruction. Therefore, with a view to adhering to the recommendation, (Burke and Welsch, 2018), an interactive, cohesive and integrated approach was used in this study, overcoming the issue of curricular overload. The integration of literacy instruction afforded the researcher increased time to implement the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention, without compromising any other curricular areas.

2.2.4 Current Best Practice – A Balanced Approach to Literacy (NEPS, 2016)

The aforementioned Balanced Approach to Literacy is outlined for the Irish context in *A Balanced Approach to Literacy in the Early Years* (NEPS, 2016). It is a pivotal Irish document, providing a comprehensive insight into specific methodologies for literacy instruction. Accompanying this publication, the European Literacy Network (ELN) (2016), undertook an investigation into literacy in Ireland. The main conclusion from this report determined that Ireland is "a high-performing educational system where reading literacy is concerned" (ELN, 2016:6). Many of the key literacy areas for development, outlined in the report, focused explicitly on strategies for promoting reading. For example, "providing a literate environment in school; offering digital literacy learning opportunities at school; supporting family literacy programs and strengthening reading motivation". These areas for development in the teaching of reading reflect a strong commitment to improving literacy instruction in Ireland.

The Balanced Approach to Literacy Development (NEPS, 2016) is presented as current best practice worldwide, advocated for by many international theorists [Clay (2013), Cobb and Kallus (2011), Fresch (2008) and Calkins (2001)]. It is characterised by an amalgamation of the main aspects of the skills and comprehension-based approaches to the teaching of reading. This approach suggests that children should experience an active, multi-

faceted, multi-sensory approach to the teaching of reading. This involves; emphasis on many different skills and strategies, exposure to various genres of books and print; opportunities to engage in varied reading tasks and experience of various reading stimuli. “In a balanced approach to literacy instruction, teachers integrate instruction with authentic reading and writing and experiences so that students learn how to use literacy strategies and skills and have opportunities to apply what they are learning”, (Tompkins, 2018:1).

For the purpose of this research, the primary focus was on the “Reading” component of the Balanced Approach, (NEPS, 2016). Other components such as; phonics and other skills, strategies, vocabulary, comprehension and literature were integrated into the research as part of the teaching of reading. Therefore, as advised in the curriculum, and in alignment with the aims for this research study, the balanced approach was implemented to create a specific classroom culture based on building a “community” of independent readers (Warner et al., 2017 and Hawley, 2017:36). This approach is highly acclaimed on a national level (NEPS, 2016) and from an international perspective Clay, M. (2013), Gambrell et al.,(2011) and Tompkins, (2018).

2.2.5 Current Best Practice for Teaching Reading– The New Primary Language Curriculum (PLC)

In the Irish context, the New Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) (NCCA, 2015) is the prescriptive document that outlines how reading should be taught. As mentioned above, the curriculum underwent a significant review recently and the Junior PLC was disseminated for use in 2016, with the Senior PLC anticipated to be released in 2019. The internal stakeholders of the new language curriculum included; students, parents, teachers, principals and the boards of management within schools. External stakeholders included; the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), The Teaching Council, the Irish Primary Principals’ Network (IPPN), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), and the

Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the DES Inspectorate. All of the internal and external stakeholders were somewhat involved in the review, implementation and critique of the new curriculum. However, a critique of the development of the new language curriculum, incorporating the curriculum for reading, was that many of the stakeholders were not sufficiently involved in the consultation and draft process during the curriculum review (McGarry, 2017).

A further critique of the implementation process, as discussed by McGarry (2017) was that during the initial implementation, there were discrepancies between the information given by the curriculum developers, the NCCA, and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), who were the providers of professional development for the new curriculum. This led to ambiguity relating to what standard of teacher planning and assessment was expected.

2.2.6 Assessment in the New Primary Language Curriculum

The new primary language curriculum (NCCA, 2015) discusses the teaching of reading in relation to three elements, *Communicating, Understanding* and *Exploring and Using.* Similarly, the associated learning outcomes for Reading are discussed under these elements, (See Table 2.3). For the purpose of this research, the teacher-designed approach to teaching reading incorporated these learning outcomes into framework for assessment, as is discussed in Chapter 3. In the wider educational context, the decreased amount of objectives for assessment of reading was deemed an attribute of the new curriculum (McGarry, 2017). Previously, Irish literacy assessment practices were in conflict with international practice in terms of literacy assessment because international assessment practices advocated using a trajectory of development to assess student progress. However, the new language curriculum, (NCCA, 2015) advocates for assessment of all learning outcomes to be documented using learning milestones, as per international practice.

Element	Learning Outcomes
Communicating	• Engagement (intentionality) • Motivation and choice (relevance)
Understanding	• Conventions of print (meaning and interpretation of text/illustration) • Phonological and phonemic awareness • Phonics and word recognition (alphabetic principle, word identification strategies) • Reading vocabulary (semantics)
Exploring and Using	• Purpose, genre and voice (awareness of author's purpose) • Comprehension (comprehension, text organisational structure and fix-up strategies • Fluency and self-correction (accuracy, fluency and meaning)

Table 2.3: New Primary Language Curriculum: Reading – Elements and Learning Outcomes (NCCA, 2015)

A criticism of this prescriptive approach to assessing the achievement of objectives on a continuum is that it advocates labelling students according to the milestone their reading behaviour corresponds to. While, it is useful to have "a precise description of the behaviours of proficient readers", (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012:12), the introduction of milestones standardises the learning objectives on a continuum despite the emphasis in the curriculum on using a differentiated, target-based approach. In this way, the new curriculum could be viewed as inflexible when compared to previous curricula, allowing for limited fluidity within the spectrum of the milestones. This is in opposition to the researcher's professional

philosophy of child-centred education, and therefore contributed to the motivation to improve literacy instruction in practice. The researcher recognises that it is appropriate to acknowledge a caveat due to the ongoing revision of the Primary Language Curriculum, which will be published after this paper. While it is unlikely that the milestones will be revised, the researcher reserves judgement on future amendments to the curriculum.

Additionally, in terms of practicality, the issue of curriculum overload, (NCCA, 2005; 2010: np), hinders the implementation of this prescriptive assessment. If educators were to undertake the assessment rigorously, milestones could be attributed to children according to each aspect of reading instruction, and children could be placed at different points on the spectrum according to each learning outcome. With increasing class numbers and curricular overload, this level of assessment in one subject area is unsustainable. In light of this critique of the new curriculum, (NCCA: 2015), this research study endeavoured to incorporate practical methods for assessing, varied reading attainment, independence, engagement, motivation and confidence, as discussed in Chapter 3. Calkins (2001) and Black and William (2018) advocate for continuous, varied forms of assessment as learning, assessment of learning and assessment for learning, and thus were among the most significant theorists that influenced the framework for assessment in the research context.

2.3 Differentiated Literacy Instruction

For the purpose of this research into enhancing literacy teaching and learning for the whole class, the "full range of readers", (Calkins, 2001:157), was interpreted as the emergent readers, the lower achieving readers and the most proficient readers in the research sample. In light of the claim that these were the type of readers involved in this research, the intervention was developed to cater for all research participants, with a focus on creating an environment conducive to sustainable reading development for all readers.

2.3.1 What constitutes 'Good Reading?' - Assessment of Reading Success

Reading success is characterized by a reader's ability to use a plethora of strategies to enhance their access to and comprehension of a text. In order to evaluate success, the researcher was looking for "observable signs of reading progress" (Calkins, 2001:156). For example, the application of a reading strategy i.e. decoding, in an appropriate context would denote progress as the child is actively using the strategies at their disposal. Additionally, proficient readers can choose reading material that is 'just right' for their reading level, as referred to as "The Goldilocks Rule" (Weber, 2018:2), as discussed in Section 4.3.4.

Mullis and Martin (2015:12), cited in Eivers et al., (2016), explain how readers can construct meaning from texts in a variety of forms. They read "to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment". This is considered the optimum level of functioning for a proficient reader. From the researcher's observations in the context, a proficient reader has a strong understanding of reading strategies, can accurately make effective use of each respective strategy in an appropriate context, can engage in consistent meaning-making as they absorb the information in a text, and can assess their own reading progress. Afflerbach (2016: 415) supports this definition, explaining that, "to be independent and successful, all readers must assume responsibility for self-assessment: setting clear goals for reading, monitoring progress along the reading path, and determining if reading is successful".

The external presentation of a confident reader is also important. The confident reader exhibits a clear, fluent, reading voice, making effective use of intonation and accurately interpreting the syntax and punctuation of the sentence. A proficient reader can be observed using skills to deduce what is being said in the text i.e. using contextual clues to infer the meaning of an unfamiliar word. McEwan-Adkins (2007) outlines these reading skills in *The Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers,* (See Appendix A). Additionally, we can also

observe the strategies children have invented or incorporated into their practice to support themselves. Reading proficiency is achieved as a result of a lengthy process of assessment and consequential differentiated literacy instruction aimed at children becoming fully competent independent readers.

2.3.2 What characterizes Reading Difficulty? - Assessment of Reading Difficulty

Clay (2013) and Calkins (2001) identify teacher observation as an important tool for formal and informal assessment of reading difficulty. Reading difficulty is characterised as "students who do not demonstrate strong grade [class] level proficiency", (Melekoglu, 2011: 248).

As discussed above, (in Sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4), it is important to identify over-reliance on particular strategies and under-use of other strategies in relation to the teaching of emergent and struggling readers. The fundamental reading strategies, i.e. word identification, decoding, inferring and use of contextual clues, need to be used at appropriate times, in isolation and concurrently, in order to be effective. The idea is that the more challenged the reader is, the more idiosyncratic that reader's strategies are likely to be. Readers that are struggling find it difficult to apply the taught reading strategies appropriately and effectively, and thus application is disjointed. This highlights the value of explicit strategy instruction in the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention. As evident in Chapter 4, this research study includes data from participants that qualify as lower-achieving readers and from participants with specific reading difficulties, i.e. dyslexia. Therefore, it was foreseen that the readers who were struggling in the research context, would experience consolidation of all of the fundamental skills of reading during the intervention. Smith, (n.d.), cited in Calkins, (2001:25), states that the main purpose of school is that "every child is given full membership to the club of literacy", which extends to less-proficient readers as well as more capable readers.

2.3.3 Improving the teaching of emergent readers through increased differentiation

In the research context, there are four participants that would qualify as emergent readers. In the interest of trustworthiness and validity, it is important to the researcher that the voices of these participants are accurately represented in the data. The significance of representing the voice of the child in action research is emphasised by Burton et al., (2011: 128) who state that "the inclusion of children's voices form an integral element in participatory action research (PAR)". Calkins (2001) also reinforces the importance of showcasing and assessing basic reading skills with emergent readers. The concepts of thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text, summarize the complexity of effective reading behaviour that characterises proficiency in reading, (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012). Proficient readers are largely unconscious of this complex cognitive activity. However, engagement with this literature highlighted, for the researcher, that the cognition involved in proficient reading needs to be explicitly modelled for emergent and struggling readers (Clay, 1991, cited in Fountas and Pinnell, 2012:10). The mini-lesson aspect of the reading workshop facilitates the level of differentiation and explicit teaching required to cater for these participants in a small-group setting. The rationale for the assessment methodology used to organise the ability groups necessary for the implementation of this aspect of the intervention is discussed in Section 2.5.3 of this chapter.

2.3.4 Improving the teaching of struggling readers

"Children don't get to be stronger readers by holding heavier books" (Calkins, 2001:35)

The research will include participants that qualify as lower-achieving readers. According to initial teacher observation, (Reflective Journal Entry 29, 3 March 2019), reading had often been a "destructive experience" for many of these children as they had been operating at frustration-level (Treptow et al., 2007). It is common for struggling readers to be over-dependent on certain strategies and not to engage with others, as alluded to by

Calkins (2001). This leads to failure to access higher-order core reading strategies, such as fluency and comprehension strategies. Educators must consider the extent to which readers are employing appropriate strategies. If strategies are not employed effectively, it is likely that consolidation of the objective of each strategy is needed, (Afflerbach et al., 2016).

Clay, (2000) emphasized the importance of providing all students with the same experiences that the more proficient readers had been given. For example, consistent access to reading material of choice and engagement with authentic reading experiences may be more commonly associated with proficient readers. However, these are the type of opportunities that Clay, (2000) advocates for all readers. Calkins (2001) echoes this, advising that educators should develop a perspective on a struggling reader as a reader with strengths and limitations. It is important to document what these readers can do well in addition to the needs they are exhibiting, despite the perceived 'trade off' that can potentially occur. For example, young readers focusing on semantics to the detriment of consideration of orthographic detail, [spelling and word-based work] (Deacon et al., 2012).This positive perspective is conducive to developing learner autonomy.

In line with this view, Clay, (2000) developed a Reading Recovery © programme that focus on the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities for struggling readers. This programme influenced the differentiation strategies used in the teaching of the group of readers in the research sample. The learning opportunities advocated include; creating authentic opportunities for students to independently engage with continuous texts and using a blended approach for the teaching of reading and writing. Additionally, Forbes and Dorn, (2015:29) corroborate this view, advocating that "providing book introductions…,teaching with precision and an economy of language; and organizing for the development of fast recognition or production of letters, letter clusters, and words that the reader knows" are essential learning opportunities for struggling readers.

2.3.5 Improving the teaching of the most proficient readers

The most proficient readers participating in this research study continue to require a higher level of instruction concerned with higher-order skills, including; mastering reading fluency, reading with expression, intonation and critical-thinking comprehension skills. Wood (2008:18) defines proficient readers as "highly verbal and [able to] use advanced language and vocabulary with ease". Despite this proficiency, Wood (2008:19) affirms that "even advanced readers benefit from instructional strategies for developing greater insights into the subtleties of literary selections, understanding nuances of meaning, and mastering advanced-level informational content". Calkins (2001:12) corroborates this view, questioning, "What is growth in reading once you can read?" This consideration is important because research suggests that the learning needs of children with proficient reading skills can be overlooked and this is detrimental to attainment and development (Tomlinson, 2014).

This view is corroborated by Moon and Brighton (2008:274), cited in Garret et al., (2015:18) who explain that educators are primed to "hold a deficit-oriented framework when considering the characteristics of [proficient and struggling] young learners". This assertion strongly resonated with the researcher's experience, as evident in the reflective journal, (Reflective Journal Entry 27, 22 February 2019). In opposition to the "deficit-orientated framework" that the researcher was previously perpetuating, Wood (2008) highlights that having a more neutral or positivist outlook is beneficial to proficient and exceptional readers. Wood (2018:19) affirms that "by providing the young gifted reader with a challenging instructional program and high-interest reading curriculum…reading progress will…result in positive educational outcomes".

Therefore, as advised by these theorists, in relation to challenging and advancing the proficient readers, the intervention effected change in researcher practice, as highlighted in

Reflective Journal Entry 34, (22 March 2019). Vocabulary development and higher-order comprehension were subsequently a key focus of the research intervention. This perspective challenged the epistemological viewpoint of the researcher, culminating in the identification of a "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 1989; 2015, cited in Sullivan et al., 2016:62) in researcher assumptions, which led to a change in practice (Brookfield, 2013). Woolman, (2007, cited in Fountas and Pinnell, 2012:7) also supports transforming practice as a result of reflection, instructing that "to change our practices in an enduring way, we need to change our understandings. If we bring our old thinking to a new practice, the rationales may not fit". The action-research reflective process enabled the researcher to change the "deficit-orientated framework" (Moon and Brighton, 2008:274, cited in Garret et al., 2015:18) that was perpetuated, and transform it into a more balanced approach towards teaching proficient, struggling and emergent readers.

2.4 Independence, Engagement, Confidence and Motivation

Hiebert (1983: 233) concludes that due to the instructional-social context of classroom learning, "learning to read, as with any area of content, cannot be viewed as an exclusively instructional phenomenon". This study is based on the impact of the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) on Independence, Engagement, Confidence and Motivation, all contributing factors to learning to read.

2.4.1 Fostering Independent Reading

As discussed by Calkins (2001) and Clay (2000), learner autonomy is the ultimate goal of reading instruction, and consequently, of this research intervention. As alluded to in Section 2.1, the concept of reader autonomy is prevalent in much of the eminent literature on this research topic, and aligns closely with the professional values attributed to the researcher. Fountas and Pinnell, (2012:6) agree, asserting that "accurate word reading is not the only goal [of reading instruction]; efficient, independent self-monitoring behaviour and the ability to

search for and use a variety of sources of information in the text are key to proficiency". This correlates closely to the aims of this research intervention, affirming that independent skills can be developed effectively parallel to literacy skills. The definition of independent reading that resonates most with this research originates from Afflerbach (2016:415).

"To be independent and successful, all readers must assume responsibility for self-assessment: setting clear goals for reading, monitoring progress along the reading path, and determining if reading is successful".

All of the elements outlined in this definition correlate to central aspects of the research intervention. The purpose of using a differentiated intervention to enhance researcher practice was to facilitate independent reading in the research context. As part of the intervention, the practice employed by the teacher-researcher was focused on modelling independent use of explicit reading strategies, positive reading habits and criteria for assessment. Buhagiar, (2007:50) ascertains that "students cannot become the hoped-for independent and autonomous learners unless they first absorb standards of quality, (Sadler, 1989, cited in Buhagiar, 2007), and develop the capacity for self-assessment", (Black, 1998; Stefani, 1998, cited in Buhagiar, 2007). The connection between assessment and independent practice is further discussed in Section 2.3.1.

2.4.2 Developing Engagement, Motivation and Confidence in Reading

Gambrell (1996:14), Erikson (2019) and Rosenweig et al., (2018) outline the pivotal role the teacher has in "creating a classroom culture that fosters reading motivation". In the context of this research study, the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) was embedded in a specific culture aimed at fostering engagement and motivation. Reading success is largely dependent on motivation to read. "Motivation, self-efficacy, and making correct attributions for reading performance are essential for reading success" (Afflerbach, 2016: 416). Autonomy enables students to engage more readily with the text that they are reading,

contributing to success. Rosenblatt (1994, cited in Fountas and Pinnell, 2012:9) affirms that "reading is a *transaction* between the text and the reader…The reader constructs unique meanings through integrating background knowledge, emotions, attitudes, and expectations with the meaning the writer expresses". The aim is that increasing independence can prompt readers to initiate and negotiate these "transactions" more effectively and with increased success and enjoyment.

The concepts of independence, engagement, motivation and confidence are inter-connected and make respective contributions to student attainment and reading success. Solheim (2011), cited in Afflerbach (2016: 417) corroborates this principle, asserting that, "students' increased self-efficacy is related to enhanced reading comprehension and achievement". McCrudden, Perkins and Putney (2005), cited in Afflerbach (2016) attribute increased motivation to high self-efficacy and independence also. Students with high attainment levels in reading experience increased confidence and are therefore, more motivated to engage with reading. This contributes to reading enjoyment and the independent pursuit of authentic reading experiences. This cyclical model is an example of the optimal learning model, as described by Routman (2008). It employs the gradual release of responsibility model (Kracl, 2012) effectively, using increasing engagement, motivation and confidence as tools to support independent reading.

2.5 Strategies for Teaching Reading

The development of the intervention was influenced significantly by the teaching methodologies advocated for use in the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001, Atwell 2007; 2009, and Clay, 2000). As described in Section 2.2, both a blended phonics and whole-language approach is advised for the teaching of reading. This incremental approach to learning aligns with the differentiated elements of the workshop. Stockard and Engelmann

(2010, cited in Jarvis, 2016:4) describe the spiral nature of learning to read, articulating how "reading is a developmental activity and higher order skills (fluency and comprehension) depend on the acquisition of the more basic skills (phonemic awareness and phonics)". As discussed in Section 2.3, the presentation of abilities among the research participants warranted a significantly differentiated approach, where both lower and higher-order strategies were incorporated into the teaching content. In this way, participants in the research learned reading strategies appropriate for their zone of development (Vygotsky, 1978), in a timely, incremental manner. The "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) aligns with this approach as the mini-lessons and conferencing opportunities, targeted at the respective ability groups, all incorporate the teaching of strategies suited to each group. This section will review specific reading methodologies and strategies in use during the intervention.

2.5.1 The Reading Workshop, (Calkins, 2001).

"If our teaching is to be an art, we need an organizing vision that brings together all of these separate [reading] components into something graceful and vital and significant. It is not the number of good ideas that turns our work into art, but the selection, balance, coherence and design of these ideas" (Calkins, 2001: 4).

The work of Calkins, (2001) informed the researcher's approach to structuring the teaching of reading to support the research. The aforementioned aim, as mentioned in Chapter 1, of combining the reading components into a comprehensive approach to cater for fostering reading independence of all learners was the goal of the research intervention. The "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) framework was an appropriate influence on the development of the intervention because there is scope within the structured methodology to explicitly teach the various components of reading and to teach the associated strategies, concepts, skills and vocabulary.

Calkins (2001:42) advocates for the use of a structured teaching routine, explaining that "the most creative environments in our society are…the predictable ones". This refers to how learning environments should be uncomplicated due to the unpredictable nature of children's work. In relation to reading, this structured environment allows "readers to be…purposeful and full of initiative if they work within a predictable, constant structure" (Calkins: 2001:66). This resonates with the experience of the researcher as highlighted in the reflective journal, (Reflective Journal Entry 3, 14 August 2019), "*the establishment of a structured routine will be central to the success of the initiative because it will be a new approach for the children. I hope that the routine ensures they experience security within the new approach to enable them to fully engage with it".* However, a critique of this routine-based approach would be that spontaneity can be important for building excitement and increasing motivation in the classroom, as advocated for by Froebel, (cited in Liebschner, 1992; Weston, 1998; Smedley and Hoskins, 2019).

2.5.2 Guided Reading as a component of the Reading Workshop

Guided reading will form a part of the reading workshop intervention, as advised by Fountas and Pinnell (1996; 2012). This approach provides an opportunity to model and assess the chosen objectives in a small-group setting. Calkins (2001) critiques Guided Reading, cautioning that while it is useful, a guided reading approach cannot be a forum to teach all reading strategies, monitor reading, conference with students and assess difficulties. Upon reflection, this critique resonated with the experience of the researcher as the Guided Reading approach was previously exploited to meet an excess of learning criteria. Therefore, this was an aspect of the researcher's practice that was identified for improvement and modification.

Among other theorists, Van Rijk et al. (2007:331) corroborate the research hypothesis. "Extensive research has revealed that Content Orientated Reading Interventions (CORI) have positive effects on reading motivation and reading comprehension compared to approaches

that are based on traditional or mere strategy instruction" (Guthrie and Klauda, 2014; Guthrie, McRae, and Klauda, 2007; Guthrie et al. 2004 and Wigfield et al. 2008, cited in Van Rijk, 2007). Therefore, in order to effect a change in practice, the new approach adopted cognitive strategy instruction, (CSI) (Wigfield et al., 2016), focused on modelling explicit reading strategies and the associated thought process. This comparison correlates to the contrast identified in the reflective journal, (Entry 13, 6 February 2019), between the newly developed reading intervention, and the researcher's previous, more traditional practice of solely implementing Guided Reading.

Calkins (2001:32) affirms this, asserting that "it is troubling if a child's only access to books is through the keyhole of guided reading groups". This describes that the unnatural experience of guided reading is too limited to constitute a child's only interaction with reading. Similarly, as an extension of guided reading, the "round robin" (Ash et al., 2008), reading approach, is heavily critiqued. Johnson and Lapp (2012:260, in Lapp and Moss, 2012) argue that it "does little to develop fluency or comprehension and can lead to children associating reading aloud with anxiety". Both critical viewpoints informed the development of the intervention, with limited emphasis on guided reading, and no inclusion of the round robin approach in the programme.

2.5.3 Using Ability-Based Groups during the Reading Workshop

Reading instruction requires differentiation of content and process and this is made possible through the use of ability groups during literacy stations. The concept that reading skills and strategies are more accessible to students when they are presented at their readiness levels (Vygotsky, 1978) informed the rationale for incorporating ability groups into the research intervention. In alignment with this view, Griffith et al., (2015) describe how small-group lessons facilitate increased variation in teacher decisions that are specific to the learning needs of individual children. The wide range of learning needs in the research

context supported the need for targeted teaching, catering for specific children within streamed ability groups. Therefore, ability groups were used to support differentiated literacy instruction, in this instance, while implementing the targeted reading initiative.

There is strong literary evidence to support ability-based small-group instruction. Hiebert (1983: 234) acknowledges that "small groups established for reading instruction…form instructional-social contexts that are unique from organizational contexts", affording educators an opportunity to establish suitable conditions for learning. Consequently, the context formed is a microenvironment that can be cultivated to suit the learners in the reading group, with the aim of ensuring readiness for learning. Another aspect of the rationale for using ability grouping as part of the reading intervention was that children could work alongside others who had similar abilities and similar interest levels. According to Erikson (2019) and Rosenweig et al., (2018) these supportive conditions increase engagement in reading, motivation to read and confidence in reading. This approach aligns with the original "Reading Workshop", (Calkins, 2001, Atwell, 2007; 2009) because it incorporates station-based teaching. Tomlinson (2014:104) is also an advocate for using station teaching to aid differentiation outlining that, "for the purposes of differentiated instruction, stations allow different students to work with different tasks". In this way, educators align student needs with instruction and assessment. It is further affirmed that "targeted use of stations makes both teaching and learning more efficient than it could be with whole-class instruction" (Tomlinson, 2014: 108). Additionally, Kracl (2012) concludes that small-group instruction is a very useful methodology for catering for diverse student needs, corroborating this view held by Tomlinson (2014).

