APPROVED BY:

Advisor
To my husband, Denny,
and our children, Chris and Adam
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recently both teachers and schools have been challenged to find ways to increase individual reading time during the school day. United States Education Secretary Lamar Alexander said in a U.S. Education Department report released in 1992, "The more students read, the better they read. We've known this for a long time. Unfortunately, our children aren't reading very much." The time that students spend on oral reading in a reading group setting is extremely limited. Silent reading is a very effective tool for increasing skill in reading. Another valuable technique for increasing individual reading time is choral reading. As the state legislature continues to mandate curriculum that has more and more content added to the course of study, teachers and administrators must be creative in their quest to provide students with opportunities to enjoy and improve their reading skills.

1
In the intermediate grades choral reading has been ignored as a tool to promote reading. Russell (1949) states that "choral reading gives children a sense of security in the group, a sense of social participation, and an enjoyment of sound and rhythm which is not always possible in individual reading." He further states that one of the most important advantages of choral reading is that it may help the unrhythmical word-by-word oral reader. In the classroom choral reading can be used in all areas of the curriculum. This activity engages all students in reading. Eyes are focused on the text. Students with difficulty in decoding are supported on all sides. Each reader gains confidence.

Whitehead (1968) believes that "choral speaking has been one of the most effective ways of interpreting literature orally for over twenty-five hundred years." He lists the values of choral reading as:

"Speech becomes more accurate and enunciation more clear. The group becomes a more cohesive social unit from having worked together. Children are engaged in an active endeavor rather than a passive one. The shy child learns to contribute to a shared undertaking; the bold
child learns to submerge himself for the good of the group.

Literary skills are developed, including the ability to sense mood, understand rhythm, and appreciate the significance of voice tone, quality, and volume."

Heilman (1972) explains that "reading is a language process . . . that it must incorporate the melody of oral language, and that reading must result in meaning." For at-risk readers who struggle to read each word, meaning is often lost in the struggle. During choral reading these students are supported in their decoding. Students are guided to read in phrases by the leader. Phrasing assists the student in getting meaning from the passage.

In the researcher's school students experiencing difficulties in reading are no longer serviced by Chapter I or other remedial reading programs in the intermediate grades. Testing must be done to qualify for tutoring services. The students who qualify must be at least two years behind the performance expected at their grade level. The task of remediating less severe reading problems falls to the classroom teacher, who must provide instruction that supports the disabled readers and also encourages the proficient reader to move on.

Recognizing the importance of reading in the student's lives, the researcher believes that it is essential that
educators do everything possible to insure that all students are supported and guided as they work to improve their reading skills. Choral reading provides the support system that helps students build comprehension, fluency, and self-confidence in reading. More able readers expose other students to correct phrasing and expression.

While attending the Ohio Council of the International Reading Association Fall Conference in 1991, the researcher sat in a session where the presenter was extolling the virtues of choral reading. The students enjoyed reading more as choral reading was employed to aid instruction. They put forth more effort. The at-risk readers improved noticeably both in individual reading and in testing situations.

**Hypothesis**

This study will focus on the following questions:

Can comprehension of material be increased with the use of choral reading?

As the study progresses, the students will comprehend material better as choral reading is employed to support their reading.

Does choral reading increase self-confidence in reading in all students in the classroom?

Students become more sure of themselves as they participate in choral reading. The learning community in
the classroom encourages each child in his pursuit of reading skill.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate choral reading as a technique for improving comprehension, fluency, and self-confidence in a heterogeneous group of fourth graders.

**Justification**

Choral reading which is often ignored as a tool in the intermediate grades is valuable for increasing comprehension in all kinds of reading material across the curriculum. Choral reading is beneficial in increasing the time students are actively involved in the reading process. Both proficient and less able readers benefit from this technique. When students have decoding difficulties, the group assists them throughout the reading. Students who are shy and find it very hard to read orally in front of their peers gain confidence with the support of the group. Boisterous students learn to curb their exuberance in order to be a part of the group. Students who read word-by-word learn to phrase passages and enhance the meaning they get from their reading. Choral reading provides all students with a model for their oral reading.
Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumes that positive attitudes toward reading can be fostered by developing a support system for all readers in the classroom. Students who dislike reading or lack the motivation to want to read have difficulty acquiring reading skills to support the reading they must do to be successful in life. Fluency plays a significant role in the comprehension of reading material. The researcher assumes also that all students have participated fully and to the best of their ability in the choral reading activities and that they have answered all questions honestly.

There are several limitations that need to be addressed concerning this study. First of all, the study was limited by the amount of time involved. The lack of a control group and the number of students in the classroom is another limiting factor. The personal bias of the instructor limits the validity of this study. The design of the evaluation procedure is also a factor. While participating in choral reading, it is difficult to tell if a student is participating to the best of his ability. The effects of maturation on the students should not be overlooked as a limiting factor.
Definition of Terms

Choral Reading - any reading done orally by a group at the same time; also choral speaking.

Fluency - reading without interruptive pauses that might break the flow of language and meaning.

Individual Reading Time - time when students are personally involved with books.

Leader - individual using a slightly stronger voice to guide the reading of the passage.

Neurological Impress Method - multisensory approach to remedial reading instruction where the student and the teacher read the same material orally together for a prescribed amount of time each day.

Oral Reading - reading done out loud by someone as they look at a sentence or paragraph and say the names of the words with required voice intonations.

Paired Reading - (also called Dyad Reading) - reading done out loud by two students from the same book. Students are paired by the teacher. One student must be a fluent reader and one student a less fluent reader.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Whole Language and Choral Reading

In a whole language classroom, teachers strive to provide the type of environment that encourages students to take risks without fear. Students become a community of learners as they work together, supporting and encouraging each other to stretch their abilities. In this kind of environment students who have difficulty reading can be guided through activities that will strengthen their reading skills in a non-threatening way. Listening, talking, writing, and reading are integrated into a stimulating natural language learning environment (Butler, A. and Turbill, J., 1984).

Importance of Reading in Today’s Schools

Today in our schools it is essential that our students be capable readers. Strong reading ability is necessary to
comprehend the material in content area subjects, such as, science, social studies, geography, health, etc. As more and more subject matter is added to the curriculum, time on each subject has to shrink accordingly. This becomes a serious problem for the students who do not have adequate reading skills. When educators search for ways to extend their reading instructional time into the content areas, one of the techniques they should consider is choral reading.

Limbrick, McNaughton, and Glynn (1985) state that children learn to read by reading. One of the most important jobs educators have is to teach children to read and show them that it is pleasurable. Trelease (1986) noted that we teach children how to read first; we then try to get them interested in reading. If, as children are taught to read, teachers continue to read aloud, sharing books they love with these students, children will come to the love of books naturally. Opportunities for students to use their reading abilities are extremely important. One of the ways to increase opportunities for students to read is through the use of choral reading.

In a recent article, Robert Kay (1991) wrote that he had personally witnessed success through the use of choral reading. Kay believes that there are several factors that contribute to a decline of reading abilities. These are television, cultural deprivation, and alternative pleasures.
He feels that book reports, assignments, pressure, and testing have made children dislike reading.

**Effects of Fluency on Comprehension**

According to Eldredge (1985), repeated exposure to words frequently used in print probably improves the students' sight recognition of such words which, in turn, probably improves reading comprehension. Whenever teachers can do anything that boosts their students' self-confidence in reading, they have an obligation to try it. The researcher believes that dealing with students who have different learning styles forces teachers to find as many ways as possible to present the material that students need to learn. Choral reading is one strategy that has been overlooked as a valuable learning strategy.

Eldredge (1988) explains that poor readers tend to be word-by-word readers. They must concentrate on word identification more than word recognition. The reader's decoding abilities determine how quickly printed material is read. "If the reader takes an excessive amount of time to identify the author's words, they forget many of the words identified at the beginning of the sentence by the time they get to the end. Choral reading supports the student, who has decoding difficulties, so that the text can be read at a rate that strengthens comprehension."
Importance of Oral Reading

Students need opportunities to read aloud in the classroom. They need to learn to use their voice to convey the author’s meaning to others. McKee (1948) believes that only by the effective use of a pleasant voice, correct pronunciation of words, phrasing, and intonation can the author’s meaning be shared with others. McKee states, "Skillful teaching of oral reading is essential to the child’s well-balanced growth in the power of reading. Students learn to read in phrases, the shortest meaningful unit of words."

Heilman (1972) states that "reading is a language process...that it must incorporate the melody of oral language, and that reading must result in meaning." Smith (1980) believes that "reading is a complex process requiring not only the ability to recognize words but also the ability to comprehend."

Oral reading, when done by the whole class, in small groups, or in pairs, is non-threatening. It develops rapport among students and helps all students gain confidence. Because all students are focused on the text and are participating, no one is left out as they wait for their turn to read.
Neurological Impress Method

Severely disabled readers have been helped by the Neurological Impress Method (NIM). This method is a one-on-one technique of unison reading with the student. NIM was developed by R.G. Heckelman, who published articles on it in Academic Therapy in 1969 (pp. 277-282) and in 1986 (pp. 411-420). Using material at the student’s independent reading level to begin, the teacher and student read together. The teacher moves the student’s finger along the line of print exactly as the words are read. The goal of each session is to read as many pages as possible using a fluent reader’s rate and intonation for ten to fifteen minutes. No pauses are made for mistakes by the student. In the beginning, the teacher’s voice is stronger, but as the student becomes more skilled, the teacher’s voice becomes softer.