International research has extensively interrogated the use and impact of ability grouping (Alexander et al., 2009; Boaler, 2008; Hornby et al., 2011; Ireson et al., 1999; Ramberg, 2016 and Smyth, 2016, cited in McGillicuddy and Devine, 2017) A significant

proportion of the research critiques ability grouping, referring to the practice as an act of symbolic violence (McGillicuddy and Devine, 2017). Tomlinson (2001) and Kracl (2012:200) also identify a difficulty with using any form of groups because the use of groups increases "the complexity of managing the classroom environment". However, the strongest criticism focuses on ability grouping. As a methodology, it is viewed as potentially having a negative impact on student self-esteem, classroom culture and student attainment. Hart et al. (2004:3) articulate how "learning without limits becomes possible when young people's school experiences are not organised and structured on the basis of judgements of ability". Similarly Hart (2004) and Bernstein (1975; 1990 and 1996) are critical of ability grouping from the perspective of the potential negative impact on student self-esteem and attainment. In the context of this research study, the research findings opposed this claim. The researcher's experience indicated that incorporating structured use of ability grouping meant that more proficient students were less limited, as there was increased provision for challenging them using differentiated practice. Similarly, less-proficient readers were more confident when working with peers of similar ability. This is supported by the international view that a combination of mixed-ability grouping and ability-based grouping, when used appropriately, is best, (Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe, 2010). These findings are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

2.5.4 The Impact of Goal Setting and Assessment on the Development of Learner Autonomy.

Nunan (1999:145, cited in Reinders, 2010:47) concludes that "learners who have reached a point where they are able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities have, by definition, become autonomous". This perspective is corroborated by Afflerbach (2016: 416) who states that, "when we view reading assessment as something to teach, we can help students move toward the goal of independence through self-assessment." This resonates with the aim for this research study. Goal setting enables children to become

aware of their own strengths, weaknesses and achievements, in a positive way. It also increases accountability and motivation for children's independent work. Afflerbach (2016: 419) further corroborates this view, asserting that "independence with assessment is the hallmark of a successful reader". Children's goals are a source of information for informal teacher assessment, as noted by Förster and Souvignier (2014:91) who found that "providing teachers with information of learning progress was found to positively affect growth in reading achievement". The opportunity for conferencing with students during the reading workshop provided an appropriate environment for scaffolding children's goals. Additionally, the researcher was enabled to observe children's' reading behaviours and to assess the rationale behind their actions to inform planning for learning (Calkins, 2001).

2.6 Assessment of Reading

Assessment of reading is a core element of teaching and planning for learning. In terms of assessing reading, it is imperative that assessment for learning and assessment of learning are both significant aspects of the assessment cycle. Black and William (2018: 553) describe "the role of students in monitoring and directing their own learning", as "assessment as learning". The term "assessment for learning" is then used to describe the process by which teachers use assessment evidence to inform their teaching, and "assessment of learning" refers to the use of assessment to determine the extent to which students have achieved intended learning outcomes". In this way, reading assessment is consistently cyclical because the development of skills aligns with the spiral nature of the literacy curriculum. Afflerbach (2016: 413) developed an assessment creed that sets parameters for assessment practices. "Assessment should produce information that is useful in helping students become better readers, and assessment should do no harm." In the context of this research, this principle was interpreted as the use of assessment solely for positive purposes where it empowers the educator and the student. In the interest of triangulation, a

combination of formative, summative and standardised assessment was used during the intervention, despite the contradiction observed between the researcher's value on differentiation and standardised testing. This paradox was negotiated by ensuring all assessment was useful and empowering for the researcher and the child participants,.

In relation to reading instruction, Forbes and Dorn (2015:29) apply the concept of the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), as they affirm how the instructional decisions made by educators "scaffold the student's development of independent self-regulation of strategic activity and development of inner control of the reading process". Furthermore, Afflerbach (2016:415) highlights the importance of assessment for learning within adherence to the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) asserting that "effective instruction within each student's zone of proximal development depends on the teacher having up-to-date assessment information that describes what a student can do independently and what a student might next do with teacher support".

Similarly, Calkins, (2001:145), instructs that "assessment and instruction must become aligned so that we tailor our interventions to the child and scaffold and celebrate even the smallest steps". This differentiated, supportive approach aligns with the Vygotskian model (1978) of assessing individual independent ability and providing intervention that will lead the learner to the next stage of learning, with the aim of learner autonomy once the task has been sufficiently supported. Chomsky (2013: n.p., cited in Sullivan et al., 2016:41) reinforces this claim, describing how "education is really aimed at helping students to get to the point where they can learn on their own". This perspective further supports the hypothesis about fostering independent reading that underpins this research study.

2.6.1 Formal and Informal Methods for Assessing Reading – Teacher Observation and Written Forms of Assessment

An assessment system in use for evaluating reader progress should be "a source of constant feedback on our progress towards our goals" (Calkins, 2001: 155). As part of this research, the "assessment system" closely aligned with the goals of the research. The patterns exhibited by the participants in the study were assessed in order to enhance the practices employed to teach these children to be effective, independent readers. In this way, assessment was beneficial and empowering for the readers and enhanced differentiated instruction used by the educator.

Assessment of reading can take a dual perspective. In one respect, assessment will focus of the identification of positive reading behaviours to indicate proficiency. Conversely, the habits of a struggling reader can be observed to identify what strategies are in use and what strategies may be lacking. In both respects, the information gleaned from assessment is valuable as reinforced by Afflerbach (2016:415) who explains that "without formative assessment, critical decisions about what to teach and when to teach in the zone of proximal development, (Vygotsky, 1978), are informed by guesswork".

Clay (2000) made a pivotal change to the perspective on the best practice for teaching and assessing reading with the affirmation that teacher observation of student reading behaviour was critical for making informed teaching decisions. This placed teacher observation at the epicentre of assessment of reading as the most effective non-written method of assessing reading. Additionally, Clay (2000) and Calkins (2001) advocate for detailed observation that investigates the way in which reading strategies are implemented. The way readers use strategies is an effective indicator of strengths and needs. For this reason, teacher observation was an important data collection tool, as is discussed in Chapter 3.

In relation to the assessment of reading via written means, Calkins (2001:144) advises that "assessing readers cannot mean merely collecting data". The data must be practical and useful for informing teaching, prompting educators to engage in praxis, where observations lead to purposeful action. A multi-faceted approach to the assessment of reading aims to give a clear indication of the child's position and subsequently informs the teacher's actions. Therefore, it can be ascertained that instruction is based on a complete portrait of the child as a reader. The assessment strategies involved in compiling the portfolio of each reader in this research included the use of teacher observations, standardised reading tests, written student feedback forms and conferencing with individual readers, as explored in Chapter 3.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the national and international literature on literacy development is rich and comprehensive, contributing significantly to the development of this initiative. In the Irish context, much of the research focuses on the Balanced Approach to Literacy and assessment of literacy. This aligns with the nominated best practice internationally. There are many attributes identified in the wealth of literature that was reviewed. The volume of literature focused on; developing the teaching of literacy skills and the associated continuous professional development of educators, conveys a strong commitment to consistent research in the field of literacy. Furthermore, there is overwhelming evidence that literacy instruction and research in literacy are evolving and adapting very well to meet the needs of the children of this generation. Internationally, much of the research focuses on teaching methodologies and reading interventions i.e. The "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001), Guided Reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012) and Reading Recovery © (Clay 2000). The Reading War (Hessler and Morrison, 2016) is also a key feature of international literature, with the merits of a phonological, skills-based approach to teaching reading being contrasted to the use of a whole-language, comprehension-based approach. Additionally, a substantial amount of

international research focuses on teaching low-achieving readers. This highlights the importance placed on reading as a skill in the context of education worldwide – it is arguably the most important skill to be taught.

However, the review of literature did highlight some areas for improvement. The literature on challenging proficient readers does not compare to that which is focused on struggling readers, either in volume or quality. Additionally, in an Irish context, in light of the implementation of the new Primary language curriculum, there is limited research on the impact of curricular reform and the perils of a system dominated by targets and prescribed competencies. This is a limitation of the research that is currently available in Ireland. As alluded to in Section 2.2.6, there will be more substantial research on the impact of the new curriculum in the near future, particularly in relation to its effect on the standard of reading. This is an area that the researcher will be cognisant of and will pursue as part of further research.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1. Introduction to Action Research

"Action research is a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention" (Cohen and Manion, 1994, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:316).

The current literature on action research in education, as relevant in 2018/2019, was considered, in conjunction with all literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The current perspective on action research suggests that it is an appropriate form of research for teachers to undertake, due to "its capacity to address complex issues" (Phelps and Hase, 2002:2). This demonstrates the emerging connection between action research and complexity theory (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, cited in Phelps, 2002:3). Action research enables the practitioner to self-reflect throughout the research process in order to bring about a positive change in their own practice, as highlighted by Woolman (2007, cited in Fountas and Pinnell, 2012:7), aforementioned in Section 2.3.5. In order to orchestrate transformation in practice, systematic reflection is integral to a self-study action-research project. McLaughlin, (2004), cited in, Sullivan et al., (2016) "links the idea of reflecting… with the idea of being an extended professional". This is discussed as exploring "what we do and why we do it", (Sullivan et al., 2016: 8).

The research paradigm associated with this action research is interpretivist, defined by Smith and Osborn (2015) as humans making sense of their environment. The interpretivist method employed is phenomenological, as it involved illuminating experiences and focused on the researcher using these experiences to develop a worldview (Denscombe, 2007; Quinn Patton, 2002; Robson, 2002). The researcher aimed to explore the impact of the reading intervention on children's reading skills using the information gathered from a

phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology was deemed a suitable approach as it is concerned with the 'subjective experience' (Robson, 2002:195) of the researcher. An additional rationale for this choice was that it asserts that individuals have unique perspectives. (Denscombe, 2007). In terms of use in self-study action research, Cohen et al., (2000:25) determine that "…it fits naturally with the kind of concentrated actions found in classrooms and schools".

However, as described in Section 3.2.1, a phenomenological approach involves inductive reasoning, which is subjective by nature. For example, bias can be observed within the way that individuals use different language and reasoning to interpret information (Gibson, 2006, cited in Javadi and Zarea, 2016:39). Despite this, researcher skill must be considered when contextualising the interpretation, although the limitations of a self-study project, as discussed in Chapter 5, can hinder the researcher's ability to discern findings and guarantee transferability (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty and Hendry, 2011).

This educational action research involved implementing a teacher-designed intervention and engaging in a corresponding reflective self-study in order to effect a change in practice. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the change in practice was a reading intervention focused on fostering independent reading skills. This chapter offers an overview of the research design and the methodology used to conduct this research. The data collection methods, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of the study are also discussed. This chapter aims to:

(1) Establish a connection between the international and national literature reviewed and the research methodologies chosen for the study.
(2) Demonstrate an understanding of the research methodologies used and articulate a rationale for the choice of methodologies.

(3) Explain the research sample selection.
(4) Describe the process for designing the instruments and collecting the data.
(5) Provide an insight into the ethical considerations relevant to the research study.

Table 3.1: Aims of Chapter Three

3.2 Research Design

Campbell et al. (2004:127) advocate for using a triad of actions when undertaking a research study. The application of this *Model of Inductive Thinking* to this research study can be seen below in Figure 3.1. The emphasis in this approach is primarily on *"Induction"* which involves the researcher progressing from observation in the research context to the construction of a hypothesis based on the research concept. Subsequently, the researcher engages in "*Deduction"*. At this stage, the researcher infers the implications of the current hypothesis and elaborates on the potential consequences. Finally, the "*Verification" stage* determines the integrity of the hypothesis, defining validity and credibility. Limitations of the research process are also explained at this point. These actions involve methodical reflection throughout the research process.

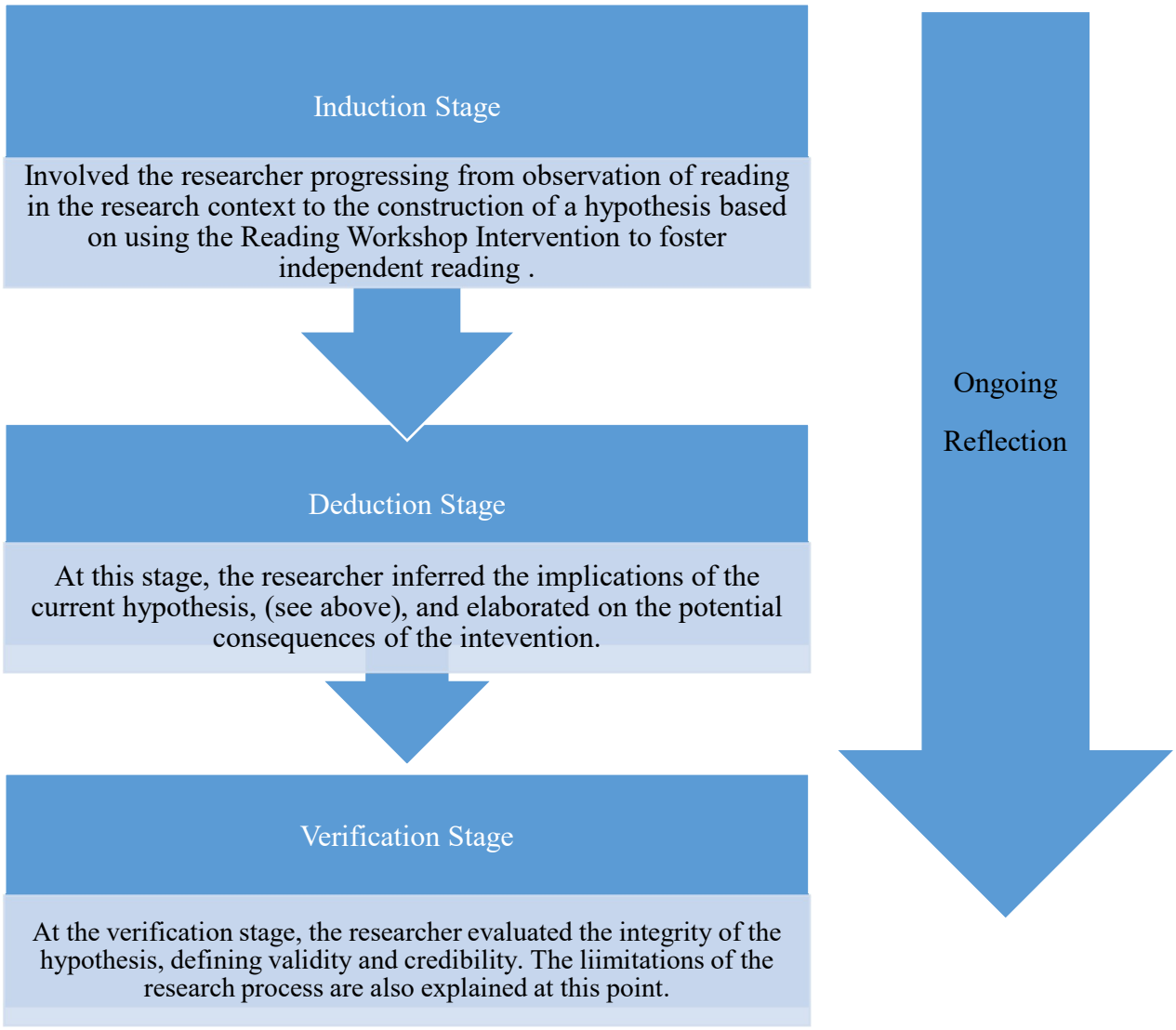


Figure 3.1: The Application of the Model of Inductive Thinking to this Research Study (as part of the Five Steps of Traditional Research): (Campbell et al. 2004:127)

3.2.1 Initial Research Phase

The initial stages of the research process involved reflection on practice, planning for research and conducting pre-intervention assessments. The evolution of the research concept was informed by reflection on past practice, teacher observation in the context and engagement with current literature based on literacy instruction. In this research study, the initial research process involved assessing children's current reading skills and their current perspectives on reading. The assessment also focused on the current differentiation practices,

employed by the researcher, to support the teaching of reading. The aim of these initial actions was to establish a frame of reference at a pre-intervention stage to enable a comparison to be made with future data, as advocated for by Cohen et al., (2007).

Once this initial data was collated, the researcher implemented the "Reading Workshop" intervention (Calkins, 2001), as seen in Appendix E. The research was designed to facilitate the integration of the intervention into the everyday routine of the research context. In order to facilitate rigorous data collection, the contextual integration of the intervention involved the introduction of the following changes to the researcher's practice, the teaching methodologies used and the classroom environment:

Requirements of the Intervention	
Researcher Practice	• Engagement in and documentation of continuous pupil observation, followed by discussion, journal reflection, evaluation, planning & organisation, in line with the action research process (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993).
	• The implementation of the Reading Workshop intervention, incorporating mini lessons, teacher conferencing and independent reading, three times weekly for fourteen weeks.
	• Adopting a new approach to planning for the teaching of reading with a primary focus on differentiated instruction.
Teaching Methodology	• The provision of reading folders for the child participants, including reading strategy prompt cards, goal-setting cards and feedback forms to support their reading. (See Appendix C for resources used).

	• Creating weekly reading goals with children independently and as a class and monitoring achievement (Förster and Souvignier, 2013).
	• Increasing the time spent on promoting independent reading skills.
	• Use of audio recordings to monitor and assess the teaching of reading and children's reading stamina and achievement.
Research Environment	• The adaption of the classroom environment to include more sensory resources and visual prompts to support reading and the Reading Workshop lessons (Essley, 2008; Keene and Zimmerman, (1997; 2007).

Table 3.2: Intervention Implementation

3.2.2 Research Sample

A total sample of twenty nine students in a mainstream second class participated in the research. This sample was random to the extent that the researcher was allocated this class without this research being considered or without researcher input. Random class sampling (Cohen et al. 2007) was appropriate in the instance of this research because it ensured that an authentic example of the differentiation requirements of a typical second class group was observed. All of the students in the class participated in the research. There were fourteen boys and fifteen girls involved. The group involved children who were of Irish descent and children from different ethnic backgrounds, ensuring a diverse sample within the research context. The other research participants were the researcher, two critical friends and the members of the validation groups.

3.2.3 Research Schedule

The research schedule was a fluid element of the research. Initially the time allocated for the action research was twelve weeks. However, based on the researcher's reflective insight and the advice of the supervisor, and due to circumstantial issues in the research context, the project was undertaken for an extended duration of sixteen weeks. The rationale for this extension was to facilitate the continuity of the intervention in a valid manner aligned with extra-curricular class activities. The extra-curricular demands present in second class meant that extending the research period afforded the researcher time to ensure consistent implementation of the project, thus instilling confidence in the validity of the research. This is an example of when the reflective journal prompted a significant change in practice, showing flexibility and the practicality of action-research, as advocated for by Sullivan et al. (2016).

The research was undertaken using a cyclical approach, incorporating four cycles in sixteen weeks, excluding school holidays, and incorporating an evaluation of each cycle. Figure 3.2 explains the structure of the cycles. The pre-intervention (Week 1) and post-intervention (Week 16) assessment weeks were included in the research cycles.

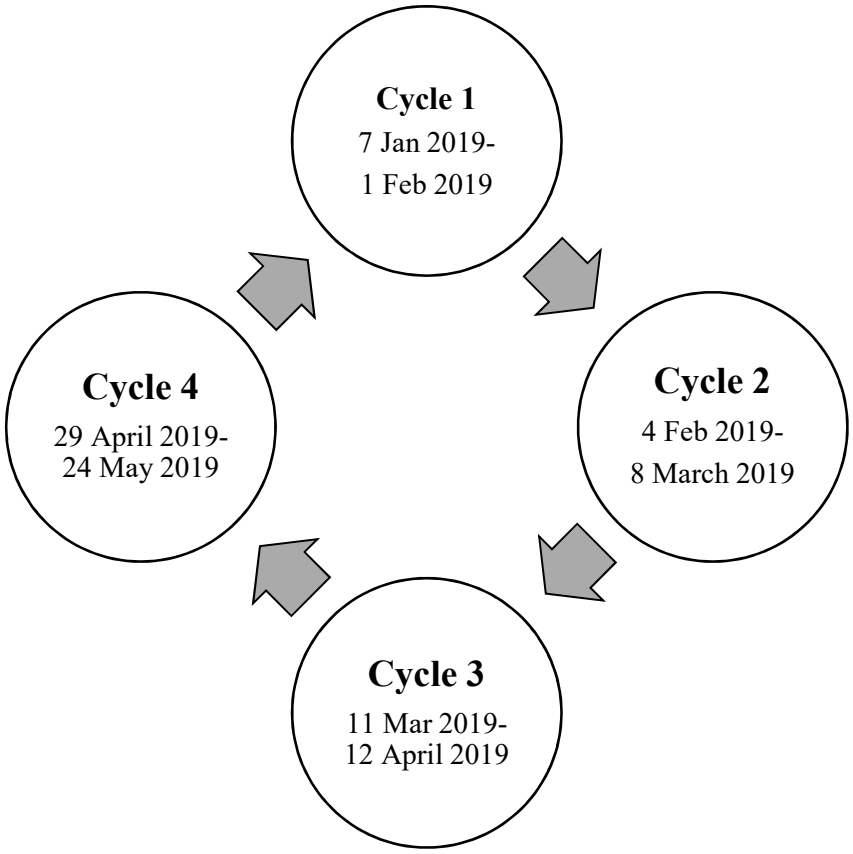


Figure 3.2: Research Cycles

3.3 Action Research Design

Self-study action research embraces the idea that each researcher is informed by their own "values, norms and assumptions" (Sullivan et al., 2016: 25). The paradigm of action research is based on the implication that "research will inform practice through an iterative process based upon developing synthesis of theory and practice" (Burton et al., 2011:7). In alignment with action-research conventions, an interpretive approach was taken in relation to collating and deducing the data. A critique of the using an interpretive theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, cited in Boychuk Duchscher, 2004) is that it does not fully acknowledge that the interpretation of qualitative data is inherently subjective due to the inductive nature of the research. However, as is discussed further, in Section 3.3.2, triangulation can be employed ensure validity in the research.

3.3.1 Reflection as a key aspect of the Action Research Design

The reflective process and the self-study element of the research followed a phenomenological approach. The research study was based on the principle of attributing value to the "importance of the study of phenomena through direct experience" (Burton et al, 2011:6). In this study, the phenomenon was literacy instruction which was studied through reflecting on the situation in the research context, assessing the needs present and modifying the researcher practice. The "direct experience" alluded to was described in the Reflective Journal, with the aim of providing an authentic insight into the researcher's experience of self-study, thus contributing to the validity of the research. The aim of this process was that the data collated was interpreted in relation to the research question and was critically evaluated with a view to modifying future practice. In terms of critically evaluating practice, the researcher considered; the perceptions and values of the different participants in the research, the official expectations and values of the language curriculum, and the physical conditions and resources in the research context. As seen below in Figure 3.3, this process correlated to the approach advocated by Smyth (1989, cited in Burton et al, 2011:7). Smyth (1989) describes a phenomenological approach to developing, and reflecting upon, an action-research plan as a "four stage model". The model involves is discussed below as it was applied to this research study.

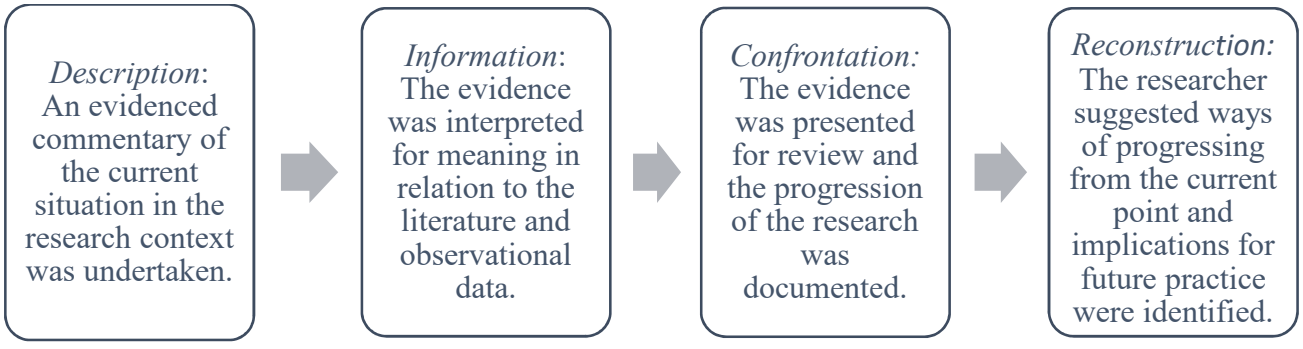


Figure 3.3: Smyth (1989) Four Stage Model for Research.