Gardner (1965) found that the neurological impress method lowered student anxiety as they read because they were freed from the failure experiences they had suffered during traditional reading instruction. In the regular classroom the teacher deals with students of all ability levels. The neurological impress method is impossible to schedule so that adequate time can be spent with each student. Choral reading is valuable as an alternative support for students with reading difficulties, especially those who are not serviced by remedial services.
Value of Choral Reading as Part of the Reading Program

As Stewig observes, "Several values result from choral speaking (reading). Personal values accrue as children learn to appreciate literature by participating in it instead of simply listening passively to the teacher read. Social values include learning to work together to achieve results. Psychological values develop by satisfying group experiences without self-consciousness and in a formal presentation. The cohesive, unifying effect of participation as a group member is important to children."

Supporting children as they learn new things or improve upon the things they have already learned is a goal the researcher finds benefits both the student and the classroom teacher. This support encourages the formation of a cohesive learning community. Early assistance enables the student to get a feel and understanding for the activity so that eventually the student will not need the help of the teacher or classmates.

Eldredge (1986) modified Heckelman’s NIM so that it could be used in the regular classroom. A "lead reader," a student in the classroom, worked with a student who had decoding difficulties. The difficulty of the reading material was not controlled. The criteria for selecting reading material was that it could be read by the lead reader and was of interest to both students. The students sat side by side reading aloud together from the same book.
The lead reader read the book at a normal pace, using phrasing, not word-by-word reading.

With practice a whole classroom of students, lead by the teacher or a strong student reader can participate successfully in choral reading. This method can be used across the curriculum to introduce new subjects in science, social studies, or health. Choral reading can also be used to review the main points covered in each of these subjects. Reading material, both prose and poetry, can also be used for choral reading practice.

Research Studies

Partridge (1991) witnessed that in an English as a Second Language class, students felt free to try choral reading, because their "mistakes" did not stand out. She has also observed that choral reading relieves shyness, develops alertness, teachers, encourages creativity, stimulates thinking, and affords pleasure. . ." Students with reading difficulties are supported during choral reading. Their focus must be on the written page. The leader guiding the choral reading activity can strengthen the students' comprehension by using appropriate phrasing. Harris (1970) says that slow readers do poorly in comprehension because of their many repetitions and hesitations that break up the continuity of thought. Smith (1971) states that students how read slower than 200 words a
minute have a difficult time comprehending, because the words are read as isolated units instead of meaningful sequences.

Heckelman reported that after 12 hours of instruction using the Neurological Impress Method an adolescent girl’s reading abilities jumped three grade levels. Over the years NIM studies conducted by Heckelman and others have produced positive achievement results.

Eldredge (1986) used dyad reading with 61 poor readers in some second grade classrooms in Utah. These readers’ achievement scores were compared to 61 second graders who did not experience dyad reading. The assisted readers achieved nearly a year’s growth more than the ones who were not involved in dyad reading.

Bedsworth (1991) reported using the neurological impress method with eighth grade disabled readers. She found that at the end of nine weeks, students were able to stay on task better. Their attitudes about their own reading had changed. They showed significant progress on posttests - an average gain of 3 1/2 years. In the regular classroom the teacher deals with students of all ability levels.
Attitudinal Changes Toward Reading
Due to Choral Reading Instruction

The push to be the "best" puts students in direct competition with each other in many classrooms. Choral reading encourages cooperation. Students must work together to utilize choral reading. Stewig (1981) found "value in the unifying effect brought on by choral reading as a social function. . .Psychologically it is satisfying for children to learn to work together to achieve results." When the researcher talked with several business people recently, one of the main qualities valued by the business community is the ability of their employees to work as a team. Students need to develop this cooperative attitude early in their school life.

Jackson (1972) stresses the importance of group activity which encourages the shy child. Jackson’s reading instruction is designed to help the introverted child. Both choral reading and teacher modeling are incorporated into this program. Using this method the teacher reads aloud to the children from transparencies on an overhead projector, pointing to the words, so that everyone can see. The teacher reads slowly using correct phrasing and expression. Then the teacher invites the class to read along. The teacher, as leader, uses her voice to dominate and guide the group reading. If a child fails to read correctly or makes
an omission, it will not be noticed. Since this is a group effort, no one is humiliated by the inability to perform.

Value of a Model for Oral Reading

Choral reading provides all students with a role-model for oral reading. The students hear correct expression, pauses for punctuation, and correct phrasing which enhances meaning. Routman (1991) explains, "Modeling (demonstration) shows the learner how to do the skill or strategy and also increase understanding of the theory. Usually many demonstrations are necessary." As the students and teacher practice choral reading, the less fluent student is surrounded with role-models.