Similarly, Sullivan et al. (2016:75) describe another, similar four-step process that focuses on planning a reflective action research process, (Table 3.3). This process involves the practitioner assuming responsibility for aligning their research process with their educational values and the requirements of their educational context, in order to effect a positive change in their practice. Table 3.3 demonstrates how this model was also applied to the specific research being undertaken in this study.

1. Integration - The research plan was based specifically in the context the researcher is working in. - The research plan related to the concepts of education that are important to the researcher i.e. literacy and the development of learner autonomy. - The research plan was informed by literature, policies and practices in the research context.
2. Innovation - In order to achieve the research aim of enhancing differentiated literacy instruction to foster independent reading, new practices were researched to inform development of the researcher's teacher-designed framework.
3. ***Improvement*** - The researcher evaluated practice to look for improvement in all aspects of practice. - The researcher endeavoured to document pupils' progression in literacy learning and learner autonomy. - The researcher reflected on, and documented professional learning in relation to the teaching of literacy.
4. ***Impact***

- The researcher ascertained and documented the influence of the research in the learning community. - A new claim to knowledge was developed and explored in relation to the impact on the research context, and the implications for future practice. This knowledge was shared with colleagues in the context.

Table 3.3: Sullivan et al. Planning for Reflective Action Research

Upon reflection, in terms of contrasting both of these models, it is clear that the approach advocated for by Sullivan et al. (2016) is more practitioner-focused than the model promoted by Burton et al (2011), which is focused on the data collected. However, the steps of both models follow a similar trajectory, highlighting the importance of context-specific planning and practice, and of reflection and future planning within a research study. The use of both approaches to support the trajectory of reflection in the research process enabled purposeful, consistent and authentic planning and reflection to occur. However, as it was a self-study research project, perhaps the process advocated by Sullivan et al. (2016) was most applicable and effective.

3.3.2 A Valid Approach: Triangulation of Data and Trustworthiness of the Research Findings

The trustworthiness of the research findings was a significant consideration for the researcher. MacNaughton (2001: 75, cited in Ortlipp, 2008: 3) cautions that "the researcher cannot claim that what is described is true or valid because particular strategies have been put in place through method. Instead, the aim is to make the process of data analysis as visible and transparent as possible". Therefore, this section will discuss the measures taken to ensure validity, with the goal of achieving transparency in the data analysis. An additional consideration arose from a common criticism of small-scale action research, as outlined by Campbell et al. (2004:85) who affirmed that it is "open to criticisms of lack of objectivity and

rigour". However, as advocated by Denzin (2012), Sullivan et al. (2016) and Carter et al. (2014), triangulation was employed in this research to ensure the various perspectives in the research were appropriately interrogated. Denzin (2012) advocates for the use of triangulation, involving collating data from various sources, and by different means, to enhance the validity of findings. The concept of triangulation was explored using four lenses, as advocated for by Campbell et al. (2004: 86). As seen below, Figure 3.4 details how triangulation was employed in this research by; Method, Investigator, Theory and Data.

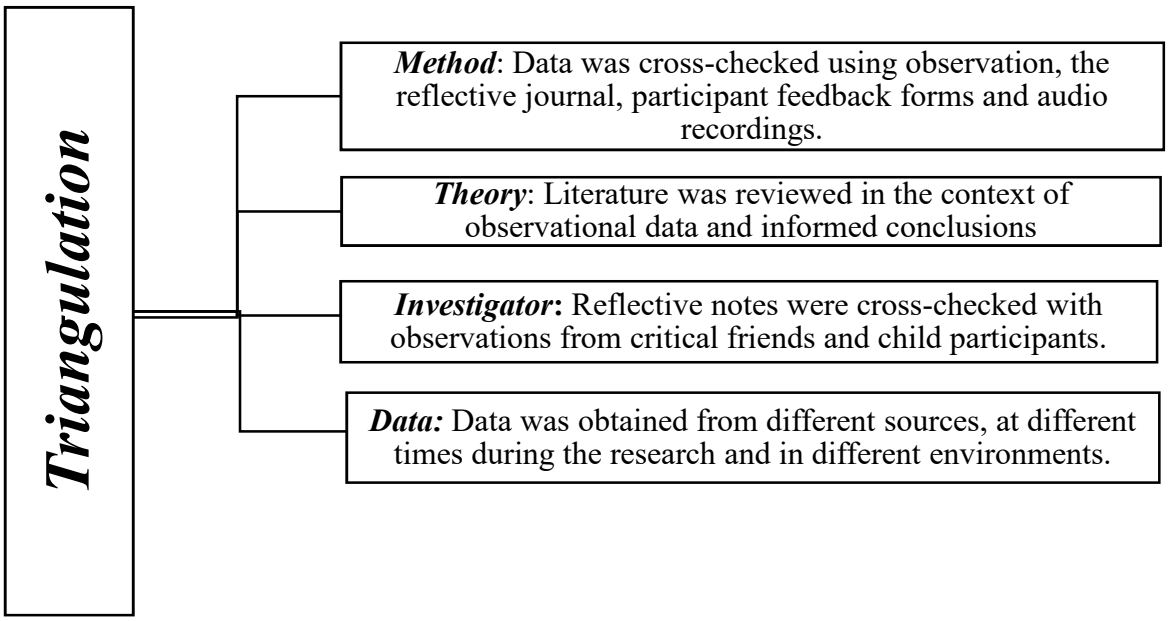


Figure 3.4: The Triangulation of Data -Informed by: Campbell et al., (2004: 86)

The critical friends and the colleagues who were involved participated with a view to providing alternative perspectives on the research and the teaching of literacy in the school context. This is reflected in the *Investigator* section of Figure 3.4 above. The critical friends were also involved in critiquing the research methodology and research practices. The researcher employed the expertise of two colleagues with experience of undertaking a postgraduate degree to act as critical friends, as part of the validation process. Campbell et al.

(2004:192) advise that "researchers may choose a peer with specialist knowledge of their area in order to gain more depth in their study". In adherence to this guideline, the researcher employed the expertise of the Head of Special Education, specialising in Literacy, in the research context. Bruce (2010:11) cautions that when engaged in self-study, "as a teacher researcher, one can become deeply involved in the learning and teaching process". The addition of critical friends and validation groups supported the maintenance of perspective and offered additional views of the research. However, Campbell et al., (2004:193) caution that "steps have to be taken to ensure that undue influence is not exerted on the researcher and the research project by peer evaluators". This guideline was adhered to by attributing significance to the role of the researcher's reflective journal, as outlined below.

From the researcher's personal perspective, the reflective journal was used throughout the process to provide an authentic insight into the professional learning in progress, as advocated by Noffke and Somekh (2013). Sullivan et al. (2016:13) also support the use of the reflective journal, and the associated meta-reflection, describing it as "invaluable". The use of the reflective journal supported critical evaluation of researcher assumptions and the hegemonic influences that limited or dictated researcher practice, thus influencing the research outcomes. Burbules and Berk (1999, cited in Sibbet, 2016:2) explain how "those favouring critical thinking, aim to produce young people who can make thoughtful, well-substantiated choices about their values and behaviour", thus contributing to learner autonomy.

The following measures were also undertaken by the researcher in order to ensure the validity of the research; Credibility, Transferability and Confirmability (Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

1. Credibility

The researcher acknowledges the inevitable bias present in self-study action research and understands the credibility of this bias must be ensured. As a teacher, the researcher has a dual perspective on the subject area, and is acquainted with literacy instruction from a practitioner perspective and a researcher perspective. Awareness of both perspectives was used to monitor bias throughout the research process. As discussed above, a reflective journal was maintained throughout the process to highlight and interrogate the researcher's assumptions which could infiltrate the research (Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, 2017). The prevalence of researcher bias was also considered throughout the data analysis process. The researcher was aware of the need to cautiously interpret what the data revealed, not merely what they wanted to hear (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). Therefore, the data was re-examined consistently to ensure that the researcher interpretation was consistent with the data (Nowell et al., 2017:38).

2. Transferability

It was the researcher's intention to provide a robust description of the data, thoroughly describing the structures, assumptions and processes exposed by it. It was foreseen that this would enable the reader to independently assess the extent to which the findings are transferable to other settings. The detail given about the research context, research sample and the methodologies employed aimed to give a concise insight into the study. In terms of the extent to which the findings could be applicable, using thematic analysis, the researcher ensured that internal and external homogeneity was considered, thus ensuring that themes and codes identified were appropriately alike within, yet different externally (Patton Quinn, 2002). In this way, it was ensured that there was adequate convergence and divergence between the themes and codes, allowing for the creation of a unique, well-developed research narrative.

3. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which others can independently confirm the findings reported. As discussed by Sullivan et al. (2016:47), in the context of this research, the role of the critical friends and the two validation groups served to add confirmability to the data, and to achieve transparency in the research. Additionally, as part of a debriefing exercise, at the end of the research, the findings were confirmed with participants, as evident from the children's questionnaires.

Figure 3.5 depicts the general research schedule and the procedures involved in the methodological process of this research. A more detailed research schedule, incorporating the intervention plan, can be found in Appendix E.

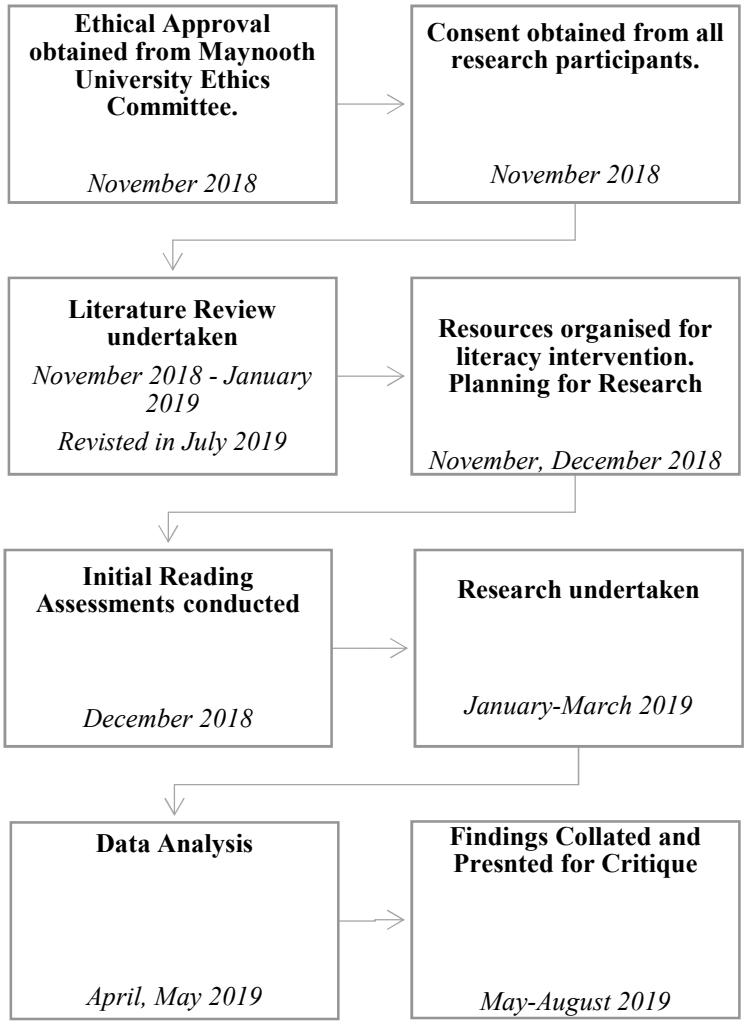


Figure 3.5: Research Schedule

3.4 Data Collection Methods and Rationale

As alluded to in Chapter 1, it was decided that this research study would employ a mixed-methods approach to gathering data, making use of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The qualitative methods employed to collect data included; the use of a research journal, the use of student questionnaires, (See Appendix D) and teacher observation. The quantitative methodologies used involved; the administration of two pre and post-tests, analysing sight words, reading accuracy, reading rate, reading comprehension and reading ages, and recording the reading stamina of the child participants. The primary aims of data collection were to:

1) Evaluate the planning and implementation of the differentiated literacy intervention – The Reading Workshop.
2) To assess the Reading Workshop Intervention to show the extent to which increased differentiation impacted on: • Reading attainment • Independent reading • Motivation to read • Engagement in reading • Confidence when reading

Table 3.4: Aims of Data Collection

3.4.1 Qualitative Data: Reflective Journal, Observations and Questionnaires

The preliminary qualitative data was gathered with the aim of forming a triangulated baseline (Denzin, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2016 and Carter et al., 2014) demonstrating an initial level of literacy skills. The literacy skills that were primarily assessed were children's independent reading skills and use of reading strategies. These assessments generated qualitative data based on the following assessment criteria; pupil use of reading strategies, pupil motivation to read, pupil engagement in reading and pupil confidence in reading. Further observational qualitative data, was collated from the researcher's reflective journal. Qualitative data was also collected from a series of meetings with the thesis supervisor, the critical friends involved and the research validation groups. A variety of quotations taken directly from this qualitative data are included in Chapter 4 to ensure the true responses of these participants are represented.

In the interest of achieving triangulation of the data (Hopkins, 2002, cited in Koshy, 2005:106) and using a multi-faceted approach to the research, the study utilised different

forms of qualitative research. The objective of this approach echoes the belief held by Cohen et al. (2000:112) that data obtained from an assortment of sources would "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint". The decision to use qualitative data resulted from consideration of the forms of data that would enable the researcher to "probe deeply" into the research topic (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:185).

A further consideration was which forms of data would most accurately "capture the complex reality under scrutiny" (Denscombe, 2007:45) in order to answer the research question. The data obtained from teacher observations, children's feedback and the researcher's reflective journal was inherently qualitative, by nature. Campbell et al. (2004:2) explain this, affirming that "education involves issues to do with the quality and nurture of these relationships, so educational research is uniquely qualitative." In relation to this research, as discussed in Chapter Two, literacy instruction has a significant interpersonal aspect because it relies on the establishment of a relationship, between the teacher and the children, which facilitates dialogue about reading and thus, affords the teacher the opportunity to qualitatively assess where the individual children are at in relation to literacy skills. However, a notable criticism of qualitative data is that is there is an unavoidable level of researcher bias associated with qualitative assessment. In response to this criticism, Galdas (2017:1) explains that, rather than focusing on bias, "considering concepts such as rigor and trustworthiness are more pertinent to the reflexive, subjective nature of qualitative research". As previously discussed in Section 3.3.2, validity, rigor and trustworthiness were significant considerations in this research study.

The three questionnaires were administered with the aim of ensuring triangulation and incorporating the voices of the child participants into the research. As the questionnaires were concerned with seeking "rich and personal data…a word-based qualitative approach" (Cohen

et al., 2007:321) was deemed appropriate. It was the intention of the researcher to design open-ended questions to obtain a true reflection of the children's opinions (Campbell et al., 2004). According to Cohen et al. (2007:330), "an open-ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which…are the hallmarks of qualitative data". Therefore, the questions were designed to be age-appropriate for the children and to "enable participants to write a free account in their own terms", (Cohen et al., 2007:321). As is discussed in Section 3.3.2, the researcher concedes that the questionnaires may be subject to personal bias. In the interest of mitigating this bias, the content of the questionnaires was discussed with the thesis supervisor and both critical friends. Additionally, the questionnaires included questions perceived as negative, as advised by Cohen et al. (2007:321), i.e. "What do you not like about the Reading Workshop?" (Questionnaire 2, 15/03/2019).

3.4.2 Quantitative Data: Standardised Test Scores and Reading Stamina Records

The qualitative data was further supported by quantitative data in the form of academic standardised test results, from all participants and from a focus group of participants, and the recording of time spent by participants independently reading (reading stamina). The quantitative methods employed were; the use of standardised test scores, (from the *Sight Word Reading Test* (SWRT) and the *York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC))* and the recording of reading times achieved, (referred to as Reading Stamina). A criticism of quantitative approaches to educational research deems that "education involves interpersonal relationships whose subtleties cannot easily be captured in quantitative terms" (Campbell et al. 2004:2). The researcher attributes merit to this conclusion, and this is reflected in the decreased emphasis on the quantitative data collected, in comparison to the qualitative data. Despite this, the quantitative data collection was rigorous and consistent in

nature, as outlined below in Figure 3.6, and in Sections 3.4.3, 3.4.4 and 3.4.5. This supports the validity of the data collated throughout the research process.

Preliminary Quantitative Data Collection: Week 1

Date	**Test**	**Participants**
7 January 2019 - 11 January 2019	The Sight Word Reading Analysis Test	All child participants
16 January 2019	The York Assessment of Reading Comprehension Test	A sample of 8 child participants

Ongoing Quantitative Data Collection: 14 Weeks

Date	**Test**	**Participants**
Weekly Reading Stamina Recordings: 14 January – 17 May 2019 (non-inclusive of holidays: 14 weeks)	Reading Stamina was recorded in minutes 3 times weekly and an average was obtained.	All child participants – the reading stamina for the class was recorded.

Post Intervention Quantitative Data Collection: Week 16

Date	**Test**	**Participants**
20 May 2019 - 24 May 2019	The Sight Word Reading Analysis Test	All child participants
23 May 2019	The York Assessment of Reading Comprehension Test	A sample of 8 child participants

Figure 3.6: Quantitative Data Collection Schedule

3.4.3 Preliminary Data Collection

The initial teacher observation aimed to ascertain the standard of reading in the class. Continuous observation was used to assess the how the children were engaging with literacy instruction and independent reading prior to the implementation of the intervention. These observations were documented in the reflective journal, and the findings are discussed in Chapter 4. In the interest of using a comprehensive approach to assessment, and in line with the approach advocated in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NCCA, 2011), all children were given a standardised reading test before and after the intervention, and a sample of participants completed a second standardised assessment also, as seen above. The results were calculated and compared with the aim of indicating changes in academic achievement, as is discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.4.4 Ongoing Data Collection

As referred to in the literature review, standardised literacy assessment can only provide a snapshot of a child's ability at a specific moment in time. Conversely, continuous assessment can give a more comprehensive assessment of strengths and needs in relation to literacy development, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.6. Therefore, as anticipated, a more significant, comprehensive data set emerged from the continuous qualitative data

collection methods. In line with this approach to assessment, Chulu (2013:407) remarks that "an effective assessment system will…focus not only on national examinations and large-scale national assessments, but also on assessments that improve teaching and learning on a daily basis". In alignment with this advice, the continuous assessment of literacy attainment in this study incorporated the use of reading logs, reading conferences, teacher observation and student questionnaires. The student questionnaires preserved the voice and literacy perspectives of the child participants in the research. This echoes the effort to ensure validity, authenticity and trustworthiness in the research, as described in Section 3.3.2.

3.4.5 Post-Intervention Data Collection

The post-intervention data collection mirrored the pre-intervention procedure, in the interest of maintaining rigor in the approach to research. Teacher observation continued to be used to determine the standard of independent reading, the engagement and the motivation in the class. All children were given the same standardised reading test, (the SWRT), after the intervention, and a sample of participants completed a variation of the second standardised assessment, (the YARC), also.

All of the data collected aimed to answer the research question regarding how differentiated literacy instruction could be improved to foster independent reading skills in the research context. Furthermore, the extent to which the children's confidence, motivation and engagement could benefit from differentiated literacy instruction was considered. In terms of critically evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention at the end of the research process, the perceptions and values of the different research participants were considered using a variety of analytical lenses, as advocated by Brookfield (2013).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The twenty nine children in the class participated in the research. All participation was voluntary and no incentives were given for participation. Participants could have

withdrawn from the research at any stage without any consequences. All General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Maynooth University and Children's First (Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Tusla, The Child and Family Agency 2007) ethical guidelines were adhered to. The research also aligned with all guidelines dictated by the school-based stakeholders in the research, the principal and the Board of Management.

The effect of the power imbalance present in the dual role of researcher and class teacher was an important ethical consideration. The impact of personal bias on the research was also considered and the researcher endeavoured to be consistently mindful of the epistemological standpoint from which the research was approached. Power-dynamics present between colleagues involved in the process, and the gatekeepers involved, were also considered in relation to the involvement of critical friends in the research. The implication of the power dynamic present on the data was considered and as a result, all responses were anonymised, with pseudonyms used to refer to participant responses. It was ensured that colleagues did not incur any harm as a result of participation and conversely, did not receive any incentive to participate from the researcher or the gatekeepers in the research context.

3.5.1 Process of ethical approval involving all stakeholders involved

The gatekeepers involved in the research were the school Principal, the Board of Management and the parents of the children in the class. Written consent was obtained from all of these sources. Parental consent and child assent was obtained for every child participant.

The process involved in obtaining ethical approval involved attending two meetings with the school principal, where the research project was discussed at length. All of the consent forms and ethical considerations were presented for discussion and approval. All forms of data to be collected were mentioned in the consent forms to obtain consent for different types of data. All ethical documents and consent forms, as per Appendix F, were

approved by the Ethics Committee at Maynooth University and by the course director, Dr Bernadette Wrynn, and by the thesis supervisor, Mr Brian Tubbert. Figure 3.7 depicts the process of obtaining ethical approval for this research.

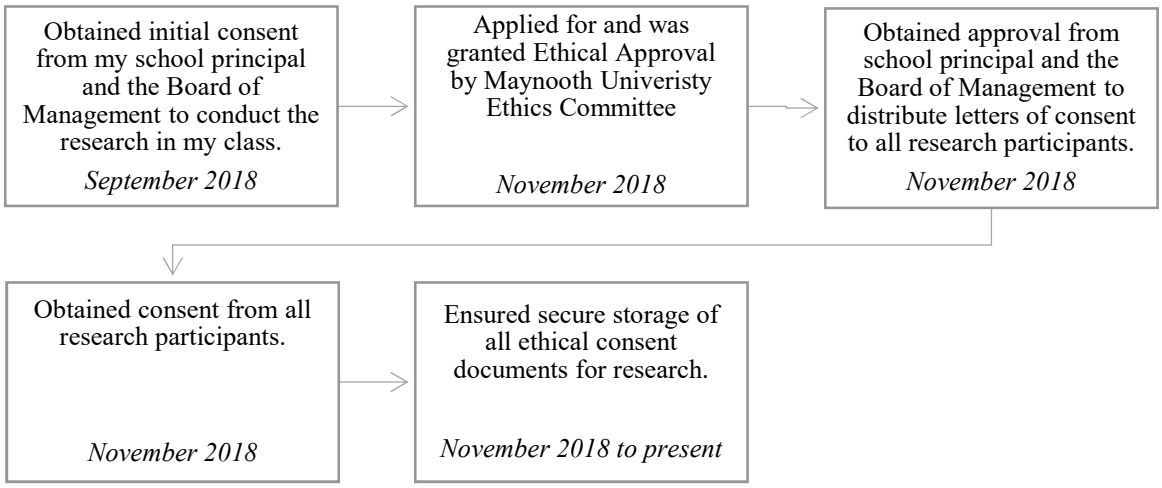


Figure 3.7: Ethical Approval Process

3.5.2 Adherence to guidelines relating to particularly vulnerable research participants i.e. Children with SEN.

The twenty nine student participants were vulnerable citizens as they are under the age of eighteen. Full parental consent and child assent was obtained for all participants. There were three children with significant special educational needs in the sample. These children were considered to be particularly vulnerable and every effort was made to ensure they are represented in the data, as indicated in Section 3.3.2.

This issue of potential identification of children was mitigated by anonymising all children involved in the research. The identity of critical friends could have been disclosed where questions may jeopardise the anonymity of the interviewee in the school. Any feedback associated with these participants was also attributed to pseudonyms throughout the

research, as per Appendix A. Further to consent being obtained, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point, (Silverman, 2010).

The research into the literacy intervention did not lead to the detection of sensitive or intrusive content. As such, the incident plan for critical disclosures was ultimately not necessary in this research study However, had there been an issue, it was planned that all unexpected disclosures would be dealt with in a timely manner, in accordance with the school policy and with adherence to all ethical guidelines aforementioned. In terms of sensitive disclosures, the plan would have dictated to consult the school principal who is the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection in the research setting. In terms of any other unexpected outcomes, it was ensured that they were analysed accordingly as part of the research, as evident in Section 4.6.

3.5.3 Ethical Data Collection and Storage

It was ensured that all actions undertaken were aligned with the data protection guidelines upheld in the school setting and in Maynooth University. Consent attributed specifically to all methods of data collection associated with this research project was obtained, (Appendix F includes the consent and assent forms). All data obtained was kept confidential and secure in a locked filing cabinet, only accessible to the researcher, for the duration of the study and thereafter. Upon completion of the thesis, the data will be kept in a locked cabinet for a further ten years, as per university regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The audio and visual data, (photographs), was used only for observational and assessment purposes. It was stored in secure cloud storage, accessible only via password, in accordance with the 1998 and 2003 Data Protection legislation. It was subsequently deleted from all devices. As agreed and consented to, the results were presented in this thesis. They were available to be viewed by the research supervisor, the Head of Department in the University and an external examiner. It was accepted that the thesis or a synopsis of the

research findings could be published, with consent, in a research journal or could be made available to future postgraduate students.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter represents the findings from this research. The data was collected and analysed in response to the research question posed in Chapter 1; *How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?* The fundamental concept underpinning data analysis was the extent to which increased differentiation affected the practitioner's ability to develop children's independent reading skills, engagement in reading, confidence in reading, and motivation to learn.

Through extensive reflection, immersion in the data and subsequent identification of thematic commonalities across the data, the pertinent data was identified and selected for discussion. After the data was refined according to significance, the final data set for analysis included:

Qualitative Data	***Quantitative Data***
The Reflective Journal Entries (60)	Pre-intervention SWRT Results (x29)
Audio Recordings of Reading Workshop Mini-Lessons	Post-intervention SWRT Results (x29)
Audio Recordings of 'Book Talk' discussions and small-group conferences	Pre-intervention YARC Results (x8)
Audio Recordings of Children's YARC Tests	Post-intervention YARC Results (x8)
Photographs of Child Participants during the Reading Workshop	Reading Stamina Records

Photographs of the Research Environment during the Reading Workshop	SWRT Standardised Testing Papers (58)
Questionnaires from Child Participants	YARC Standardised Testing Booklets (8)

Table 4.1: Data Set for Analysis

4.2. Data Analysis Process

As the data collection methods incorporated qualitative and quantitative methods, the results of the research are categorised as qualitative findings and quantitative findings. Thematic Analysis was deemed an appropriate approach for interpreting the qualitative data due to its flexibility and the potential for a "rich description of the data set" to be provided (Javadi and Zarea, 2016: 35). All qualitative data was analysed thematically, with the aim of exposing reoccurring themes across the data. The quantitative data was analysed numerically (Cohen at al., 2007). The quantitative findings were aligned with the qualitative findings to identify if any correlation was apparent.

Thematic analysis involved full immersion in the data over the final months of the research process. As described in Figure 3.1, 'The Application of the Model of Inductive Thinking' (Campbell et al. 2004:127), was used to identify reoccurring codes in the data. This process was repeated as the data set was revisited numerous times to ensure a rigorous approach was adopted, establishing a narrative of the data. The categorization of similar codes led to the identification of reoccurring themes in the data. Similarly, related themes were categorised and the main themes were derived from these sub-groups. The themes were analysed to ensure sufficient evidence was present to support the findings associated with each theme. It is the intention of the researcher to explore the findings to present clear narrative of the experience of the research participants.

4.3 The Main Themes and Associated Findings

The thematic analysis uncovered five main themes and eight corresponding findings, as seen in Table 4.2. The main findings that emerged from the data analysis were:

Themes	Findings
Importance of Reflective Learning	1. Reflective practice was a source of professional learning and development for the researcher. 2. Collegial collaboration contributed significantly to the research and the collaborative use of shared literacy resources benefited children in the learning support setting.
Skills-based Teaching	3. An increase in children's independent use of reading strategies and reading skills was evident. 4. The data highlighted a link between increasing independent reading skills and increased reading confidence. 5. Goal-setting contributed significantly towards self-assessment strategies and motivation. 6. The incorporation of 'Book Talk' and the associated Seven Key Components for Direct Vocabulary Learning (Grabe and Stoller, 2018:1) into the workshop was highly effective.
Time	7. Provision of increased time for independent reading significantly influenced engagement and motivation.
Choice	8. Book Choice influenced engagement and motivation.

Table 4.2: Main Themes Revealed by the Data

These key findings, relating to the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention, its effect on independent learning and differentiated practice, in conjunction with its impact on the researcher's values, will be analysed, discussed and critiqued in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. As many of the data collection methods focused on qualitative data collection, the majority of the findings will focus on qualitative data. However, Part 4.4 will discuss how the quantitative findings support the qualitative findings. The findings discussed in this chapter highlight the potential for merging theory and practice in action research.

4.3.1 The Importance of Professional Learning

One key qualitative finding was the positive contribution of reflective journaling to professional development. The main professional learning that emerged from the reflective entries included; insights into how to reflect purposefully and how to evaluate this reflection, and the achievement of a balance between productive and over-analytical reflection. As experienced throughout this process, and as advocated for by Schön (1983), the purpose of reflection for development is inherently positive and is a necessary element of professional growth.

However, negative elements of critical reflective practice that pertained to this research, involved scrutinising practice extensively, resulting in practitioner anxiety and over-analysis of practice. A key aspect of the learning acquired as a result was the acceptance that effective reflective practice must achieve a balance between over-analytical, self-destructive reflection and productive, purposeful reflection. Through extensive practice and the acquisition of knowledge about reflective practice, this destructive action was minimised to enable effective use of reflective journaling. This awareness is evident from Reflective Journal Entry 44, (14 February 2019). Consequently, purposeful reflection emerged as a theme in the

learning that permeated the research process. As reflective practice became a key aspect of the researcher's professional life, with increasing practice, the reflections became less anecdotal and more effective because the narrative was more focused on changes in values and practice. As the research progressed, the reflective element of this self-study action research infiltrated all professional practice. An implication of this learning is that the researcher is confident that critical reflection will form an inherent part of future professional practice.

This research was supported by invaluable input from the critical friends and the validation groups. The additional perspectives obtained from colleagues contributed to triangulation, and therefore the validity of the research. The development of the intervention and the researcher's practice was evaluated from the perspective of peer-reviewers currently working in the research setting. In the research context, there was an inherently positive response towards the sharing of research and practice. The main qualitative data sources relating to the critical friends and the validation groups were the minutes of meetings and reflective entries from the journal relating to exchanges involving the critical friends and validation groups.

The collegial collaboration positively affected the research in the following ways;

- The feedback from Critical Friend 1, *Catherine Allen, (CF1), advised on literature pertinent to the research, supporting the review of literature.
- CF1 had significant insight into the differentiation requirements in the research context and therefore corroborated that differentiation was a key priority for teaching this class group.
- CF1, was involved in the teaching of some child participants with SEN, and certified that using the same resources as were used during the workshop, (See Appendix C), was an effective methodology for the children in learning support.

- At the final stages of the research, the findings were presented twice for critique to a validation group of colleagues inside, (Validation Group 1 [VG1]), and outside of the research context, (Validation Group 2 [VG2]). As evident in Figure 4.1, the most significant contribution these presentations made to the research was that questions raised during the discussion prompted the researcher to reflect on implications of the research for future practice and collaboration, as shown in Figure 4.1. Additionally, the positive response to the research findings affirmed the conclusions drawn by the researcher.

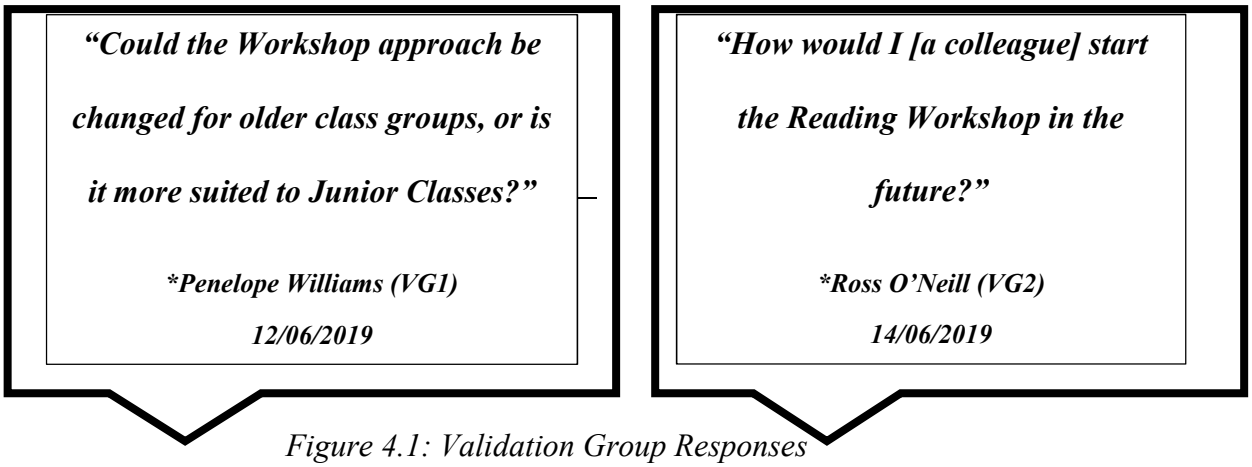


Figure 4.1: Validation Group Responses

4.3.2 Skills-based Teaching – Independent Use of Reading Strategies and Skills

The Reading Workshop intervention was concerned with explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies, with the goal of enabling learners to use them independently. The findings associated with the skills-based teaching in the intervention will be discussed in this section. According to the observational data, the children's oral feedback, the questionnaires and the standardised test results, it was evident that children's independent use of Reading Strategies and Reading Skills increased significantly from the beginning to the end of the research

process. This is evident from the researcher's field note observations, detailing verbatim quotes from the child participants, as seen in Figure 4.2.

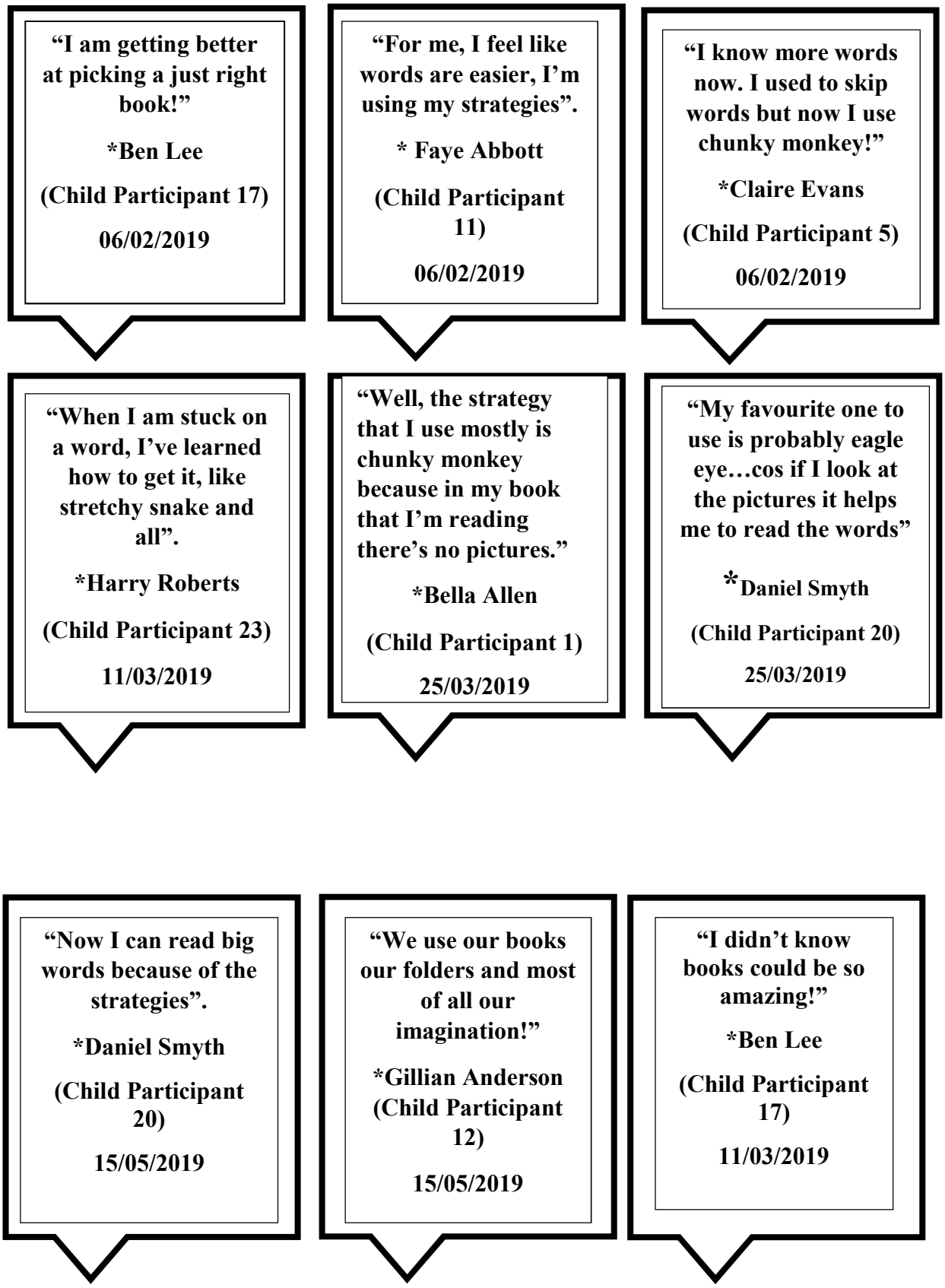
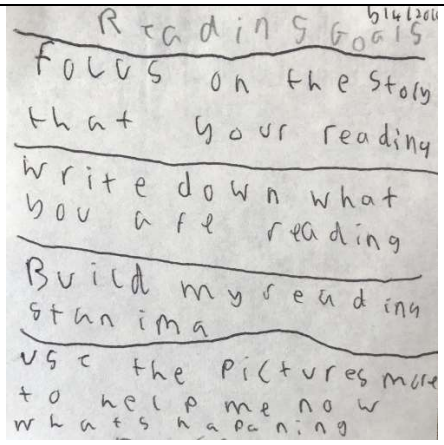
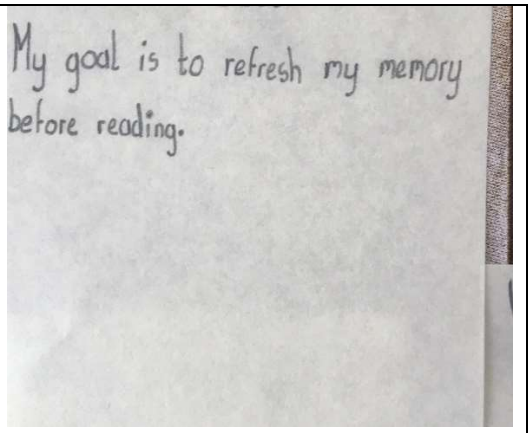


Figure 4.2: Children describing Reading progress and Strategies used

Goal setting contributed significantly towards self-assessment strategies and motivation. As seen in Table 4.3 below, the child participants accurately assessed their own progression in relation to developing reading skills and strategies, through feedback on the questionnaires. This highlights how goal setting contributed to the developing self-assessment capacity exhibited by the child participants, a secondary result of their increasing independence and confidence when reading.

	
*Curtis Donovan (Child Participant 19) 05/04/2019	*Ciara Hughes (Child Participant 3) 26/03/2019

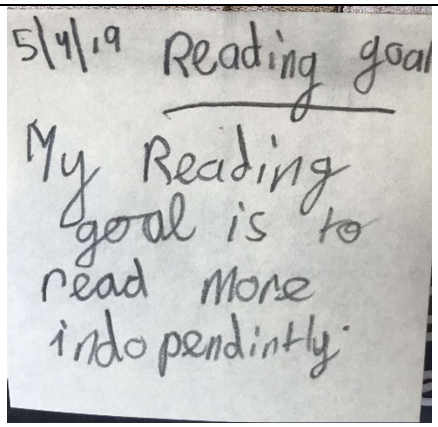
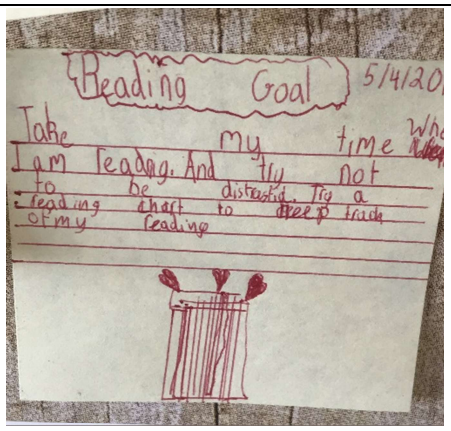
	
*Harry Roberts (Child Participant 23) 05/04/2019	*Chloe Adkins (Child Participant 4) 05/04/2019

Table 4.3: Children's Reading Goals

A key aspect of the Reading Workshop was the modelling of the pedagogical language associated with reading, accomplished via 'book talk' (Calkins, 2001) activities. The incorporation of the Seven Key Components for Direct Vocabulary Learning (Grabe and Stoller, 2018:1) into the workshop was highly effective. As per Figure 4.3, the data from the children's questionnaires highlights the vocabulary acquired, as modelled during the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001), and the responses of the children to the intervention. For the purpose of triangulation, samples have been taken from all three questionnaires, administered at different times during the research. For the purpose of authenticity, all grammatical mistakes are shown as they were originally written.

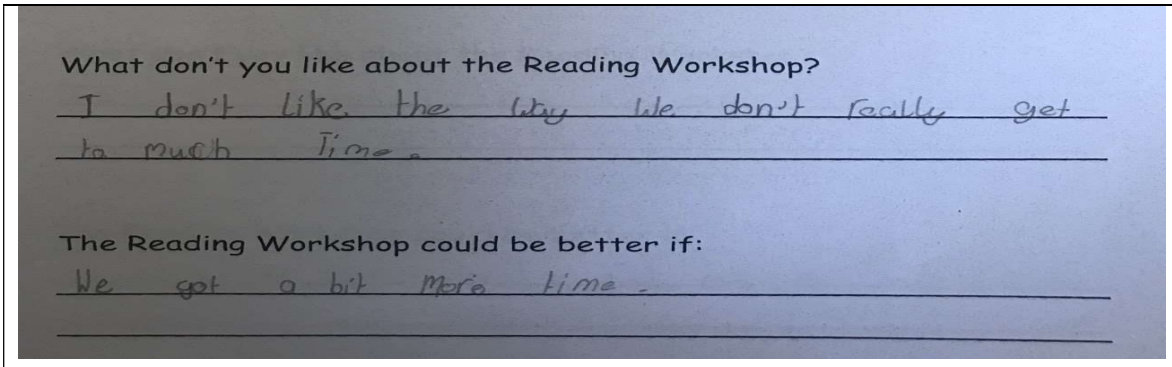
Questionnaire 1: 06/02/2019 2:05pm ***Question**: What do I do during the reading workshop?*	
Child Participant	**Answer**
(1) *Bella Allen	"During Reading Workshop I try to build my stamina".
(9) *Felicity Hackett	"We lisen to the techer wen she is doing mini lesins".
(13) *Grace Flynn	"I answer questions from teacher and talk about things to help reading".
Questionnaire 1: 06/02/2019 2:05pm ***Question:** If another class wanted to do the reading workshop, I would tell them that…*	
(12) *Gillian Anderson	"We learn about reading. We build reading stamina and our strategies, I wonder questions and how to chose a just right book".
(16)*Bobby Noonan	"In reading workshop you have to be quiet and if your chating you do knee to knee and eye to eye".
(24) *Henry Christian	"That you read and lern about reading and grow your amaganation"
(13) *Grace Flynn	"You get to read and learn about things to help your reading and you get to talk to your friends about your book."
Questionnaire 2: 15/03/2019 2:15pm ***Question**: Have you learned anything new from doing the Reading Workshop?*	
(11)*Faye Abbott	"I can read more faster and I understand bigger words".
(20) *Daniel Smyth	"Looking at the pictures helps me."
(18) *Christopher Bell	"I learned that reading is really fun".
(26) *Liam Duncan	"Yes I yous chunki monkey".
Questionnaire 3: 15/05/2019 1:55pm ***Question:** I would describe my reading as…*	
(27) *Michael James	"Good, excellent, brilliant, exciting"
(1) *Bella Allen	"Interesting because we are all so focused".

(26) *Liam Duncan	"My reading is good. It yous to be worser."
(12) *Gillian Anderson	"I think my reading has changed because I can read harder books".
(8) *Danielle Avery	"It is good an interesting because I learn new words and find out new things".

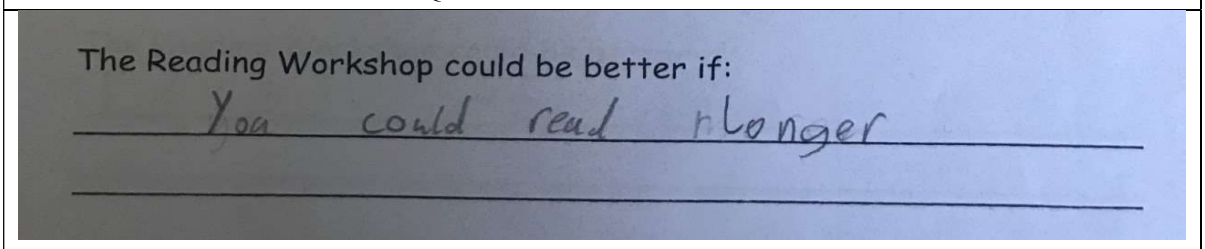
Figure 4.3: Children's Questionnaire Responses

4.3.3 Increased Time for Reading

The reflection throughout the research cycles, as explained in Figure 3.2, enabled the researcher to adapt the research according to professional observations and children's feedback. The use of the researcher's field notes and the questionnaires throughout the research informed these cyclical changes and the professional learning. In order to validate the voices of the children in the research, the researcher reflected on their observations and enacted a change based on their recommendations. This reflection is evident in Reflective Journal Entry 14, (13 January 2019), where the researcher identified that children experienced time pressure during independent reading time. "*The timer signalling the end of reading time went off and none of the children moved except for a groan that clearly showed they wanted to continue. "Make it stop", LH (Child Participant 25) called out. "2 more minutes", Table Two agreed"*. Therefore, one aspect of the intervention that was changed after Research Cycle Three was the time allocated for independent reading increased. As highlighted below by the sample of quotes in Table 4.4, this change was requested by numerous participants, and solely instigated by the child participants in the research. By Research Cycle Three, the children were very enthusiastic about wanting increased time for independent reading, conveying increased engagement, motivation to read and reading stamina.

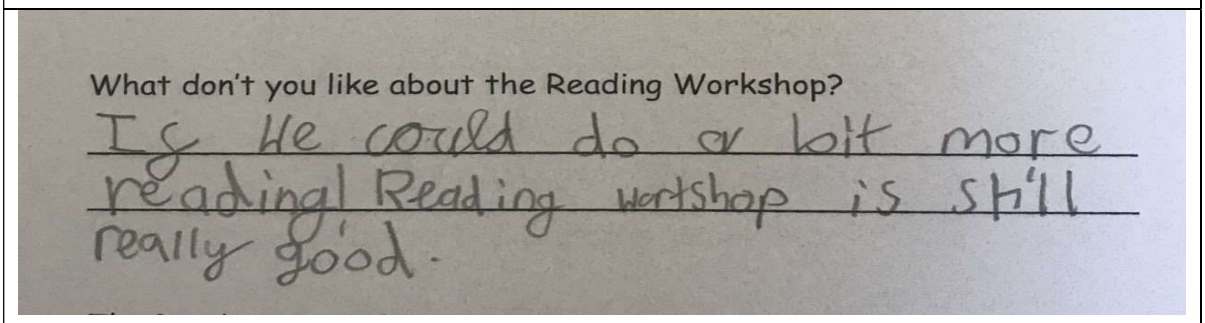


*Bella Allen (Child Participant 1)
Questionnaire 2: 15/03/2019



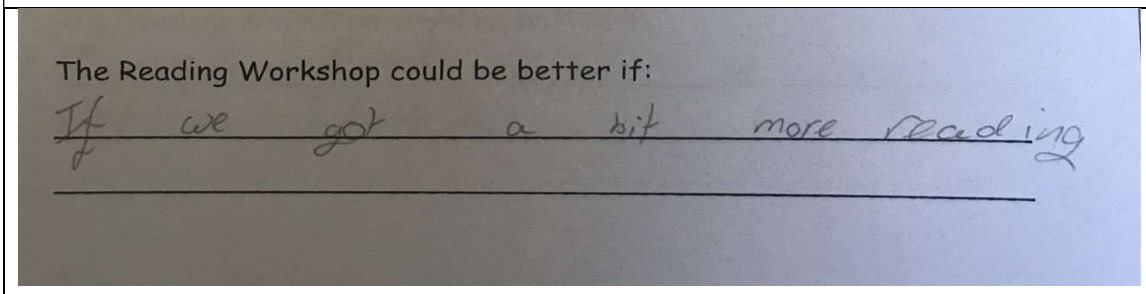
*Finn Fenlon (Child Participant 2)

Questionnaire 2: 15/03/2019



*Harry Roberts (Child Participant 23)

Questionnaire 2 15/03/2019



*Hugh Little (Child Participant 25)

Questionnaire 2: 15/03/2019

Table 4.4: Children's feedback on The Reading Workshop

4.3.4 The Importance of Choice

The concept of learner autonomy aligns with the provision of choice for children. The "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention incorporated children learning to make informed choices about reading material that was 'just right' for them, as described in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1 as 'The Goldilocks Rule", (Weber, 2018: 2). A key research finding was that this skill was very challenging for the majority of the children, regardless of their reading ability. As this was an early research observation, the researcher was enabled to implement supportive measures to scaffold children's learning. Therefore, the schedule of content for the mini-lessons was adapted to incorporate more time to model and practice this skill. Additionally, children chose books from a large selection of books curated by the research prior to the intervention. Each collection of books was colour-coded to correspond to the respective ability groups i.e. green, pink, blue and yellow, and children chose books according to colour. There was a wide range of books within each collection of books, ensuring that the resources were differentiated, and then differentiated again. In this way, the children were scaffolded as they made informed choices about what books were 'just right' for them. Furthermore, they were not overwhelmed by an entire library of books ranging from picture books to novels, but they still had an adequate challenge and range of material to choose from. This also aided the researcher's assessment because the ability groups were fluid and therefore, as progression was observed, the researcher could seamlessly move a student and they could find a suitable book at the lower range of the more advanced collection of books.