One of the most beneficial things parents can do for children is to read to them. Routman suggests that when students "see a parent as a reading model and receive encouragement from the parents to read, these actions will help bring children into the reading community." Calkins (1986) explains, "Adolescents (actually, students of all ages) need the teachers (and parents) to demonstrate that reading and writing can bring tremendous joy to life. Of course, they need the chance to do what readers and writers do." In all other subjects in the curriculum, teachers explain, demonstrate, and support students as they try out
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The research design for this study is both qualitative and descriptive. The data collected has been analyzed for changes in attitude toward reading both before and after the choral reading activities. An attitudinal survey was administered before and after the choral reading activities. Fluency during oral reading of the informal reading inventory was recorded with diagnostic marks for the selection read as a pretest and the one read for the posttest. Changes in comprehension were checked by using questions after the informal reading inventories done before and after the choral reading activities. All students in the classroom were engaged in choral reading activities for a minimum of twenty minutes every day during a six-week period.
Subjects

The students participating in this study were a heterogeneous group of fourth graders. There were thirteen boys and thirteen girls. These students have an academic rating from below average to above average in reading, with most students falling in the average range. All subjects were caucasian. The students were selected for this study because of their availability to the researcher on a daily basis.

Setting

The setting for this study was a rural area in a midwestern state. The elementary school had a population of 532 students during the 1992-93 school year. All students are bussed. There is a wide range of socio-economic groups represented. Property values range from very low figures to $350,000. Family groups are very diverse also. For the most part parents are interested in the schools and supportive of the accomplishments of the students.

Methodology

The interest in this study was prompted by a session the researcher attended during the fall conference of the Ohio Council of the International Reading Association in 1991. Upon returning to the classroom, the researcher began to employ choral reading with the students, especially at-
risk readers. After a limited period of time, the researcher noticed that there were many positive benefits derived from choral reading activities for all students.

This study was conducted in the researcher's self-contained fourth grade classroom. The students have experienced a literature-based reading program this year. Silent reading and reading aloud by the researcher were daily activities from the beginning of the year. Literature had been used to support the concepts taught in all areas of the curriculum. All objectives of the course of study for reading have been taught through the use of trade books, poetry, read alouds, and other literature.

The study ran for six weeks, beginning February 1, 1993 and ending March 19, 1993. The attitudinal survey before the activities was given on January 29, 1993 (see Appendix). The Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory was given during the week of January 25, 1993 as a pretest. An attitudinal survey after the choral reading activities was given on March 19, 1993. Another selection from the Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory was given during the week of March 22, 1993 as a posttest.

Choral reading activities were incorporated for approximately twenty minutes per day. Students participated in these activities using a variety of techniques. The techniques that were employed most were those of whole class choral reading and small group choral reading with the
teacher. The teacher’s voice was deliberately strong to sustain the choral reading. Students who were not confident gain confidence as they find that both the teacher and the other students will support their attempt to read the material.

Sometimes students were split into pairs and read aloud together. During these activities a more fluent reader was always paired with a less fluent one.

Often students were part of larger groups of five or six students who worked on passages of reading material to present to the entire class. As in the paired reading, the student groups were a mix of more fluent and less fluent readers.

Many types of literature were used to support the choral reading activities. Historically choral reading has been used most with poetry. While it is true poetry lends itself very well to choral reading, the researcher has found that other kinds of literature can be used as well.

*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (see Appendix A) was read as a class book during the course of this study. The Oompa-Loompahs’ songs in the book are excellent for choral reading. As some students used voices when they read the dialogue, the researcher and the rest of the class filled in the narration using choral reading. All students had to follow along in order to do their part. Students volunteered for the parts of dialogue. The names were
placed in a can and drawn. Students whose names were not drawn still were important in the reading and had the opportunity on another day to have their name drawn for dialogue. There were no complaints from students about not being a part of the story, because everyone participated in the narration.

The researcher chose sections of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory for choral reading, because of descriptive language, humor, character development, or story content. After choral reading all students participated in discussions of the text. Neither fluent readers nor less fluent readers hesitated to offer opinions about the text, leading the researcher to believe that their involvement with the text during choral reading had strengthened their comprehension.

Because phrasing is so important to meaning, mini-lessons on phrasing were incorporated into reading instruction. A passage from the story was copied on an overhead transparency, and with the help of the students, the researcher modeled how sentences are actually read by breaking them down into meaningful units called phrases. This mini-lesson was repeated using text from the book, Shiloh (see Appendix A), to emphasize the importance of phrasing and to reinforce the skill. Students were given a copy of the text to mark phrases for choral reading.
Choral reading was used in all areas of the curriculum. At the beginning of a science/social studies unit on volcanoes, facts known about volcanoes were written on a chart. At the conclusion of the lesson, these facts were part of the choral reading activities for the day. The researcher found that choral reading could be done using charts and overhead transparencies, but would recommend that students have a personal copy of the material used for choral reading. The choral reading was much smoother when the students had their own copies. Students were encouraged to run their finger along the text. Because the pace of choral reading is set by the leader, running the finger under text did not focus the students' attention on word-by-word reading. This also helped students who have tracking problems hold their place. Choral reading was also used to review facts learned from this unit.

The researcher's class studied infectious diseases during this six-week period also. Since the textbook was used for this subject, choral reading was used with the introduction of the chapter. The list of vocabulary at the beginning of the chapter and important facts in the chapter were read chorally. At the end of the chapter choral reading was used for reading the summary.

Many of these choral reading activities were done whole class with the researcher as the leader. Often students were paired or in groups of four or five students to read
material chorally. The members within the groups were not fixed but changed every few days. The only thing that remained constant was the mix of fluent and nonfluent readers.

Poetry and chants are excellent material for choral reading. Students get caught up in the rhythm of the pieces. One of the students' favorite pieces was a chant by Sonja Dunn called *Junk Food* (see Appendix A). Not only did the students use this chant for choral reading, they also wrote their own variation of the piece. Then they practiced with two other students, so that they could present their pieces to the class chorally. A list of books containing poetry used in this study is included in Appendix A. *Jabberwocky* proved to be a challenging choral reading text because of the nonsense words. After several choral readings, the students were proud of their mastery of the piece.

Choral reading can become tedious if the reading sessions are too long. One fifteen minute session combined with others of shorter duration seemed to work best. Students in the researcher's classroom have become very good at choral reading. This skill develops over time. Students who have not had practice with this method will find it difficult at first.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Presentation of Data

The Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory, oral passage A, was given as a pretest during the first week of February to 26 fourth grade students. Scores were recorded for comprehension questions and instructional reading levels. After a six-week period, the Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory, oral passage C, was given as a posttest. Scores were recorded for comprehension questions and instructional reading levels. The gains (losses) were computed for individual students. The mean average for the entire class was computed for comprehension and reading levels.

An attitudinal survey (see Appendix C) was also given both as a pretest and posttest. The answers given by students were analyzed for signs of improvement of the student’s outlook toward reading.
TABLE I

INFORMAL READING INVENTORY
Pre/Posttest Comprehension Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>POSTTEST</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>B</td>
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AVERAGE MEAN
Questions Missed

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<td>2.3</td>
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By comparing the pretest and posttest scores for comprehension questions, the researcher found that twenty-five students missed fewer questions after the choral reading activities. One student missed the same number of questions on both tests.
### TABLE II
INFORMAL READING INVENTORY
Pre/Posttest Instructional Reading Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>PRETEST</th>
<th>POSTTEST</th>
<th>GAIN/LOSS</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
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AVERAGE MEAN
Reading Level 4.9  5.6  .7

When comparing the students' reading level on the pre and post reading inventories, the researcher found that there was no loss of reading level. Eleven students made gains of one year. Four students made gains of two years in their reading levels.
Discussion of Data

Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory

By comparing the comprehension questions missed by the students on the pretest and posttest (Table I), the researcher found that the students' comprehension abilities did improve after the choral reading activities. Only one student missed the same number of questions on the pretest and posttest. Seventeen students missed two or three fewer questions on the posttest than they had on the pretest. Twenty-five students missed fewer questions on the posttest than on the pretest. The difference between the average mean for questions missed on the pretest and the average mean for questions missed on the posttest was 2.3 questions missed. These results support the hypothesis that students will comprehend material better after they have been involved in choral reading activities.

From the calculations of the pretest and posttest scores for reading levels (see Table II), the researcher found that over half of the students gained at least a year's growth in reading level. Four students showed a gain of two years. Ten students remained at the same level. Most of the students whose reading level remained the same were above grade level already. There were no students who experienced a loss in reading level. The two students who were reading below grade level each gained a year's growth. While the growth in reading level cannot be totally
attributed to choral reading, because of the students’ positive reactions and the short investment of time (ten to twenty minutes daily), the researcher believes that choral reading should consistently be a part of the reading program at all grade levels. The average mean gain was .7 years which strongly suggests that choral reading could be valuable to all students.

**Attitude Survey**

The attitude surveys (see Appendix C) were given on January 28, 1993 and March 19, 1993. The researcher chose to focus on certain questions for analysis to determine if students’ attitudes had changed over the six-week period during which the students were involved in choral reading activities.

Students were asked how often they read at home for pleasure (question 10). Over half the class, 16 out of 26, reported that they were reading more often at home than before the choral reading activities. One student wrote on the January survey that he read once a month for pleasure, because he didn’t have time. On the March survey this student reported that he was reading every night. Six students had written on the first survey that they read all the time. This did not change on the posttest survey. Four students reported on the first survey that they did not read
for pleasure. This information did not change on the second survey.

When students were asked how they felt about reading aloud in front of the class (question 13), the answers remained consistent from the January to March surveys. Most students reported that they felt nervous when asked to read aloud for the class. Many students said they felt embarrassed. Two students reported that they felt scared. Only three students said they felt fine reading aloud for their classmates. Twenty-three students, out of twenty-six, gave negative comments about reading aloud in class.