When asked what the children had learned from the Reading Workshop, much of the feedback from the questionnaires stated that they had learned to 'pick a just-right' book'. This is evident from the quotes detailing children's reading goals and feedback on reading in

Figure 4.4. The choice of reading material was empowering for children in comparison to the previous approach employed by the researcher which involved books being chosen for the children according to their guided reading groups. The researcher observed that the children were far more engaged and motivated to read when they made their own informed book choices, as seen in the Reflective Journal, (Entry 18, 14 January 2019). "

"The focus was on book choice and children responded very positively. I have decided to stretch today's choice of book' workshop objectives over two days so will continue with it tomorrow. The reason for this change is that upon reflection, I have realised that it is a really important teaching point – I plan to reinforce it all week to ensure children understand the criteria for 'Just Right' books".

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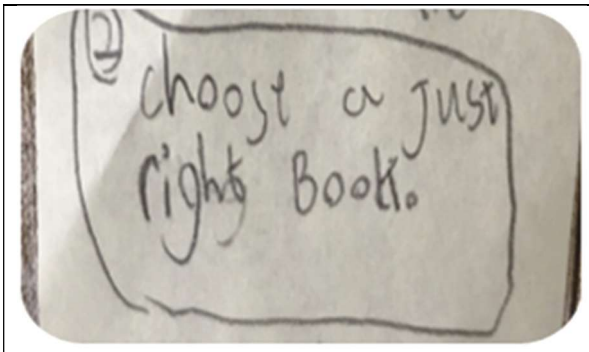
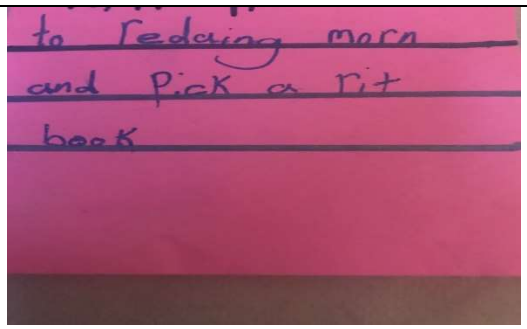
<td> 

*Finn Fenlon (Child Participant 22)
5 April 2019</td>
<td> 

*Fiona Yates (Child Participant 10)
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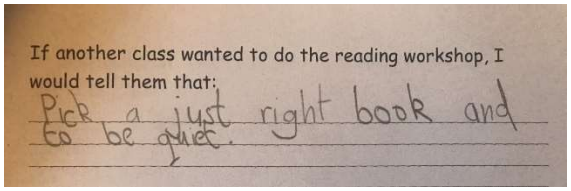
<td> 

*Michael James (Child Participant 27)
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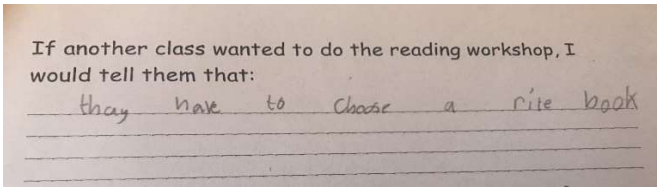
<td> 

*Felicity Hackett (Child Participant 9)
6 February 2019</td>
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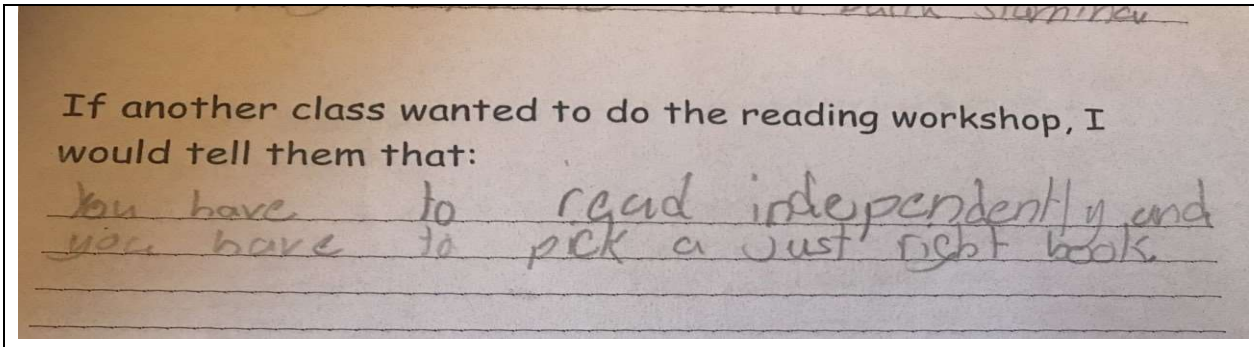


*Christopher Bell (Child Participant 18)

6 February 2019

Figure 4.4: 'Just Right' Books - Children's Book Choice

4.4 Quantitative Results Associated with the Findings

The main quantitative data sources relating to the children involved in the research were the pre-intervention and post-intervention standardised tests, the York Assessment for Reading Comprehension (YARC) and the Sight Word Analysis Test (SWRT). The SWRT was administered to all pupils before and after the classroom intervention, and the results were compared in order to establish if the literacy intervention stimulated academic achievement focused on reading. Furthermore, the SWRT results were used to select eight children as a representation of all of the ability groups in the class, i.e. two children from each ability group. The more detailed YARC standardised test was administered to these pupils before and after the classroom intervention also to ascertain if the intervention affected children's reading and comprehension results.

4.4.1 Sight Word Reading Analysis Test (SWRT) Results

The Sight Word Reading Analysis Test was the first quantitative data collection source involving all of the child participants in the research. This test involved children independently reading 60 words on sight. Appendix G shows an example of the test. The test is graded by assessing and documenting the words read correctly, incorrectly, the words

omitted and word substitutions. The results of the pre-intervention SWRT strongly supported the researcher's hypothesis that there was a significant requirement for differentiated literacy instruction in the class context as a very wide range of abilities was identified within the research sample. The results were analysed and children were divided into literacy groups as a result. The results of the post-intervention SWRT corroborated the research claim that the intervention had increased children's reading success, when reading independently. The following diagrams (Figure 4.5; Table 4.5) show the range of results, comparing the children's scores from the first pre-intervention SWRT test, (referred to as SWRT 1, consistently highlighted in green) and the second post-intervention SWRT test, (referred to as SWRT 2, consistently highlighted in blue).

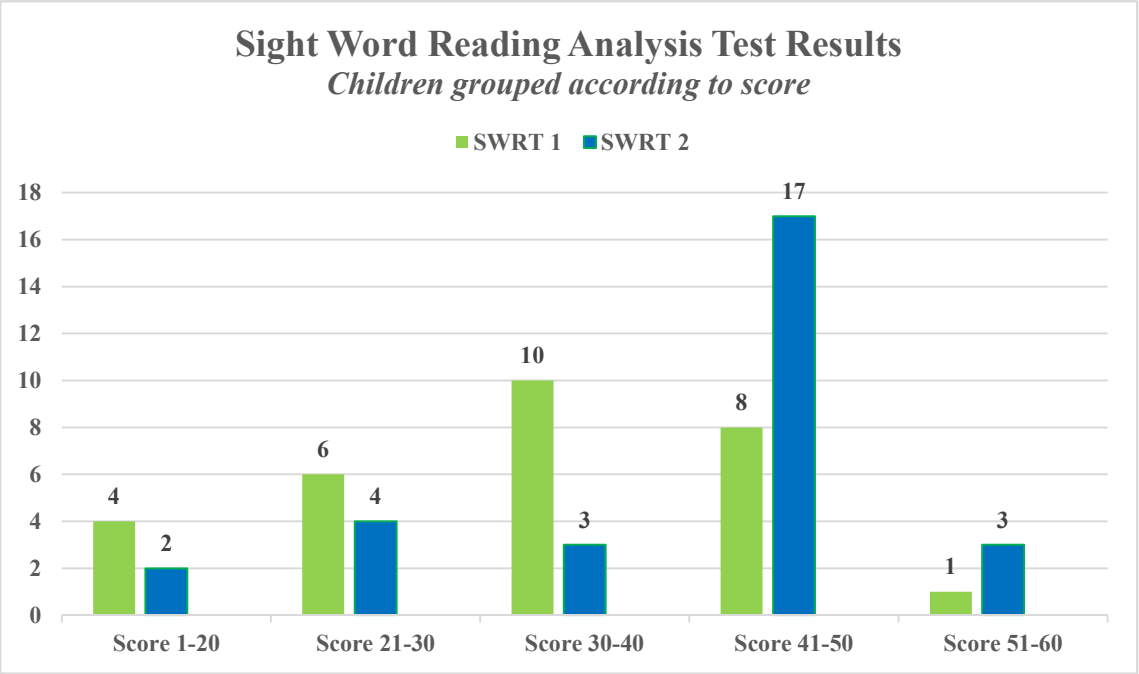


Figure 4.5: SWRT Whole Class Test Results (29 Participants)

	Score 1-20	Score 21-30	Score 30-40	Score 41+	Score 50-60
SWRT 1	14%	21%	34%	28%	3%
SWRT 2	7%	14%	10%	59%	10%

Table 4.5: Interpretation of the SWRT 1 and SWRT 2 Results (1)

In both tests, the maximum score to be achieved was 60. The comparisons can be understood as follows:

• In SWRT 1, 14% of children, (4 children), scored below 20, while in SWRT 2, only 7% of children, (2 children) scored within this range. • In SWRT 1, 21%, (6 children), scored between 21 and 30, while in SWRT 2, 14%, (4 children) scored within this range.
• In SWRT 1, 34%, (10 children), scored between 30 and 40, while in SWRT 2, 10%, (3 children) scored within this range.
• In SWRT 1, 31%, (8 children) scored between 41 and 50 while in SWRT 2, 59%, (17 children) scored within this range.
• In SWRT 1, 1 child scored within the 50-60 range. In contrast in SWRT, 10% of the participants tested scored within the highest range.

Table 4.6: Interpretation of the SWRT 1 and SWRT 2 Results (2)

When the pre-intervention (SWRT 1) results were compared to the post intervention (SWRT 2) results, 31% of children scored in the higher range (41-60) in the first test. In contrast 69% of children scored within this range in SWRT 2. This increase of 38%

highlights that overall, the children demonstrated increased ability to read words independently on sight.

Conversely, in SWRT 1, 35% of participants scored in the lower range, (1-30), demonstrating that according to this test, over a third of children could have been categorised as emergent or struggling readers pre-intervention. In contrast, in SWRT 2, 21% of participants fell into this category. Therefore, the children identified as scoring in the lower range, fell by 14% post-intervention.

In summary, as is evident, 79% (23 children) improved their results when the results of SWRT 1 and SWRT 2 were compared, i.e. scoring within a higher range in SWRT 2 [23 children] and 17% increased their scores, but remained within the same category, [5 children]).

Additionally, 14%, 4 children (FG, CB, DS and EM), attained the same high grade in both tests. The outliers in the study account for 7% as 2 children, (FY and RM) regressed by 1 point each. Figure 4.6 shows a direct comparison between the participants' individual results of the SWRT Pre and Post Intervention tests.

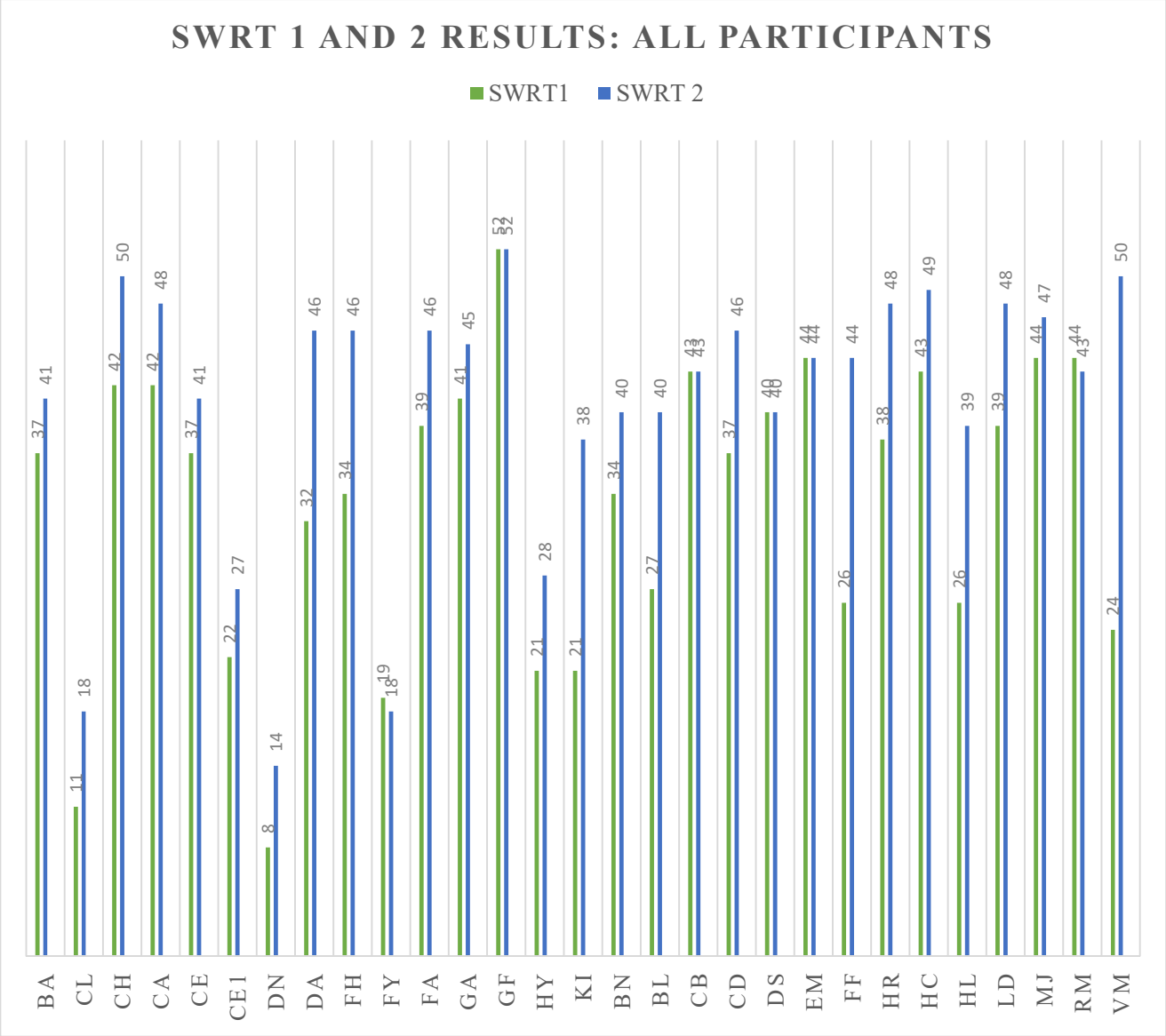


Figure 4.6: SWRT Comparison of Test Results for each Participant

The researcher acknowledges that the remit of the SWRT is to provide incidental results from a chosen moment in time. Therefore, as with all standardised testing, the results cannot be interpreted in isolation. However, these quantitative results can be used to support the much wider range of qualitative findings in this research. In this instance, the participants' increased ability to achieve reading success independently aligns with the qualitative findings, as discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

4.4.2 York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC) Results

The YARC was the second standardised test employed as a quantitative reading assessment. The results of the YARC pre-intervention test highlighted a wide range of abilities within the group, supporting the researcher's initial hypothesis that there was a necessity for differentiated literacy instruction in the class context,. The SWRT is designed to be administered prior to the YARC test and the results of the SWRT are used to support selection of materials for administration of the YARC. Therefore, the YARC was administered as a sequential test, following on from the SWRT.

The YARC test was administered to eight children from the group of research participants. The children were selected to represent all four ability groups in the class. Therefore, those who had scored highest and lowest in each literacy group undertook the YARC assessment. The rationale for this was that it was envisaged that the results would subsequently reflect the ability within each literacy group in the class. The YARC test assesses reading accuracy, reading rate, comprehension and reading age. The standard score obtained and the percentile rank are calculated as part of the results.

Appendix H, shows the range of results, comparing the children's scores from the first pre-intervention YARC test (referred to as YARC 1) and the second post-intervention YARC test, (referred to as YARC 2). Appendix I depicts the individual YARC results of the eight Child Participants.

In summary, the pre-intervention and post-intervention results of both standardised tests indicated a correlation between the YARC test results and the SWRT test results. Both data sets support the qualitative results, indicating that the intervention had a positive effect on children's academic reading achievement.

4.4.3 Attributes and Limitations of the SWRT and YARC Tests

The SWRT, as seen in Appendix G, is a user-friendly, time-efficient and concise test, appropriate for use in the classroom. It was a suitable choice for testing the ability of all of the child participants, as it tested independent reading skills, as applicable to the remit of this research study. The most significant limitation of the test, identified by the researcher, was the layout of the test. The format of the paper included words in small font, which was not ideal for the child participants, and a small section for assessment, which made grading onerous for the researcher. In the interest of validity and trustworthiness, the researcher administered the both the SWRT 1 and SWRT 2 assessments exactly as the test was designed in the SWRT programme. However, if the researcher were to use this assessment resource in future, it could be enlarged to A3 size to overcome this limitation.

An attribute of the YARC standardised test is that it measures a more comprehensive range of skills than are assessed in the SWRT, as described in the rationale for using this test. Therefore the results of the YARC test are more detailed. In comparison with other standardised literacy tests, i.e. the Drumcondra Reading Test and the Diagnostic Reading Analysis Test, the researcher is of the opinion that the YARC offers a more comprehensive insight into reading ability. However, in the researcher's experience, there were also some limitations of the YARC Test as an assessment resource. A limitation of the test was that each participant could not undertake the YARC Test individually due to time constraints as it was a detailed test to administer. The researcher administered the YARC 1 and YARC 2 tests over two professional development days, kindly granted by the school. Therefore, the test is more appropriate for educators working in a Special Education setting (SEN). A further limitation of the YARC test related to the administration of the reading passages. The children's SWRT score may dictate that their reading ability corresponds to a passage that they can read but may not be able to comprehend to the same extent. Therefore in two instances, i.e. (BL, Child Participant 17 and HY, Child Participant 14), children could read

the more difficult passages during YARC 2, as dictated by their increased SWRT 2 Result, but their comprehension of these passages was not aligned with their reading ability. However, in discussion with Critical Friend 1 (CF1, CA), the researcher accepts that many standardised reading assessments may encounter this challenge as often children's reading ability precedes comprehension of the written word until reading proficiency is achieved, later in the senior cycle of primary school.

4.5 Record of Reading Stamina

The other quantitative element of the data collection was the recording of the time the children spent independently reading, defined as reading stamina. Each time the intervention was implemented, the independent reading time was recorded. The criteria for independent reading was specific – as a class it was agreed that it was defined as a quiet activity, where all participants were engaged and employing reading strategies independently. Therefore, only when all criteria was satisfied, the time was recorded. This methodology integrated with goal setting and the whole class set weekly reading goals based on building their reading stamina as a group. This was an effective incentive to motivate children to develop their independent reading skills. Table 4.7 details the average time spent reading independently on a weekly basis, highlighting how this increased, from 2 minutes to 22 minutes throughout the intervention. An unexpected decrease was observed in Week 7, but this did not appear to hinder the overall time achieved. These results can be interpreted as follows:

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Time (Mins)	2	2	5	5	7	7	5	7	10	12	15	17	20	22

Table 4.7: Record of Reading Stamina

4.6 Unexpected Findings of the Research

The untidiness of action-research, alluded to by Sullivan et al., (2016) can lead to the emergence of unexpected findings. As described in Section 3.3.2, in the interest of presenting an honest, valid narrative on the research, triangulation of data was ensured and the thematic analysis of this data solely aimed to uncover organic data. It was the intention of the researcher that this approach to data analysis could reveal unpredictable outcomes, if they were present in the data set. In the instance of this research, the themes and most of the findings that were uncovered, were aligned with the research hypothesis. However, some of the findings associated with these themes were unforeseen, as seen in Table 4.8. This section will briefly discuss the unexpected findings that emerged from the data.

Theme	**Findings**
Differentiation	1. Struggling Readers engaged really well within the structure of the intervention.
Reflective Learning	2. Critical Reflection was a challenging element of self-study action research
Challenging Assumptions	3. Children had strong assumptions about reading.
Classroom Management and Wellbeing	4. Children found the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) relaxing and it promoted excellent behaviour regulation in the classroom. A strong link to mindfulness and mental wellness was observed.
Hegemony	5. The influence of external power sources on researcher practice exceeded preconceived beliefs.
Ethics	6. Children were very eager to be identifiable when speaking about their participation in the research.

Table 4.8: Unexpected Findings from the Research

4.6.1 Challenging Differentiation Assumptions

The consideration of how the research influenced the researcher's values, assumptions and understanding of literacy instruction was an important area for reflection. It was considered if the data exhibited changes in the researcher's teaching and/or in the students learning. Additionally, reflection focused on whether the data reflected changes in the researcher's own thinking, highlighting instances where meta-reflection had been successful. One instance where a clear pedagogical shift can be identified related to the professional assumptions held by the researcher. The researcher previously held a "deficit-orientated" framework (Moon and Brighton, 2008:274), cited in Garret et al., 2015:18), in relation to the teaching of struggling readers, as detailed in Section 2.3.4. Therefore, a concern held by the researcher maintained that struggling readers could disengage from the intervention due to the difficulty experienced, and thus, be further disadvantaged or marginalized. However, the research findings show that this was not the case. On the contrary, the children categorised as experiencing difficulty with reading engaged particularly well, specifically during small-group instruction, and teacher conferencing. This observation is detailed in Reflective Journal Entry 48 (3 March 2019) where the researcher states;

"I was mindful of the potential for a reading intervention to be a frustrating or difficult experience for them. However, the reaction has been the opposite. These children are among the most engaged in my class! Perhaps the intervention is a less pressurised reading environment. There is no individual spotlight on these children which allows them to participate at their own pace".

4.6.2 Critical Reflection as a Challenge

Educational Values are used as "overarching principles that help you teach and learn, but also to help…to gauge that…everyday practice is as it should be", (Sullivan et al., 2016: 51). It is important to ensure that educational values are enacted through practice. Teacher-identity is concerned with the personal philosophy and values attributed to the practitioner. As discussed in Chapter 1, the researcher's value system has been influenced by Froebelian concepts, i.e. child-centredness and professional reflection. Gregory (2000: 446), supported by (MacRuairc, n.d.), explains that there is no such thing as education that is value-neutral and so all education is a form of "enculturation" and personal bias can infiltrate value-systems. In alignment with subscription to these personal values, the researcher identified as a critically reflective practitioner prior to undertaking this research and therefore did not anticipate difficulty with reflective practice. However, Reflective Journal Entry 44 (13 February 2019) details the challenging relationship between the researcher and critical reflective practice throughout the research process. It shows the researcher meta-reflecting on previous preconceptions about reflective practice.

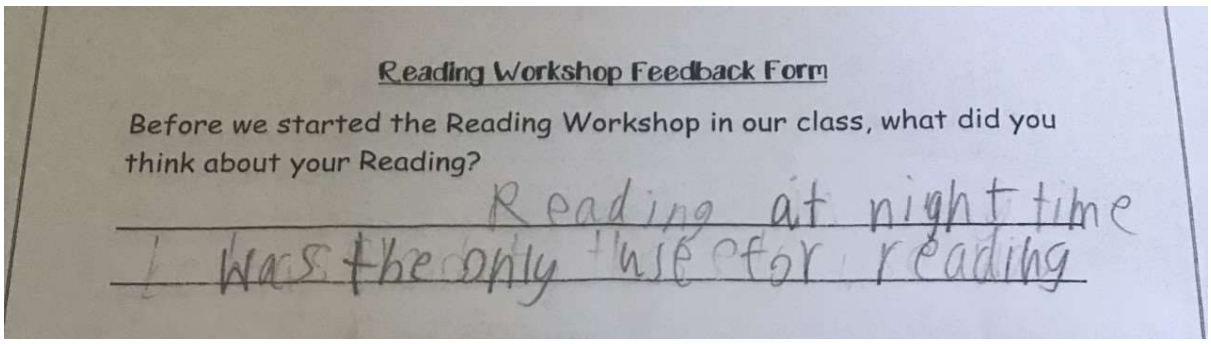
"I wanted to follow a method and instantly become 'a critically reflective practitioner'. Initially I was considering if I already was one…However, it became clear that my reflective skill set is the main reason for the lack of critical reflection in my practice. I see this as a positive because I can change it, I can challenge myself to develop my skills".

This was an area of discomfort, where the research identified a "living contradiction" in practice (Whitehead, 1989, cited in Sullivan et al., 2016:62). Additionally, it was important to consider how contractual and curricular obligations are situated alongside the demands of personal educational values. These requirements can limit practitioners' ability to fully align practice with values and personal educational philosophies. This may result in a discrepancy between living practice and educational values. This is described as experiencing

oneself as “a living contradiction”, (Whitehead, 2015). Despite this, the challenge offered an opportunity for the researcher to interrogate professional values and assumptions. As a result of this, the value of critical reflective practice, in the context of professional development, was illuminated for the researcher.

4.6.3 Challenging Children’s Assumptions about Reading

A related finding was that the researcher observed that the children exhibited preconceived assumptions about reading. As this was action research, and therefore, the child participants had an active role in the research, their assumptions affected the findings of the intervention. A secondary consequence of the implementation of the intervention was that it challenged some of these assumptions. For example, Figure 4.7 details a child’s (HC, Child Participant 24) assumption about the “use” and time for authentic reading, i.e. reading for pleasure as an organic activity, not as part of guided reading. The eloquence of the comment highlights the cognition behind the assumption, the concept had been previously considered by the child. The intervention challenged this assumption by providing relaxed, authentic reading experiences for children during school time.



*Henry Christian (Child Participant 24)
Questionnaire 2: 15 March 2019
Figure 4.7: Children’s Assumptions about Reading

4.6.4 The Impact of the Intervention on Management and Wellbeing

An unexpected, but welcome finding of the research was that children found the engaging in the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) to be relaxing and expressed this readily via the questionnaires, as seen in Table 4.5. It was the intention of the researcher to ensure the intervention was a pleasant experience for the children and therefore, the intervention required effort relating to the creation of the setting, seen in Figure 4.8, and the establishment of an enjoyable routine. However, the extent to which the Reading Workshop manifested as a calm, enjoyable activity was unprecedented.

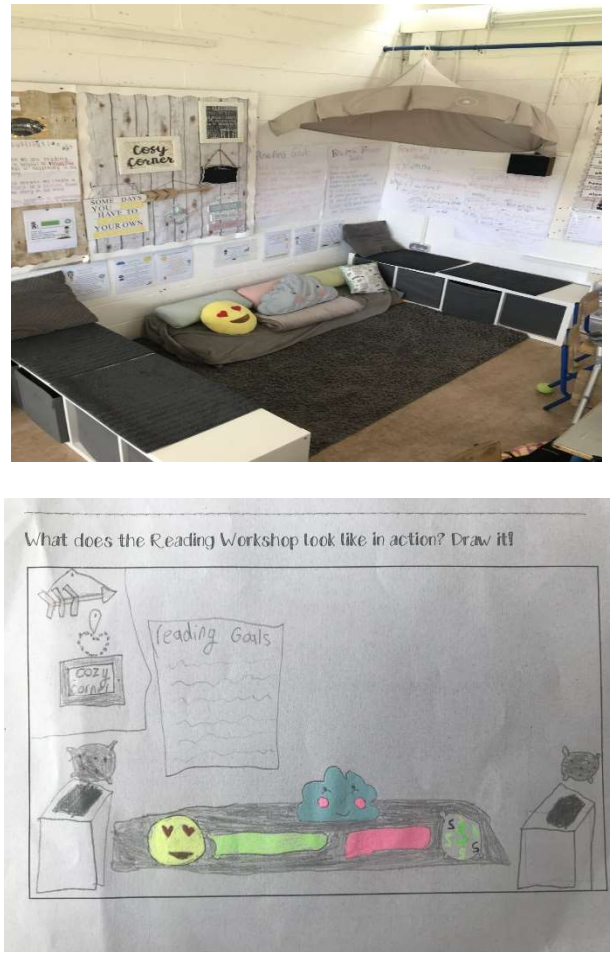
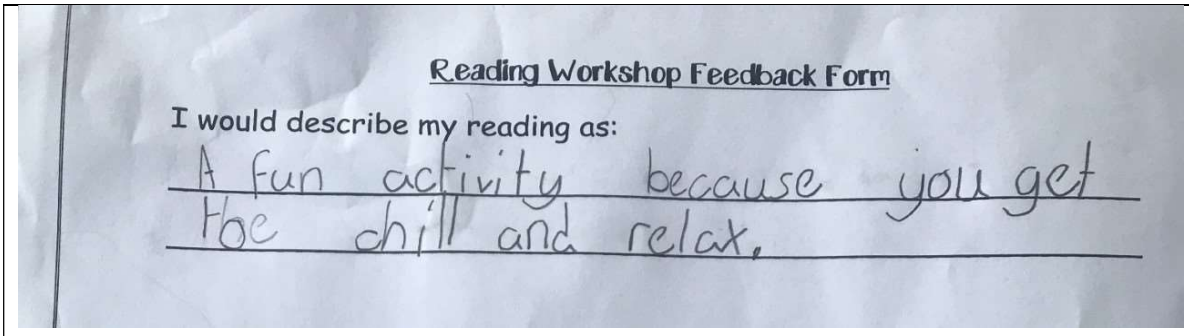


Figure 4.8: Murphy, A. (2019) The Setting for the Reading Workshop and a Child's (CE, CP5) Representation of it. (Alison Murphy's Private Collection)

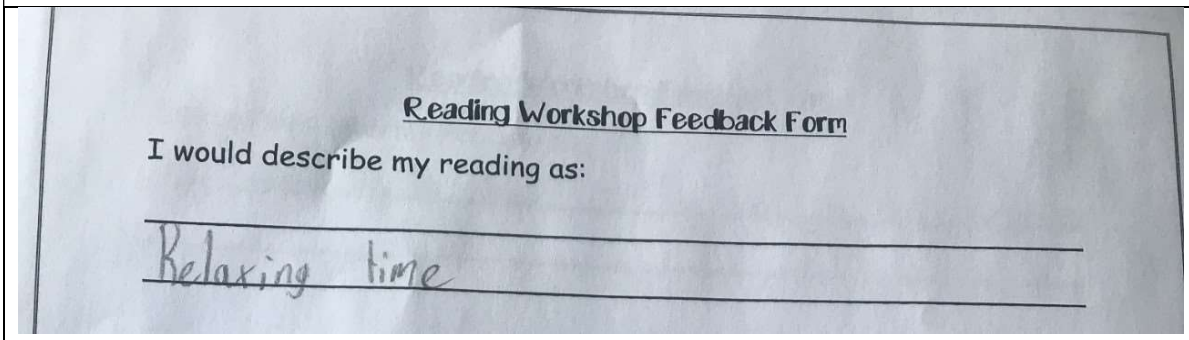
Additionally, the structure of the workshop promoted excellent behaviour regulation in the classroom, contributing to the wellbeing of all participants. This is in opposition to the caution given by Calkins (2001) that promoting independent learning poses significant classroom management challenges. With an increasing emphasis on the promotion of mental wellness in schools, this finding could make a significant contribution to the debate on the inclusion of wellbeing techniques in the curriculum. Additionally, the focus in this research on the development of independence, motivation and confidence, closely aligns to the principles of wellbeing for young people, as discussed by the Health Service Executive (HSE) (2015). Furthermore, there were frequent references to the words, "relax" and "quiet" in children's questionnaire responses, the researcher's observations and the reflective journal

entries. The researcher observed that the children became quite resolute about enforcing that independent reading time was quiet time, and they appeared to particularly enjoy this aspect of the intervention, as seen in the feedback below (Table 4.9). The researcher acknowledges that it was beyond the remit of this research to solely evaluate the contribution of the approaches used in the intervention to wellbeing in the classroom. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.5, the capacity for reading, presently a curricular focus, to be integrated with wellbeing and mindfulness, is an area of consideration for future research.



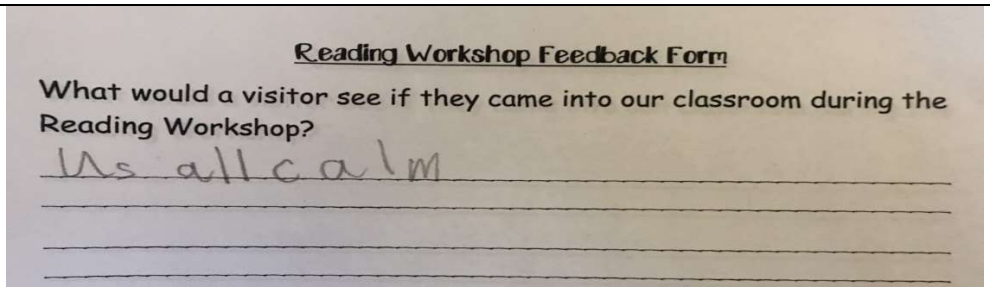
*Christopher Bell (Child Participant 18)

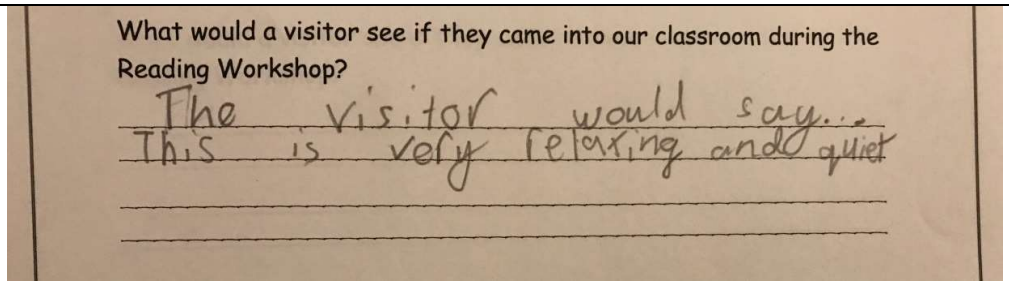
Questionnaire 3: 15 May 2019



*Chloe Adkins (Child Participant 4)

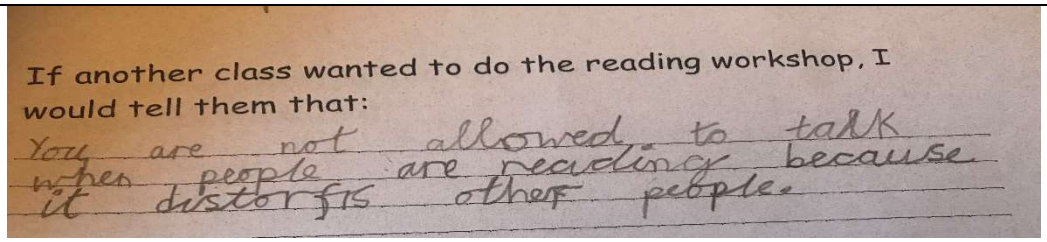
Questionnaire 3: 15 May 2019





*Harry Roberts (Child Participant 23)

Questionnaire 3: 15/05/2019



*Liam Duncan (Child Participant 26)

Questionnaire 1: 06/02/2019

Table 4.9: Evidence of the Contribution of the Intervention to Wellbeing

4.6.5 The Role of Hegemony in the Research

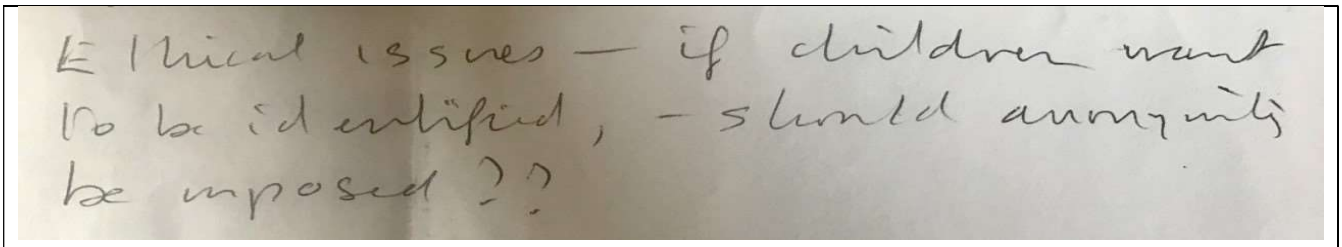
An unexpected finding resulting from productive reflective practice led to the consideration of the impact of hegemonic influences on the researcher's practice. This emerged as a significant theme in the reflective journal, as seen this quote from in Entry 45 (15 February 2019). *"The ideal that hegemonic ideals are at play that are accepted by the majority, but only benefit a minority is confusing for me in a climate where education is meant to be accessible and equal for all".*

This entry related to; the growing awareness of the influence of external power and limitations on the researcher, the influence of the power imbalance present between the researcher and the child participants, and the power dynamic observed between the researcher and the stakeholders involved in the research. As alluded to in Chapter Two, the current political agenda imparts expectation and influence on the practice of educators. The impact of these hegemonic influences on the experience of the researcher, during the self-study research project, and on the experience of the participants in the research were evaluated in relation to the extent to which the research results were affected. For example, as alluded to in Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.6, and Reflective Journal Entries 27 (17 November 2019) and 46 (19 February 2019), curriculum overload has enforced significant time pressure on educators. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, this hegemonic influence affected the research because other curricular areas were integrated with the literacy intervention, i.e. historical texts used for modelled reading, in order to meet all curriculum requirements.

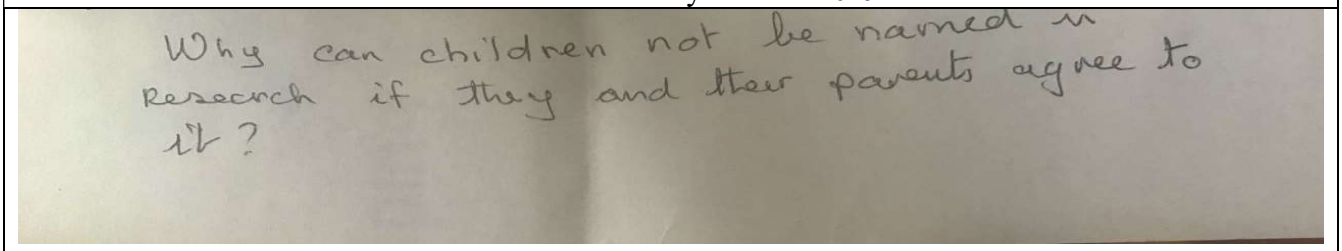
4.6.6 Unexpected Ethical Dilemmas

As described, in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, all relevant ethical considerations were adhered to. In this endeavour, the researcher encountered an unprecedented ethical dilemma. In the interest of transparency, at the beginning of the research, the child participants volunteered assent for the research and were informed that they would not be identifiable in the research. With increasing confidence and independence, at the final stage of the research, children were very eager to share their experiences and their knowledge. The researcher consistently sought permission for any quotes, photographs of work or drawing that were to be included in the written findings. The children volunteered their feedback readily but were indignant when they realised their feedback would not be attributed to them. The researcher explained about data protection but this was redundant once the children asserted that they consented for their real names to be included.

While, the researcher continued to adhere to the approved ethical process, using pseudonyms, the children's feedback was thought-provoking. This prompted the researcher to bring the issue to the attention of the validation group (VG2). Table 4.10 displays some of the responses from the members of Validation Group 2. The general consensus in the group maintained that, in the interest of organic participatory action research where children are viewed as participants with voices, not as anonymous research objects, there may be potential for children to be identifiable in research. It was accepted that this would be within agreed parameters, and subject to parental consent and child assent. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is an issue for policy, and perhaps could be considered in future research.



"*Ethical Issues – if children want to be identified – should anonymity be imposed?"*
*Elizabeth Murray 14 June 2019



"*Why can children not be named in research if they and their parents agree to it?"*
*Matthew Morris 14 June 2019

Table 4.10: Validation Group Responses

4.7 Conclusion

In consideration of the aforementioned theories, concepts and findings of related literature, aligned with the author's current research, the researcher can conclude that the narrative established can be evaluated in light of the research question. Thus, it is evident, from the data collated, that the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) intervention is an appropriate approach for improving differentiated literacy instruction and contributes

significantly to the development of independent reading skills, engagement, motivation and confidence. When compared to existing literature in the field, the findings from this study, did indicate minor contradictory evidence, as evident in Section 4.6.4 and 4.6.7. However, the majority of the research findings aligned closely with the literature reviewed and with the initial research hypothesis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate how differentiated literacy instruction could be enhanced to support the development of independence, engagement, motivation, and confidence in reading. To further analyse this objective, the researcher endeavoured to:

• Evaluate the impact of the intervention on the independent reading skills exhibited by the children.
• Ascertain the extent to which motivation, engagement and confidence in reading was affected by the intervention.
• Critically reflect on the professional learning associated with undertaking the research and enacting a change in practice.

Table 5.1: Analysis of Research Aims

A small scale self-study action research project, supported by in class observation, student feedback and standardised testing provided triangulated data through which the research question could be addressed. Following analysis of the data, a number of key themes emerged:

• The Importance of Reflective Learning and Collaboration
• Skills-based Teaching
• Time- Provision of increased time for independent reading significantly influenced engagement and motivation.
• The Importance of Choice

Table 5.2: Conclusive Findings

The research found that implementation of the "Reading Workshop" (Calkins, 2001) positively affected academic achievement, as evident from the SWRT and YARC

standardised test results. The children were enabled to engage in independent reading for a sustained period, increasing their time recorded from 2 minutes to 22 minutes from the beginning to the end of the intervention. Children demonstrated increased capability in relation to the use of reading strategies and the pedagogical language used to discuss their reading. Self-assessment strategies were also enhanced, as a consequence of increased learner autonomy and confidence.

5.1. Challenges of the Research

The researcher encountered some challenges during the initial stages of planning and implementation. One significant challenge was ensuring that the classroom library was sufficiently resourced to sustain a wide range of readers for the duration of the research. This challenge was overcome with support from colleagues, the school, and investment in the classroom library by the researcher. As discussed in Section 5.4, the identification of this challenge in the research context positively contributed to literacy development in the wider school context. Finally, as discussed in Section 4.6, some of the unprecedented research findings emerged from challenges encountered during the research, and addressing the challenges uncovered new knowledge, i.e. the challenge posed by critical reflection and hegemonic influences identified in the research context. All of the challenges encountered contributed immensely to the professional learning acquired during the research. Therefore, no challenge was significant enough to inhibit the implementation of the initiative. Figure 5.1 describes the conditions necessary for successful implementation of the Reading Workshop intervention:

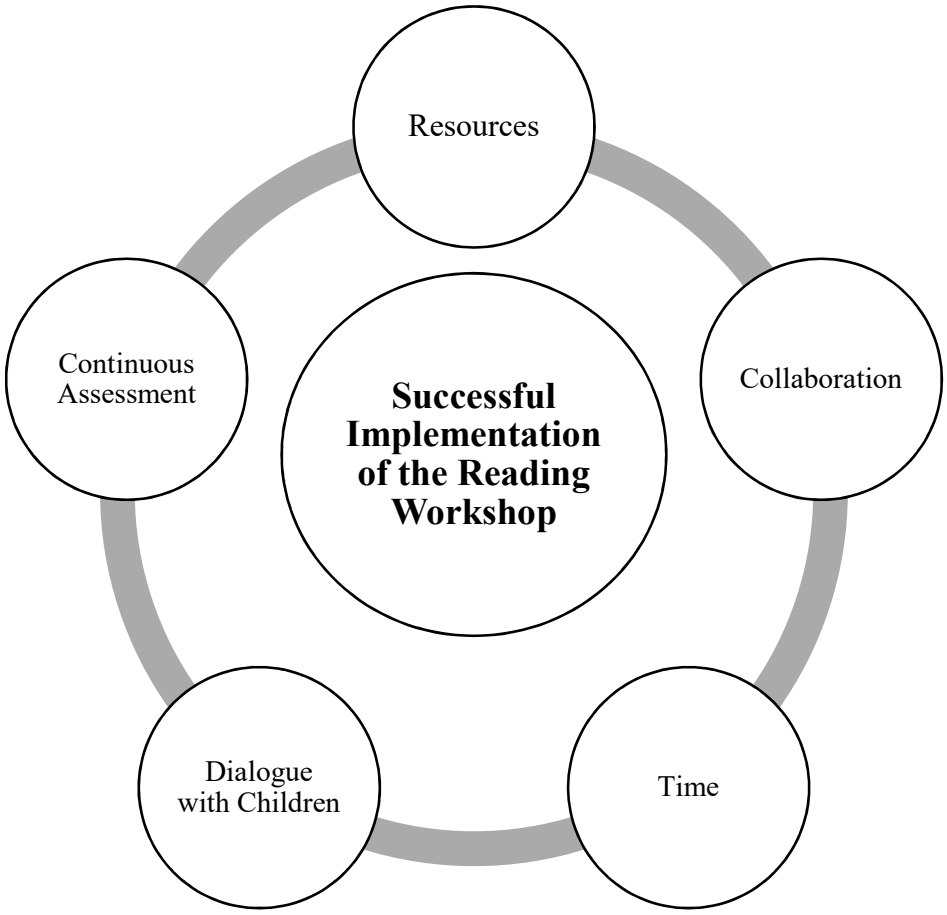


Figure 5.1: Successful Implementation of the Reading Workshop

5.2 Limitations of the Research

As this was a self-study action research project, the findings of this study were confined to the experience of the researcher. Therefore, according to the brief for this research, and the remit outlined in the study, this is not considered a limitation. However, the researcher acknowledges that it would be worthwhile to expand on this in the future, and to implement the initiative in a variety of research contexts, in order to gain a greater representative sample of educator perspectives. As discussed in Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, it must be acknowledged that the researcher's professional bias could have affected the results of the research study. However, Flyvbjerg (2004:429) articulates that this is a myth pertaining to action research, as it contains "no greater bias towards verification of the researchers preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry". Additionally, as described, researcher

bias was mitigated by the maintenance of a reflective journal throughout the research process, interaction with two critical friends and the presentation of the research for critique to two validation groups.

5.3. Personal and Professional Learning

This research study enabled the researcher to engage with a professional learning community, the positive effects of which continue to be tangible. This engagement instilled confidence that prompted the researcher to engage more meaningfully with like-minded colleagues in the research context, i.e. through organisation of the school-based validation group. This contributed immensely to collegial collaboration and researcher involvement in an emerging professional dialogue in the research context.

Secondly, through undertaking this research, the researcher was empowered to enact a change in practice, prompted by interrogation of personal and professional values. Consequently, the researcher has developed a new approach to literacy instruction which will inform future practice. This experience has provided an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on other areas of practice, with the intention of generating further change in future practice.

5.4 Implications of the Study in the Research Context

The researcher was fortunate to encounter immense collegial support for the research in the school context. The study had a profound impact on literacy instruction in the research class, increasing student autonomy, engagement, confidence and motivation. Additionally, the effects of the study were palpable within the research context. As discussed with Critical Friend 1 (CA) the challenges identified with resourcing the initiative to cater for a wide range of abilities, contributed to the adoption of a new, comprehensive reading scheme in the Junior Classes for the next school year. Furthermore, as described in Chapters' One and Two, the

alignment between the literacy initiative and the emphasis on literacy and critical thinking in the School Self-Evaluation plan ensured that the research fulfilled objectives relevant to whole school development. Finally, the opportunity to share this research with colleagues, and the enthusiasm with which the findings were received, ensured that the professional learning did not happen in isolation, and the research was affirmed in the research context.

5.5 Recommendations and Implications for Future Educational Practice and Research

Policy

- As described in Section 4.6, this research uncovered an ethical dilemma based on children's desire to be identifiable, and credited, as participants in the research. With the advancement of practitioner research, and associated increased child participation in research, perhaps this is an area for consideration.

Practice

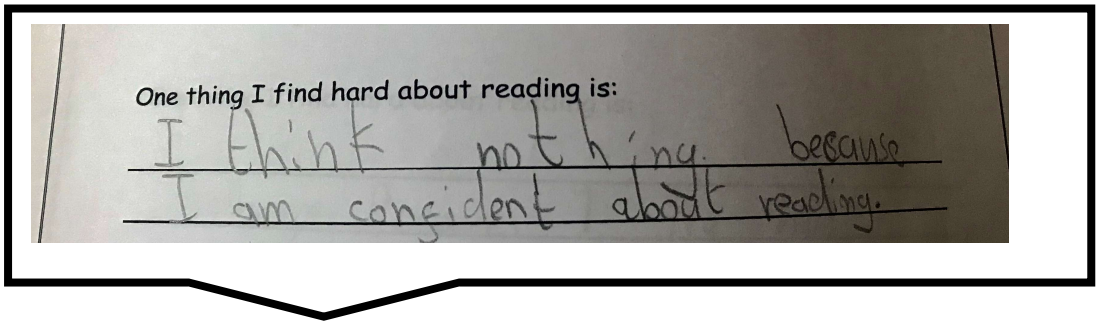
- This research benefitted immensely from collegial support in association with the emerging professional learning network in the research context. The researcher subscribes to the idea that a professional approach which allows for collaboration with colleagues and specialist professionals, could significantly benefit education communities and could support future professional research.
- The researcher has acquired confidence associated with conducting research to effect changes in practice. As a result of an immensely positive experience throughout this research, it is a certainty that the researcher will undertake future educational research.

Research

- As discussed in Section 4.6.4, the researcher is interested in pursuing future research on the capacity for reading to be integrated with wellbeing and mindfulness. This was an unprecedented finding of this research, and the investigation of this concept was beyond the remit of this study. However, the researcher is confident that this could be a relevant area for research, particularly given the current emphasis on social and emotional health development in Irish schools.
- The acquisition of parental input and feedback on the intervention was outside the parameter of this study. However, in future it may be worthwhile to investigate if parents noticed any change in children's reading at home as a result of the intervention.