On the posttest, questions 14 and 15 focused on choral reading. The students' comments were overwhelmingly positive. Only two students, out of twenty-six, gave negative comments, saying that choral reading made them feel stupid. Even though these students gave negative comments about choral reading, they wrote that they were more comfortable with it than with reading aloud for the class. One student refused to comment, because he refused to participate. The comments from the other twenty-three students suggested that they liked choral reading and that they thought it was fun. One student, who is a very fluent reader, said, "The whole class is in this together, not just me." Several students indicated that they could understand better after doing choral reading. One of the biggest benefits of choral reading, according to these students, was
that they could learn new words and could pronounce hard words with the help they received during choral reading. Many students felt they could read faster on their own after the choral reading activities. Several students mentioned that "no one can hear your mistakes." Many students indicated on the posttest that they considered themselves better readers in March than they had in January. Twenty-two students reported feeling better when they participated in choral reading than when reading aloud for the class.

Pretest question 14 and posttest question 16 asked the students to tell how they felt about reading. Most students had a very positive attitude toward reading on both surveys. Some students commented that reading was relaxing. Many wrote that they loved it. Two students wrote negative comments about reading on the pretest survey. Their answers were "so-so" and "boring." These comments changed on the posttest to "Reading is fun." and "It's great."

Because these students have been involved in a literature-based reading program this year, their attitude toward reading could have been the result of the many other reading activities they have done. The positive comments toward choral reading are a result of the time spent doing the choral reading activities. The results of the attitudinal survey supported the hypothesis that students were more self-confident about their reading after the choral reading activities. They believed that their reading
had improved. The attitudinal survey also supported the hypothesis that choral reading helps students' ability to comprehend reading material. Some students even wrote on their surveys, "I understand what we read better after choral reading."
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Teachers must be creative in their quest to provide students with opportunities to enjoy and improve their reading skills. Mandated curriculum in our schools has increased so much that time spent on individual subjects must shrink. Reading is essential for the learning of all other subjects; therefore, students who have problems in reading face a danger of experiencing failure in other subjects as well as reading. Classroom teachers who work with both proficient readers and those at-risk must embrace strategies that support the at-risk reader and encourage the rest of the students. Choral reading provides a support system that helps students build fluency, comprehension, and self-confidence in reading. Students can learn correct phrasing and expression through choral reading. This master’s project examined whether choral reading could be
used in the classroom to improve comprehension and increase the self-confidence of students in reading.

This study was conducted in a heterogeneous, self-contained, fourth grade classroom in a midwestern state. There were twenty-six students involved. There were thirteen boys and thirteen girls. The students' reading levels ranged from below average to above average, with most falling in the middle average range.

The researcher assumed that positive attitudes toward reading can be fostered by developing a support system for all readers in the classroom. The posttest survey suggested that this assumption was correct. Most students' attitudes were positive toward the choral reading activities. Two students' attitudes changed from negative to positive. While this change might be attributed to choral reading activities, it also could be influenced by the literature-based reading program that students were involved in this year.

The assumption that all students would participate fully was not correct. Most students were cooperative, but one student refused to participate and two others said choral reading made them feel stupid.

Fluency does play a large role in comprehension. Students remarked on their posttest surveys that understanding was easier after choral reading. After six weeks of choral reading, the posttest showed that twenty-
five students missed fewer questions on the Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory as their fluency increased.

The reader acknowledges that the study was limited by the short amount of time involved; however, the results are very promising. A control group would have been beneficial for comparing findings. The researcher's strong belief in choral reading could have limited the validity of the results. The involvement of the students in a literature-based reading program could have skewed the results of the testing instruments. The Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory itself could be limiting, because as the students read the passages, some were more interesting to them than others. They might have read more carefully or remembered more because of their interest. The researcher found it difficult to tell whether an individual student was participating during choral reading. By the time this research was finished, the students had completed three-quarters of the school year. The growth that they experienced might be attributed to many other factors besides the choral reading activities. These might include: maturation over time, literature-based reading program, variety of reading activities, and any other activities that might have involved reading.

The researcher designed lesson plans to incorporate choral reading into the reading program for a minimum of twenty minutes every day for six weeks. These activities
(see samples - Appendix A) were incorporated into science, social studies, math, and English as an extension of the reading program. Many methods were employed to hold the students' interest in choral reading and strengthen their skill in reading. The importance of phrasing was stressed by the presentation of several lessons on phrasing and a lot of practice in phrasing as a part of choral reading.

Students were given passages from the Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory to read orally as pretests and posttests. They were also given an attitudinal survey to fill out before the choral reading activities and after them.