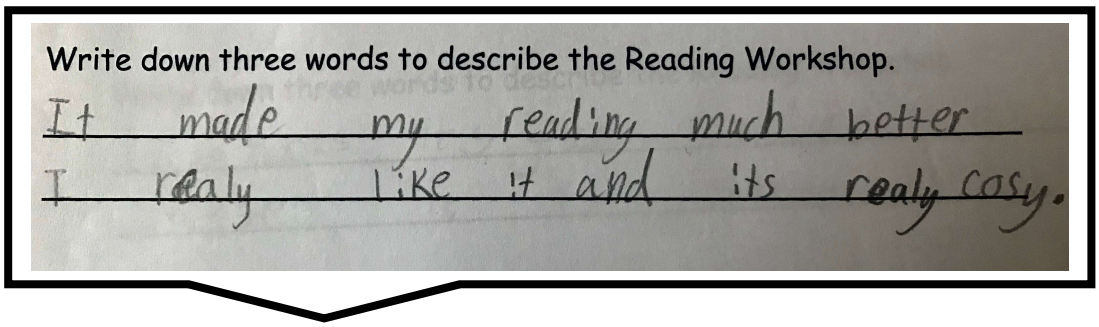
Table 5.3: Recommendations and Implications for Future Educational Practice and Research

In conclusion, this research has contributed a wealth of knowledge to the researcher's professional practice and will certainly influence future practice. In alignment with the aim to illuminate the voice of the child, the last word is attributed to the children's opinions on reading, as expressed via the questionnaires and shown in Figure 5.2.



*Michael James (Child Participant 27)

Questionnaire 3: 15/05/2019



*Felicity Hackett (Child Participant 9)

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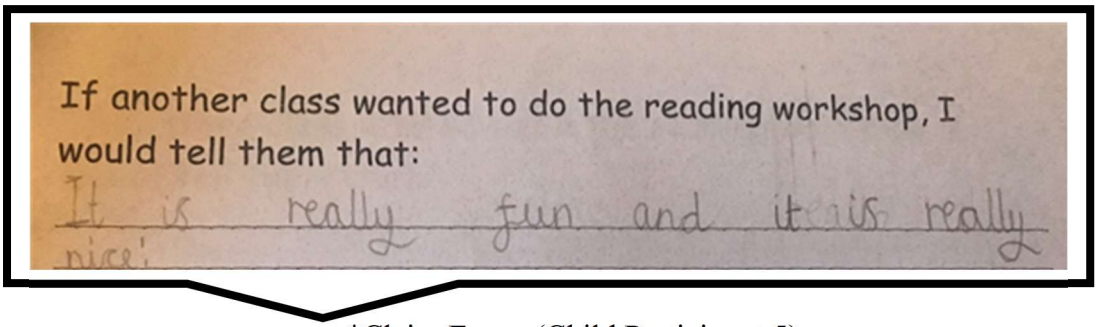
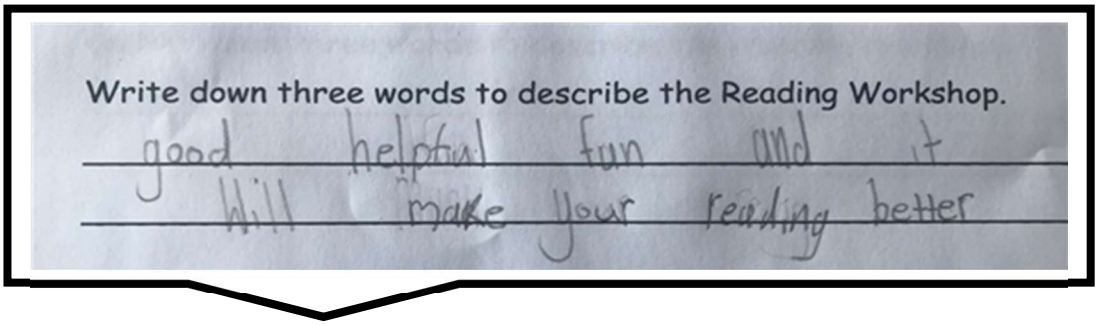


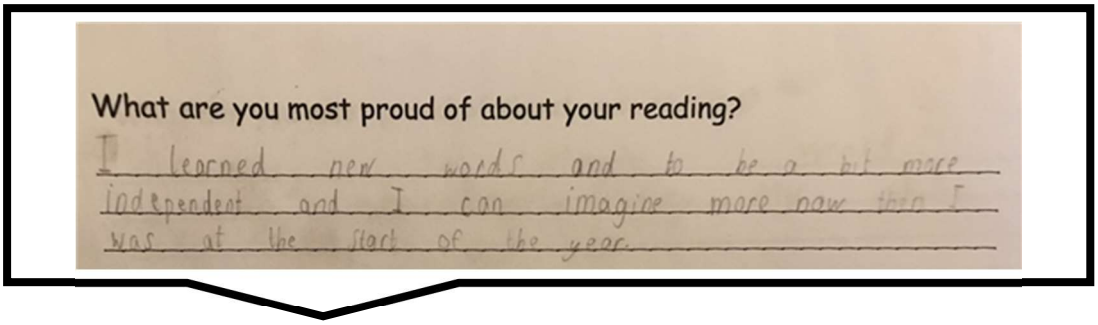
*Claire Evans (Child Participant 5)

Questionnaire 1: 06/02/2019



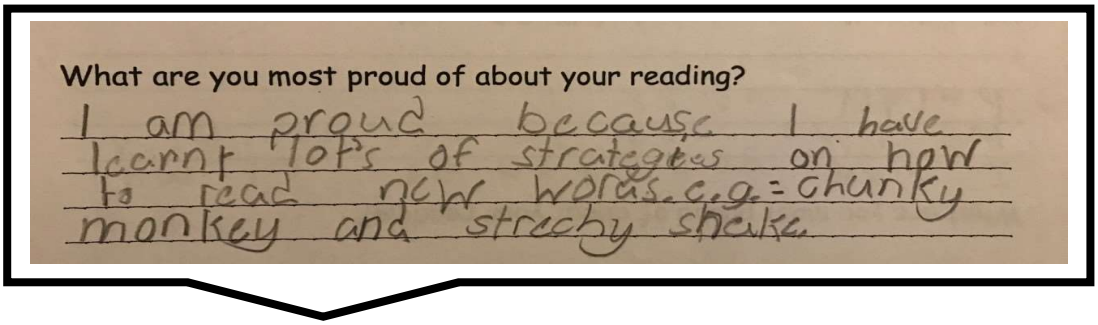
*Fiona Yates (Child Partipant 10)

Questionnaire 3: 15 May 2019



*Danielle Avery (Child Participant 8)

Questionnaire 3: 15 May 2019



*Christopher Bell (Child Participant 18)

Questionnaire 3: 15 May 2019

Figure 5.2: The Last Words

Appendices

Appendix A: Pseudonyms for Child Participants

Reference Number Child Participant	Pseudonym
1.	Bella Allen
2.	Christina Locke
3.	Ciara Hughes
4.	Chloe Adkins
5.	Claire Evans
6.	Catherine Eden
7.	Deborah Nixon
8.	Danielle Avery
9.	Felicity Hackett
10.	Fiona Yates
11.	Faye Abbott
12.	Gillian Anderson
13.	Grace Flynn
14.	Hope York
15.	Kayleigh Ikes
16.	Bobby Noonan
17.	Ben Lee
18.	Christopher Bell
19.	Curtis Donovan
20.	Daniel Smyth

21.	Eoghan Murphy
22.	Finn Fenlon
23.	Harry Roberts
24.	Henry Christian
25.	Hugh Little
26.	Liam Duncan
27.	Michael James
28.	Robert McAdam
29.	Vincent Murray
CF1	Catherine Allen
CF2	Emma Casey

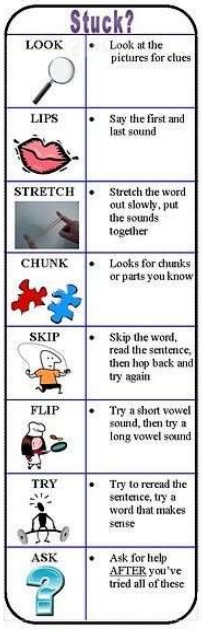
Appendix B: Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers

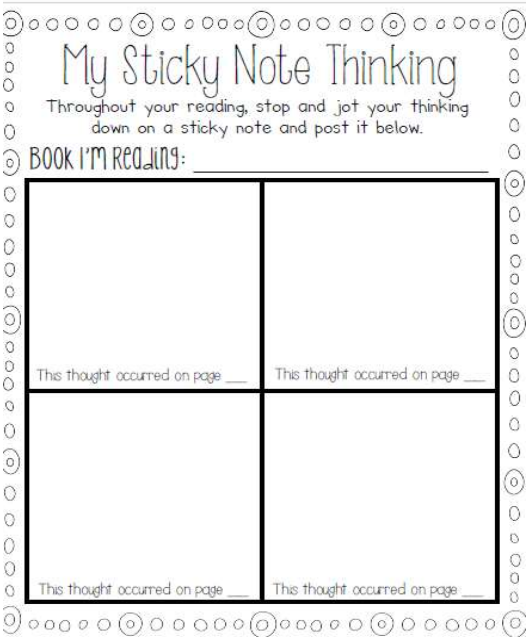
Instructional Aid 1.1: Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers	
Strategy	*Definition*
Activating	"Priming the cognitive pump" in order to recall relevent prior knowledge and experiences from long-term memory in order to extract and construct meaning from text
Inferring	Bringing together what is spoken (written) in the text, what is unspoker (unwritten) in the text, and what is already knowen by the reader in order to extract and construct meaning from the text
Monitoring-Clarifying	Thinking about how and what one is reading, both during and after the act of reading, for purposes of determining if one is comprehending the text combined with the ability to clarify and fix up any mix-ups
Questioning	Engaging in learning dialogues with text (authors), peers, and teachers through self-questioning, question generation, and question answering
Searching-Selecting	Searching a variety of sources in order to select appropriate information to answer questions, define words and terms, clarify misunderstandings, solve problems, or gather information.
Summarizing	Restating the meaning of text in one's own words--different words from those used in the original text
Visualizing-Organizing	Constructing a mental image or graphic organizer for the purpose of extracting and constructing meaning from the text

McEwan-Adkins, K. (2007) *40 Ways to Support Struggling Readers in the Content Classrooms, Grades 6-12.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Appendix C: Reading folder Resources for the Child Participants

(Including reading strategy prompt cards, goal-setting cards, note cards and feedback forms to support their reading).





Appendix D: Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1

Before we started the Reading Workshop in our class, what did you think about your Reading?

_____

_____

Have you learned anything new from doing the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

What do you like about the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

What don't you like about the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

The Reading Workshop could be better if:

_____

_____

Reading Workshop Questionnaire 2

What do I do during the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

What does my teacher do during the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

If another class wanted to do the reading workshop, I would tell them that:

_____

_____

_____

What does the Reading Workshop look like in action? Draw it!

I would describe my reading as:

_____

_____

One thing I find easy about reading is:

_____

_____

One thing I find hard about reading is:

_____

_____

If you were stuck on a word, what would you do?

_____

_____

Write down three words to describe the Reading Workshop.

_____

_____

What would a visitor see if they came into our classroom during the Reading Workshop?

_____

_____

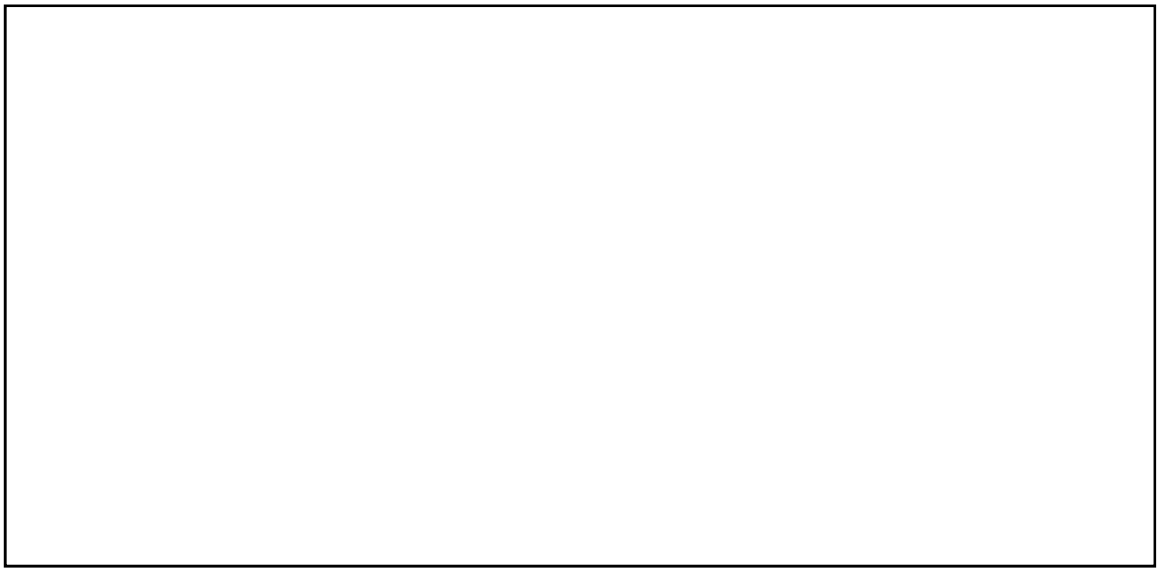
_____

_____

What do we use during The Reading Workshop?

What are you most proud of about your reading?

What does the cosy corner look like? Draw it!



Appendix E: The Reading Workshop Intervention Plan

	Weekly Dates	**Workshop Content**	**Assessment Practices**
	7th January- 24 May 2019	**Ongoing Content relevant to Research** • Reading homework from guided reader • 'Fun' reader for use in class and at home • English 2nd class curriculum implementation • Integrating a focus on reading strategies into all learning i.e. incorporating an abundance of visual strategies for reading into the environment i.e. independent prompt strips, anchor charts. • An increased emphasis on direct vocabulary learning • Children having a reading folder containing their reading log and conferencing log, reading prompts, questions for pair work/book club, reading book,	**Ongoing** • Reflective Journal Entries x3 minimum weekly • Start of week • After each workshop • End of week • Reading observations • Reading conferencing notes • Running records • Creating weekly reading goals with children independently and as a class and monitoring achievement. • Continuous teacher observations • Use of rubrics and checklists for reading assessment • Student self-assessment: in relation to goal-setting

		post its for 'sticky note thoughts' and weekly reading goals. • Increased teacher read –aloud time in the classroom. • Reading challenge – link for motivating children to read at home – parental influence and input.	• Video: The engagement of students when recording the results of their discussions? • Record Mini-lesson- Audio/Video?

Research Cycle Dates

Cycle	Start Date	End Date
1	7 Jan 2019	1 Feb 2019
2	4 Feb 2019	8 March 2019
3	11 Mar 2019	12 April 2019
4	29 April 2019	24 May 2019

Weeks	Workshop Content
Pre – Testing (optional) 7/1/2019- 14/1/2019	- Sight Word Reading Analysis Test administered to the full class. - Literacy groups formed according to the results - The children who received the highest and the lowest result in each reading group are selected to participate in the York Assessment of Reading Comprehension test.

Week 1 **Introduction to the Reading Workshop** **14/1/2019-** **21/1/2019**	Workshop 1 Focus: What is the Reading Workshop and What will it Look like in Our Class? Workshop 2 Focus: What does the Reading Workshop Sound Like in Our Class? Workshop 3 Focus: What does Independent Reading Look Like and How can we get ready to be Independent Readers?
Week 2 **Book Choice (1)** **21/1/2019-** **28/1/2019**	Workshop 4 Focus: How do I Choose a 'Just Right' Book? Workshop 5 Focus: What Strategies can I use to help me choose a 'Just Right' Book? Workshop 6 Focus: Book Exchange During Independent Reading Time
Week 3 **Behaviour of Readers** **28/1/2019-** **1/2/2019**	Workshop 7 Focus: Readers Treasure Books Workshop 8 Focus: Growing Readers Need to Build Stamina Workshop 9

	Focus: Readers set Reading Goals
Week 4 **Book Talk (1)** **4/2/2019-** **11/2/2019**	Workshop 10 Focus: 'Buzzing about Books' Workshop 11 Focus: Book Talk – Talking about our reading with teacher Workshop 12 Focus: Effective Book Talk – Talking about our reading with a Partner Workshop 13 Focus: The Language of Book Talk
Week 5 **Reading Habits** **(1)** **11/2/2019-** **18/2/2019**	Workshop 14 Focus: The Habits of GREAT Readers Workshop 15 Focus: Reader uses strategies to tackle tricky words i.e. chunking (use resource folder prompts) Workshop 16 Focus: Good Readers Use Context Clues to Figure Out Words

Midterm Break

Week 6	Workshop 17 Focus: Good Readers Use Pictures to Help Them Understand the story.

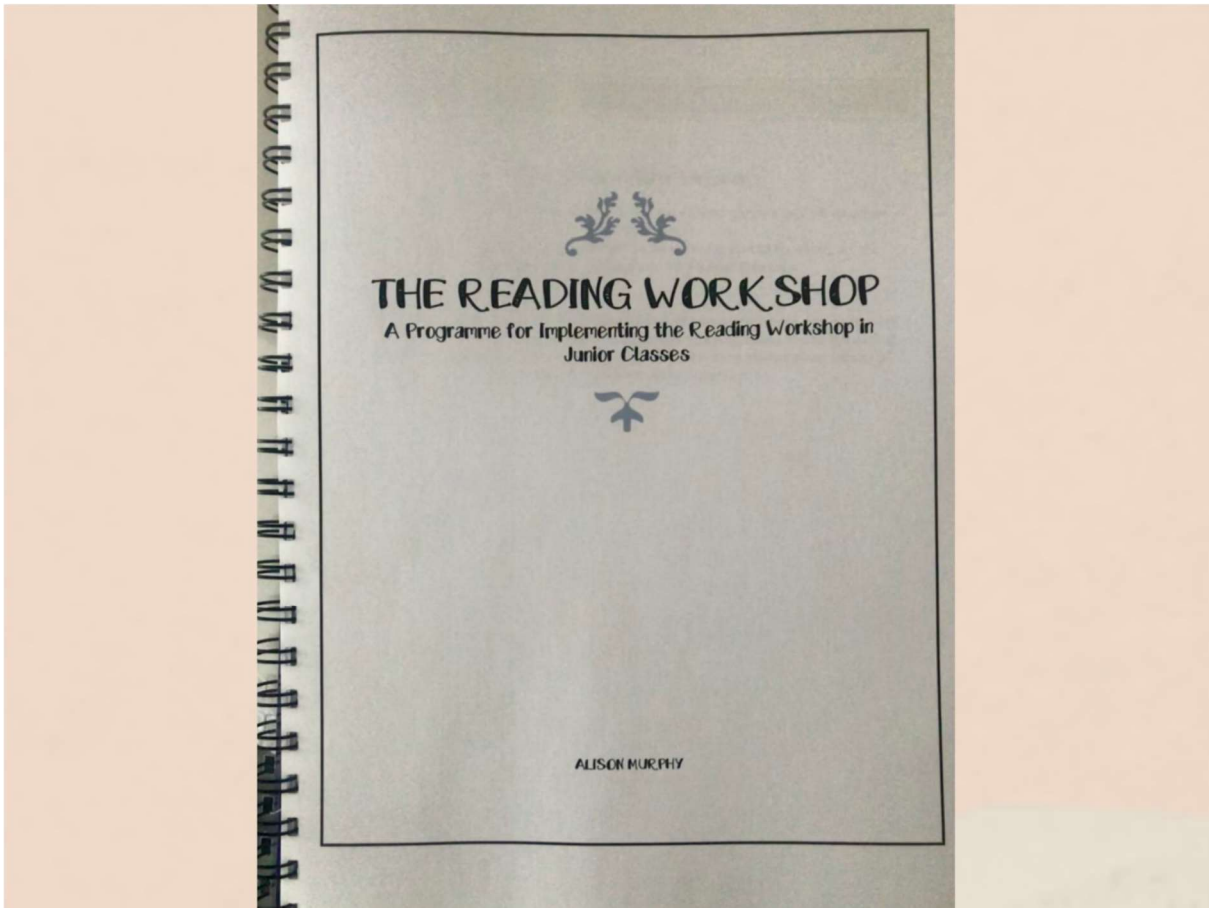
Reading Habits (2) 25/2/2019-4/3/2019	Workshop 18 Focus: Readers Use Their "Inner Voice" to Help Them Understand Workshop 19 Focus: Using Strategies for Comprehension- Making Connections- Readers make connections (text to text, text to self, text world)
Week 7 Comprehension Strategies 4/3/2019-11/3/2019	Workshop 20 Focus: Using Strategies for Comprehension – Questioning, Inferences Workshop 21 Focus: Using Strategies for Comprehension Workshop 22 Focus: Readers can visualise the story in their minds (Visualisation comprehension strategy)
Week 8	Workshop 23 Focus: Readers can re-tell the story
Reading Skills (1) 11/3/2019-18/3/2019	Workshop 24 Focus: Asking & Answering Questions Before, During and After Reading Workshop 25 Focus: Readers read with Expression

Week 9 **Reading Skills** **(2)** **18/3/2019-** **25/3/2019**	Workshop 26 Focus: Readers Practice Fluency Workshop 27 Focus: Reader read with Expression and Fluency Workshop 28 Focus: Readers can use Post-It Notes as they read to mark places in the book that inspire them to think
Week 10 **Book Choice** **(2)** **25/3/2019-** **1/4/2019**	Workshop 31 Focus: What have we learned about the habits of Great Readers? (Skills Recap) Workshop 32 Focus: Readers read different types of books: Genres Workshop 33: Focus: Strategies for Reading Nonfiction Books
Week 11 **Reading Strategies (1)** **1/4/2019-** **8/4/2019**	Workshop 34 Focus: Strategies for Reading Nonfiction Books Workshop 35 Focus: Readers can assess the books they have read and make recommendations

	Workshop 36 Focus: What do I do when I finish a book?
Week 12 **Evaluating our Reading (1)** **29/4/2019-** **6/5/2019**	Workshop 37 Focus: What have we learned about being Readers? (Skills recap) Workshop 38 Focus: Readers can keep Record of their Reading – Reading Challenge Record Workshop 39 Focus: Readers can read in different environments
Week 13 **Book Talk (2)** **6/5/2019-** **13/5/2019**	Workshop 40 Focus: Book Talk – Talking about our reading with teacher Workshop 41 Focus: Effective Book Talk – Talking about our reading with a Partner Workshop 42 Focus: Revising the Language of Book Talk
Week 14 **Reading Skills (3)**	Workshop 43 Focus: Readers can read with feeling and expression Workshop 44 Focus: Readers read with fluency

13/5/2019- **20/5/2019**	Workshop 45 Focus: Readers can use storytelling skills to read to a partner or an audience
Week 15 **Evaluating our Reading (2)** **20/5/2019-** **24/5/2019**	Workshop 46 Focus: Reader can explain what strategies they use when they are reading. Workshop 47 Focus: Readers can use a checklist to assess their own reading Workshop 48 Focus: Readers can use a checklist to assess their own reading (Recap on all skills practised).
Post – Testing (optional) **23/5/2019-** **24/5/2019**	- Sight Word Reading Analysis Test administered again to the full class. - Literacy groups assessed again according to the results - The same children as before participate in the York Assessment of Reading Comprehension test.

The Intervention Plan and all Reading Workshop Lesson Plans were published in as a Teaching Resource Book, upon the advice of the Thesis Supervisor.



Available for Viewing on Request.

Appendix F: Ethical Statement and All Consent and Child Assent Forms

Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Master of Education (Research in practice) (MEd)

Ethics Approval for Master of Education (Research in Practice)

(*Please read the notes in the module handbook (EDF684) before completing this form)*

Student name:	Alison Murphy
Student Number:	12320491
Supervisor:	Mr Brian Tubbert
Programme:	Master of Education (Research in practice) (MEd)

Thesis title:	How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?
Research Question(s):	How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?
Intended start date of data collection:	12 August 2018 Reflective Journal 7/1/2019 Intervention Data
Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:	Maynooth University Ethical Guidelines Froebel Department Ethical Guidelines

1(a) Research Participants: Who will be involved in this research? *(Tick all that apply)*

Early years / pre-school	☐
Primary school students	☒
Secondary school students	☐
Young people (aged 16 – 18 years)	☐
Adults	☒

Provide a brief description of the individuals and their proposed role in your research below [Max 50 words]:

The research participants will be myself, the 29 children in my class, one collaborating teacher, two critical friends and two validation groups. I will consult colleagues for their input on the teaching of literacy. My critical friends will be involved in providing alternative perspectives on the research as part of the validation process.

1(b) Recruitment and Participation/sampling approach: *How will these participants become involved in your research? What type of sampling is involved? Please describe the*

formal and informal recruitment processes? Please describe the type of participation and level of engagement of participants? Are there gatekeepers and what is their part of sampling process? [Max 100 words]

The 29 children in my class will participate in the research. The critical friends and the colleagues who will be involved will participate with a view to giving alternative perspectives on the research and the teaching of literacy in my school context. I will ask colleagues at my class level to participate due to the relevance of their experience to the research. I will ask two critical friends with experience of undertaking a Masters' degree to act as critical friends as part of the validation process.

The gatekeepers involved are my School Principal, the Board of Management and the Parents of the children in my class. Consent will be obtained from all of these sources. The school principal has given consent for the research to take place in my class and this is the extent of her role in the sampling process.

All participation will be voluntary and no incentives will be given for participation. Participants may withdraw from the research at any stage without any consequences.

My research will aim to improve my teaching of reading strategies to Second Class students through use of an explicit reading intervention, in the format of the Reading Workshop, (Calkins, 2001). I will also consider the effect of the intervention on children's motivation to read and enjoyment of reading.

The research will be designed under the paradigm of action research. I will undertake the research in my own class in the 2018/2019 academic year. The research will take place in a second class in a middle-class, urban setting. I will obtain consent for the research project in October and November 2018, pending Ethical approval. The main research will be conducted from January-March 2019. The writing process will mainly be undertaken from April-August 2019. The thesis will be completed by September 2019. The time frame will be:

September- December 2018

- Reflective Journal entries will be collected.
- BOM and Parental consent and ethical approval will be obtained.
- Research planning and review of associated literature.

January-March

-Research and Data Collection

March- September

-Data Analysis and Collation of Research for Thesis

The research methodologies I will employ to engage in this research will include; initial observation, continuous teacher observations, and reflective journaling, use of rubrics and checklists, use of questionnaires and student self-assessment. The data I hope to collect will include journal entries, student assessment records, audio and video recordings of student work, written student self-assessments, interview and survey responses and written teacher observations. Anonymity will be ensured in relation to all aforementioned data. I plan to obtain qualitative and quantitative data and therefore results will be collated in the form of both types of data. I will analyse the data, identifying recurring themes in the data in order to make a claim to knowledge.

3. Ethical Issues: Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise in the course of undertaking this research. *Outline the nature of consent and assent pertaining to participants. (You should discuss these concerns and outline the responses/supports you will provide in the boxes below)*

Vulnerability *(minimising risk, discomfort, coping with unforeseen outcomes, can any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher)?) [Max 100 words]*

The 29 student participants are vulnerable citizens as they are under the age of 18. I will ensure to obtain full parental consent and child assent for all participants. Children will special educational needs in the sample are considered as particularly vulnerable and every effort will be made to ensure they are represented in the data. I will adhere to all GDPR, Maynooth University and Children's First Ethical guidelines.

This issue of potential identification of children will be mitigated by anonymising all children involved in the research. Similarly, interviewee identity could be disclosed where questions may jeopardise the anonymity of the interviewee in the school. However, I will not use any names during the recording of the interviews. Further to consent being obtained, participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point, (Silverman, 2010).

Power dynamics *(between researcher-participants, amongst participants, insider-research, reflexivity, gatekeepers, working with your colleagues, working with students, etc)*: *[Max 100 words]*

I will consider the effect of the power imbalance present in my role as researcher and class teacher. I will consider the impact of my personal bias on the research and will be mindful of the epistemological standpoint from which I am approaching the research. Power-dynamics may be present between colleagues involved in the process and the gatekeepers involved. I will ensure colleagues do not incur any harm as a result of participation and conversely, do not receive any incentive to participate from the researcher or the gatekeepers. I will consider the effect of this on the data and will ensure all responses are anonymised, using pseudonyms

Furthermore, I will ensure to uphold the responsibility to debrief all research participants upon conclusion of the research. I will include the parents and school management in the de-briefing process.

Informed consent and assent *(for participants - and guardians where appropriate. Please also note* any *other approvals that may be required from other bodies (i.e. Board of Management.): [Max 100 words]*

I will seek consent to conduct the research from the parents, teachers and school management involved. Parents will give consent and children will also be asked to give assent upon explanation of the research. I will also include an opt-out clause for children involved and will not provide any incentive for participation. All forms of data to be collected will be mentioned in the consent forms to obtain consent for different types of data.

Sensitivity *(topics that may be potentially sensitive, intrusive or stressful, have you considered what to do in relation to dealing with the aftermath of a sensitive disclosure? how do you intend to deal with unexpected outcomes?) [Max 100 words]*

I do not envisage that research into a literacy intervention will lead to sensitive or intrusive content. However, all unexpected disclosures will be dealt with in a timely, in accordance with school policy and adhering to all ethical guidelines aforementioned. In terms of sensitive disclosures, I will consult my principal who is the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection in my setting. In terms of any other unexpected outcomes, I will ensure they are reflected and analysed accordingly as part of the research.

Data storage *(where will the findings be stored; will they be published? And by whom?) [Max 100 words]*

I will ensure that all actions will be in line with the data protection guidelines upheld in my school and in Maynooth University. I will obtain the standard online permission that is required in my school and will also obtain consent attributed specifically to this research project. All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

Attachments

Please attach, where available and applicable, information letters, consent forms and other materials.

- Information letters and all consent forms are attached.

Declaration *(Please sign and date)*

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of undertaking this research.' If any of the conditions of this proposed research change, I confirm that I will re-negotiate ethical clearance with my supervisor.

Signed: _____ Date: 22 October 2018

Supervisor use only

Date Considered: 3/11/18

Approved ☐

Approved with recommendations (see below) ☐

Referred back to applicant ☐

Referred to Department Research and Ethics Committee ☐

Recommendations:

Signature of supervisor: _____

Department use only: *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee *

Approved with recommendations (see below)

Referred back to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)

Referred to Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee

Recommendations: ---

Signature of Dept. Ethics Committee Chair:

_____

Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee use only *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: _____

Approved ☐

Referred back to applicant and supervisor ☐

Signed:

_____

FSS Research Ethics Committee nominee

Please complete the checklist below to confirm you have considered all ethical aspects of your research. **(Note that the consent form/s, assent form/s and information sheet/s that must accompany this application will be scrutinised and any omission or inadequacy in detail will result in a request for amendments).**	**Please tick**
I have attached (an) appropriate consent form/s, assent form/s and/or information sheet/s	✓
Each form and sheet is presented to a high standard, as befitting work carried out under the auspices of Maynooth University	✓
Each consent form has full contact details to enable prospective participants to make follow-up inquiries	✓
Each consent form has full details, in plain non-technical language, of the purpose of the research and the proposed role of the person being invited to participate	✓
Each consent form has full details of the purposes to which the data (in all	

their forms: text, oral, video, imagery etc) will be put, including for research dissemination purposes	✓
Each consent form explains how the privacy of the participants and their data will be protected, including the storage and ultimate destruction of the data as appropriate	✓
Each consent form gives assurances that the data collection (questionnaires, interviews, tests etc) will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner, and that the participant has the right to cease participation at any time and without the need to provide a reason	✓
Please include here any other comments you wish to make about the consent form(s) and/or information sheet/s. • Children will also provide assent on the parental consent form.	✓

Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Information for Board of Management

Alison Murphy
'Calimar',
Shanganagh Road,
Shankill,
Co. Dublin

8th October 2018

RE: Masters of Education Research Study*: A study researching the extent to which the teacher can enhance the teaching of reading in a Second Class*.

Dear _____,

I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education Degree in Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth. As part of this degree, an action research study is to be submitted which involves the conductor carrying out qualitative or quantitative analysis in the form of an action research study. I am conducting the research under the supervision of Dr. Bernadette Wrynn and Mr Brian Tubbert, Lecturers in the Froebel Department of Early Childhood Education, Maynooth. The Froebel Department has given approval to approach schools as part of this research.

The chosen topic aims to explore the extent to which children's reading can be improved using the reading workshop approach and supporting teaching methodologies. I wish

to obtain your permission to invite the pupils in my class to participate in the study. Only those whose parents give their informed consent to the study will participate.

The information needed to complete the study will include children's anonymous work samples, oral feedback, visual and audio recordings, (to be used strictly by the researcher), teacher observations and assessments. All information collected will be treated in confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of the research project. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. On condition of receiving your consent to approach the pupils and parents to participate in the study, I will arrange for informed consent to be obtained from the parents of participants and from the children involved.

All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

I have attached the Research Consent Form and the proposed letters for parents for your consideration. If you would like to give me your permission for the pupils of this school to take part in this study, please complete and return the attached Board of Management Consent Form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any further queries regarding this topic, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address or contact number.

Yours Sincerely,

Alison

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Board of Management Consent Form

I give consent for you to approach parents to gain consent for pupils to participate in the given Research Project.

I have read the Letter of Consent explaining the purpose of the research study and understand that:

• The role of the school is voluntary

• I may decide to withdraw the schools' participation at any time

• The participants will be given informed consent and will understand that they may only participate in the study with this consent

• All information obtained will be kept confidential, and will be treated in strictest confidence

• The participant's names will not be used and individuals will not be identifiable throughout the study

• The school will not be identifiable in any part of the study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of all participants

• Participants may withdraw during any part of the study without consequence. Participants will not receive any incentive to participate in the research study.

• I may seek further information about the research study from Alison Murphy on 086 1294929.

_____ _____

Chairperson's Signature Date

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Parents

RE: Masters of Education Research Study*: A study researching the extent to which the teacher can enhance the teaching of reading in a Second Class*.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education Degree in Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on implementing a reading intervention and investigating whether this leads to enhanced teaching of reading.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by implementing a reading intervention focused on enhancing children's reading strategies, motivation to read and enjoyment of reading. The data I will collect will be collected using observations, anonymised student results, visual and audio recordings, (to be used strictly by the researcher), a daily teacher journal and anonymised feedback from children.

All correct research and data protection guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. Only the children whose parents give their informed consent to the study will participate and only samples from these children will form part of the results. All

information collected will be treated in strict confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of the research project. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Your approval to allow your son or daughter to participate will be greatly appreciated. Please complete the written consent form attached to allow your son or daughter to participate. Please feel free to contact me via email at amurphy.stlaurences@gmail.com if you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Alison Murphy

Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Parents

I, _____ (PARENT'S NAME), have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered.

I freely give consent for my child _____ (CHILD'S NAME) to participate in the proposed Action Research Study. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

I understand that all information gathered will be kept anonymous and I may seek further information about the research study from Alison Murphy.

Parent / Guardian Signature_____

Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Principal

RE: Masters of Education Research Study*: A study researching the extent to which the teacher can enhance the teaching of reading in a Second Class*.

Dear _____,

I am currently undertaking a Masters of Education Degree in Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth. As part of this degree, an action research study is to be submitted which involves the conductor carrying out qualitative or quantitative analysis in the form of an action research study. I am conducting the research under the supervision of Dr. Bernadette Wrynn and Mr Brian Tubbert, Lecturer in Froebel Department of Early Childhood Education, Maynooth. The Froebel Department of Education, Maynooth has given approval to approach schools as part of this research.

The chosen topic aims to explore the extent to which children's reading can be improved using the reading workshop approach and supporting teaching methodologies. I wish to obtain your permission to invite pupils to participate in the study. Only those whose parents give their informed consent to the study will participate.

The information needed to complete the study will include children's anonymous work samples, oral feedback, video and audio recordings, (to be used strictly by the researcher),

teacher observations and assessments. All information collected will be treated in confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of the research project. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. On condition of receiving your consent to approach the pupils and parents to participate in the study, I will arrange for informed consent to be obtained from the parents of participants.

All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

I have attached the Participant Consent Forms for your consideration. If you would like to give me your permission for the pupils to take part in this study, please complete and return the attached Principal Consent Form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any further queries regarding this topic, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address or contact number.

Yours Sincerely,

Alison Murphy

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Principal

School Principal Consent Form

I give consent for you to approach parents to gain consent for pupils to participate in the given Research Project.

I have read the Letter of Consent explaining the purpose of the research study and understand that:

• The role of the school is voluntary

• I may decide to withdraw the schools' participation at any time

• The participants will be given informed consent and will understand that they may only participate in the study with this consent

• All information obtained will be kept confidential, and will be treated in strictest confidence

• The participant's names will not be used and individuals will not be identifiable throughout the study

• The school will not be identifiable in any part of the study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of all participants

• Participants may withdraw during any part of the study without consequence. Participants will not receive any incentive to participate in the research study.

• I may seek further information about the research study from Alison Murphy on 086 1294929.

_____ _____

Principal's Signature Date

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Teachers

RE: Masters of Education Research Study*: A study researching the extent to which the teacher can enhance the teaching of reading in a Second Class*.

Dear _____,

You are being invited to participate in a research study on Teachers' experience of teaching reading at second class level. Participation in the study involves participating in a survey and an interview.

This research will require about 20 minutes of your time. During this time, you will be interviewed about your experiences of teaching reading. The survey will be conducted wherever you prefer (i.e. in the school), and will be results will be later collated for the purpose of data analysis. There are no risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experience of teaching reading.

Several steps will be taken to protect your anonymity and identity. The typed surveys will NOT contain any mention of your name, and any identifying information from the interview will be removed. Therefore, your name and any other identifying details will never

be revealed in any publication of the results of this study. The typed interviews will also be kept under lock and key, and only the researcher will have access to the surveys.

All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may withdraw consent and discontinue participation from the study at any time for any reason without prejudice or penalty. If you do this, all information from you will be destroyed. You are also free to refuse to answer any question in the interview that you may be asked.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please complete the written consent form attached to participate in the study. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Alison Murphy

Maynooth University Froebel Department of

Primary and Early Childhood

Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus

Luath- Oideachas

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Letter of Consent for Teachers

I, _____ (name; please print clearly), have read the above information.

I freely give consent to participate in the given Research Project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to refuse to answer any survey question and to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous and I may seek further information about the research study from Alison Murphy at above address or contact number.

_____ _____

Participants Signature Date

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Information Sheet: FAO -School Personnel, Parents and Guardians

Who is this information sheet for?

This information sheet is for school management, parents and guardians.

What is this Action Research Project about?

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using teacher observations, audio and visual recordings, reflective notes, student self-assessment, student results, interviews and surveys. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What is the research question?

How can differentiated literacy instruction be improved and thus increase independent reading skills, motivation and confidence in a second class context?

What sorts of research methods will be used?

Research methods may include, continuous teacher observations, interviews/surveys with colleagues, reflective journaling and student self-assessment. The researcher may also use visual and audio recordings and work samples obtained from participants which will be anonymised and kept securely in accordance with GDPR guidelines and the Maynooth university ethical standards.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by Alison Murphy as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The proposed research participants are my current second class. In accordance with course requirements, some colleagues may be involved in a voluntary, anonymous capacity as participants in the research also. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr. Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

What will happen to the data and the results?

All data obtained will be kept confidential and secure for the duration of the study and thereafter. On completion of the thesis, the data will be kept for a further ten years, as per University regulations and then will be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

What are you being asked to do?

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with my class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

***Contact details*:** **Researcher:** Alison Murphy **Email:** amurphy.stlaurences@gmail.com

Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

Declaration by Researcher

This declaration must be signed by the applicant(s)

I acknowledge(s) and agree that:

a) It is my sole responsibility and obligation to comply with all Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.

b) I will comply with Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.

c) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy.

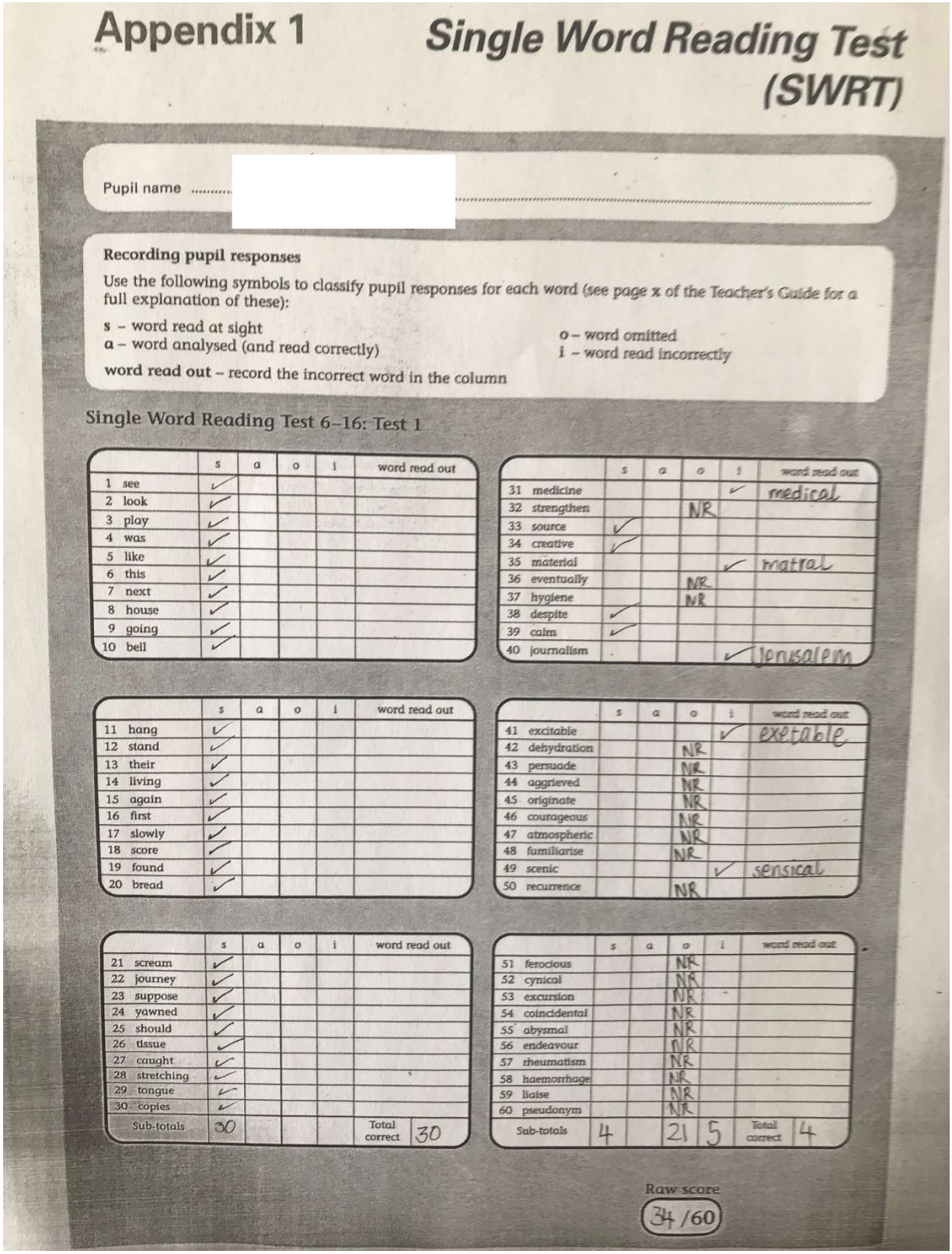
d) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.

e) That the research will not commence until ethical approval has been granted by the subcommittee in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Signature of Student: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Sample Sight Word Reading Analysis Test



Appendix 1 Single Word Reading Test (SWRT)

Pupil name .....

Recording pupil responses

Use the following symbols to classify pupil responses for each word (see page x of the Teacher's Guide for a full explanation of these):

s – word read at sight
a – word analysed (and read correctly)
o – word omitted
i – word read incorrectly
word read out – record the incorrect word in the column

Single Word Reading Test 6–16: Test 1

	s	a	o	i	word read out
1 see	✓				
2 look	✓				
3 play	✓				
4 was	✓				
5 like	✓				
6 this	✓				
7 next	✓				
8 house	✓				
9 going	✓				
10 bell	✓				

	s	a	o	i	word read out
31 medicine				✓	medical
32 strengthen			NR		
33 source	✓				
34 creative	✓				
35 material				✓	matral
36 eventually			NR		
37 hygiene			NR		
38 despite	✓				
39 calm	✓				
40 journalism				✓	Jerusalem

	s	a	o	i	word read out
11 hang	✓				
12 stand	✓				
13 their	✓				
14 living	✓				
15 again	✓				
16 first	✓				
17 slowly	✓				
18 score	✓				
19 found	✓				
20 bread	✓				

	s	a	o	i	word read out
41 excitable				✓	exetable
42 dehydration			NR		
43 persuade			NR		
44 aggrieved			NR		
45 originate			NR		
46 courageous			NR		
47 atmospheric			NR		
48 familiarise			NR		
49 scenic				✓	sensical
50 recurrence			NR		

	s	a	o	i	word read out
21 scream	✓				
22 journey	✓				
23 suppose	✓				
24 yawned	✓				
25 should	✓				
26 tissue	✓				
27 caught	✓				
28 stretching	✓				
29 tongue	✓				
30 copies	✓				
Sub-totals	30				Total correct 30

	s	a	o	i	word read out
51 ferocious			NR		
52 cynical			NR		
53 excursion			NR		
54 coincidental			NR		
55 abysmal			NR		
56 endeavour			NR		
57 rheumatism			NR		
58 haemorrhage			NR		
59 liaise			NR		
60 pseudonym			NR		
Sub-totals	4		21	5	Total correct 4

Raw score
34 /60

Appendix H: SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of All Results

Areas for Assessment	**YARC Test 1 and Test 2 Results**			
	Children who Improved their overall Score	Percentage of Children who received the same score	Percentage of Children who decreased their Ability Score	Notes
Accuracy	7/8 children	1 child	0	*As indicated above in individual participant result profiles, children reading higher – level passages during Test 2, and their increased age had an impact on comprehension and reading rate attainment.
Reading Rate	5/8 children	0	3/8 children *reflection determined that with increased use of reading strategies, reading rate was slower.	
Comprehension	5/8 children	0	3/8 children	
SWRT 1 and 2 Results for YARC Focus Group Child Participants	75% of participants (6/8) increased their aggregated SWRT score. (25% achieved the same score 2/8). No focus group participants decreased their SWRT score.			

Appendix I: Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: GF	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	69	125	95	Over 12.5	69	124	95	Over 12.5
Reading Rate	83	126	96	Over 12.5	87	127	96	Over 12.5
Comprehension	58	105	63	9.7	67	116	86	0ver 12.5
Comment	GF is a student of high ability and results reflect this.				Comment	Consistently high result		
SWRT 1 Result	52/60				SWRT 2 Result	52/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: GA	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	58	115	84	10.4	60	113	81	10. 11
Reading Rate	72	116	86	10.7	77	117	87	11.11
Comprehension	50	98	45	7.10	64	114	82	11.6
Comment	Comprehension does not reflect ability- GA was v focused on reading the words.							
SWRT 1 Result	41/60				SWRT 2 Result	45/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: DS	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	44	96	40	7.8	52	111	77	10. 11
Reading Rate	66	109	73	9.5	70	118	88	11.11
Comprehension	47	95	37	7.4	32	84	14	11.6
Comment	Comprehension does not reflect ability- DS was v focused on reading the words.				Comment	Comprehension result does not reflect ability. DS was very focused on reading the words.		
SWRT 1 Result	40/60				SWRT 2 Result	40/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: DA	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	50	102	55	8.7	56	109	73	9.10
Reading Rate	59	99	47	8.4	60	97	42	8.6
Comprehension	52	99	47	8.2	60	108	70	10.2
Comment	DA appeared nervous to begin with but relaxed as she progressed.				Comment	Rate was slow influenced by strategy use.		
SWRT 1 Result	32/60				SWRT 2 Result	46/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: BL	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	41	92	55	8.7	44	94	34	7.8
Reading Rate	41	88	47	8.4	37	84	14	7.0
Comprehension	43	91	47	8.2	51	98	45	8.0
Comment	BL was very determined and focused on reading the words exactly and made effective efforts to use reading strategies.				Comment	Lower comprehension score indicates understanding of a more advanced reading passage.		
SWRT 1 Result	27/60				SWRT 2 Result	40/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: KI	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	39	93	32	7.1	49	103	58	8.5
Reading Rate	47	93	32	7.3	49	93	32	7.6
Comprehension	58	110	75	9.7	56	105	63	9.1
Comment	Comprehension result does reflect ability.				Comment	Evidence of self-correcting and strategy use.		
SWRT 1 Result	21/60				SWRT 2 Result	38/40		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: HY	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	35	87	19	6.8	42	92	30	7.5
Reading Rate	17	81	10	6.6	11	76	5	6.1
Comprehension	46	94	34	7.3	35	82	12	6.2
Comment	Error limit was exceeded for Passage 2 and therefore the results were recorded but will not form the basis for assessment.				Comment	Comprehension is lower as a result of more difficult reading passage.		
SWRT 1 Result	21/60				SWRT 2 Result	28/60		

Focus Group SWRT and YARC Tests 1 and 2 Summary of Results

	YARC Test 1 Results				YARC Test 2 Results			
Child: CL	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent	YARC Ability score	YARC Standard score	YARC Percentile rank	YARC Age equivalent
Accuracy	22	73	4	5.9	34	81	10	6 years 07 months
Reading Rate	/	/	/	/	13	74	4	6 yrs 3 months
Comprehension	25	71	3	5.7	38	83	13	6 yrs 4 months
Comment	Error limit was exceeded for Passage 2 and therefore results were recorded but will not form the basis for assessment.				Comment	Evidence of self-correcting and strategy use.		
SWRT 1 Result	11/60				SWRT 2 Result	18/60		

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