Conclusions

Although this study was conducted in a brief time period, the researcher believes the results are valuable. Most of the students were enthusiastic toward choral reading. They listed benefits that they had achieved from the experience. Most of the students felt that their reading had improved. This attitude supports the hypothesis that choral reading can increase self-confidence in all students in the classroom. This also was substantiated by the comparison of the pretest and posttest scores on the Ekwall Informal Reading Inventory. Both comprehension scores and reading levels improved for most students. The results from the Ekwall pretest showed a mean reading level
of 4.9. On the posttest the students' reading level was 5.6 (see Table II). This was a significant increase.

The feeling of community was evident in the classroom. Students were not afraid to read aloud with their classmates. Choral reading times were relaxed and comfortable. The students in the classroom showed more and more interest in books and reading. Listening skills were improving. Certainly choral reading has had a positive effect on the students' attitude toward reading.

Comprehension is increased when students are focused on the text and actively involved in it instead of struggling with every word. All students except one were able to answer more comprehension questions correctly on the posttest than on the pretest (Table I). These supported the hypothesis that comprehension of material would be increased with the use of choral reading. During choral reading the students had to keep pace with the leader who read at a pace that encouraged comprehension. This discouraged word-by-word reading and forced students to read in phrases. Over half the students missed two or three fewer comprehension questions on the posttest. Choral reading has seemed to increase comprehension.

Recommendations

The researcher was pleased at the end of this project to note that the students' responses on the surveys mirrored
information that appeared in the literature. Gardener's (1965) comment that Neurological Impress Method lowered student anxiety as they read because they were freed from failure was substantiated by the students who said, "Choral reading is relaxing. No one knows if I make a mistake."

Partridge (1991) observed that choral reading relieves shyness, develops alertness, teaches, encourages creativity, stimulates thinking, and affords pleasure. Students noted that they felt fine during choral reading, learned new words, and had help with hard words. This observation was in contrast to their feelings about reading aloud alone, where they felt nervous, embarrassed, and scared.

Choral reading builds community in the classroom. As Stewig (1981) noted, "(There is) value in the unifying effect brought on by choral reading. . .Psychologically it is satisfying for children to learn to work together to achieve results." It is very important that students learn how to work together in school. The students involved in this study work together throughout the day. As one student wrote on the posttest survey, "When we do choral reading, we're in it together."

Comprehension was increased because students became more fluent and were aware of phrasing techniques. Choral reading provides the students with role models for reading. Routman (1991) suggests that modeling shows the learner how to do a skill or strategy. During choral reading the
students were surrounded by role models. The support system that choral reading provides is invaluable for helping at-risk readers along.

Choral reading is not a panacea; however, it is valuable as an additional strategy to support at-risk readers and encourages fluent readers to improve their reading skills in a relaxing, fun way. Because students have different learning styles, it is up to the teacher to use as many strategies as possible to help the students learn as much as they can. It is the researcher’s opinion that the positive results in comprehension, fluency, and attitude toward reading that were obtained in this study are worthwhile enough to warrant using the short amount of daily time needed to add choral reading to all reading programs.
APPENDIX A
Objective: The students will recognize the importance of phrasing in figuring out meaning from any text, practice breaking text into meaningful phrases, and use appropriate phrasing during choral reading.

Materials needed: Transparencies of texts, overhead projector, copies of text with spaces between phrases for students, copies of texts without spaces, colored pencils, sheet of paper with small slots cut out of it.

Procedure: Place transparency of the text that has spaces between phrases on the overhead. Before turning it on, place the paper with the slots in it over the transparency so that only one word shows. Ask the students to give you meaning for that word. After that discussion, use the slotted paper to highlight a phrase. Ask students for meaning for the phrase. Discuss why the phrase adds more meaning to the text than the word. Hand out copies of the first piece of text with phrasing marked by the teacher. Remove the slotted paper to reveal the text on the overhead. Using choral reading have students read the text with the appropriate phrasing.

After students have read the text that was divided by the teacher, pass out a copy of text that has not been broken into phrases. Place transparency on the overhead.
Begin modeling how to break the piece into phrases. Ask for students’ assistance. At the same time students should be marking their copies with colored pencils. After the text is marked, use choral reading to determine if the phrasing is appropriate. Students could then proceed on their own or in cooperative groups to mark another copy of text for phrasing.

Evaluation: Students should be given a lot of practice with this technique right at first. Taking the first five minutes of reading time for phrasing will reinforce this technique over time. Give students an opportunity to mark the phrasing of another piece of text after they have had extra practice.

As I worked on this lesson with my students, I found that even some of the more fluent readers were not using phrasing for meaning. This lack often interfered with their comprehension. Students who have difficulties reading and are word-by-word readers will benefit most from this instruction; however, all students need an awareness of the importance of phrasing.

Lesson Using Poetry to Work with Rhythm

Objective: The students will use choral reading to catch on to the rhythm of poetry.

Materials: Overhead projector, transparency of Junk Food, blank transparency, copy of Junk Food for each
student, paper, pencil, book *Butterscotch Dreams* by Sonja Dunn (see Bibliography, Appendix B).

**Procedure:** Share chant, *Junk Food*, with students. Pass out copies to students. Students really get into this chant. After reading the poem chorally several times, begin a list of other junk foods that the students really like on the blank transparency. Tell students to copy the first verse of the original poem on a piece of paper. They can use any junk food items from the list generated by the class or may have certain foods they really like to fill in the two middle stanzas. The rhythm of the poem must not be changed. When the students have added eight junk foods of their own, they copy the last stanza as it is in the original poem. Then they share their pieces in groups of three. These three students will practice all three new poems to present to the class, several every day until everyone has shared.

**Evaluation:** As the students present their chants to the class, the teacher will listen to see that the rhythm of the chant has been maintained. Students really enjoy this activity. Working with rhythm in this way overcomes tedium.
Junk Food by Sonja Dunn

Junk food
Junk food
I love junk food
I eat junk food
I can’t stop

Reese’s pieces
Greasy french fries
Caramel popcorn
Soda pop

Sticky candy
Gooey choc’late
Salted cheesies
Sugared glop

Junk food
Junk food
I love junk food
I eat junk food
Till I drop!

from Butterscotch Dreams
Lesson on Descriptive Language

Objective: The students will notice the way language can be used to paint a picture with words.

Materials needed: Copies of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory enough for each student and the teacher, paper, and crayons.

Procedure: Turn to the chapter entitled "The Chocolate Room." Before beginning choral reading, discuss how authors choose their words carefully so that the reader can see what is happening or what the surroundings in the story look like. Ask for volunteers to read the parts of the characters in this chapter. Everyone including the characters do the narration of the chapter chorally. Begin choral reading of the chapter and continue to the end. This lesson should not be attempted if students are not familiar with choral reading. Try this only after students have had lots of other practice using choral reading. After the choral reading is complete, give students paper and crayons. Ask students to draw the chocolate room as the teacher reads the descriptive parts of the chapter aloud.

Evaluation: Choral reading is very hard to evaluate for individual students. The teacher needs to watch that all students are participating. Students must understand that choral reading is another technique for reading instruction and that by participating fully they will
strengthen their reading skill. The drawings that the students complete will show many details from the book.
APPENDIX B
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Materials for Choral Reading Activities

This bibliography lists only those items that I used in my search for materials to support the choral reading activities that I did in my classroom. There are many books, prose, poems, chants, etc. that could be used in this way. Textbooks have material that might be used for these activities, too. Be creative.


Ruth Dowell calls herself the modern Mother Goose. The rhymes are catchy and fun.


Excellent short prose; humorous.


The purpose of this survey is to help the teacher in determining the students' attitude toward reading before the choral reading activities and after them.

PRETEST

Name_________________________________________ Date________________

1. If you had to guess...
   How many books do you think you own?
   How many books do you think are in your house?
   How many books have you read since school started?

2. How did you learn to read?

3. Why do people read?

4. How many times a week does someone at home read aloud to you?
   0 1 2 3 4 more

5. What does someone have to do to be a good reader?

6. How does a teacher decide which students are good readers?

7. What kind of books do you like to read?

8. How do you decide which books you’ll read?

9. Have you ever reread a book?

10. Do you ever read at home for pleasure? _____ If so, how often do you read at home for pleasure?
11. Who are your favorite authors? (List as many as you like.)

12. Do you like to have your teacher read aloud to you? If so, is there anything special you'd like to hear?

13. How do you feel when you have to read aloud in front of the class?

14. In general, how do you feel about reading?
The purpose of this survey is to help the teacher in determining the students' attitude toward reading before the choral reading activities and after them.

POSTTEST

Name_________________________________ Date____________________

1. If you had to guess...
   How many books do you think you own?____________________
   How many books do you think are in your house?___________
   How many books have you read since school started?_______

2. How did you learn to read?______________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

3. Why do people read?____________________________________
   ____________________________

4. How many times a week does someone at home read aloud to you?
   0 1 2 3 4 more

5. What does someone have to do to be a good reader?_______
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

6. How does a teacher decide which students are good readers?
   ____________________________

7. What kind of books do you like to read?___________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

8. How do you decide which books you’ll read?_______________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

9. Have you ever reread a book?____________________________

10. Do you ever read at home for pleasure?__________ If so, how often do you read at home for pleasure?__________
11. Who are your favorite authors? (List as many as you like.)
__________________________________________________

12. Do you like to have your teacher read aloud to you? ___
If so, is there anything special you’d like to hear?
__________________________________________________

13. How do you feel when you have to read aloud in front of the class?
__________________________________________________

14. Has reading aloud together helped your reading? ___
Tell why you think this.
__________________________________________________

15. How do you feel when you are participating in choral reading?
__________________________________________________
How is this feeling different than reading aloud in front of the class?
__________________________________________________

16. In general, how do you feel about reading?
__________________________________________________


