ABSTRACT

DANIELS, LAVERNE JONES. The Effects of a Cross-age Reading Tutorial Program: Hispanic Students Who Are Not Proficient In Reading Tutored by Non Hispanic Students Who Are Proficient In Reading. (Under the direction of Kenneth H. Brinson, Jnr.)

The purpose of the research has been to examine the effects of a cross-age tutoring program aimed at assisting Hispanic students in comprehension and fluency reading skills. The research process included exploring previous research on the topic and closely observing outcomes of students participating in the cross-age tutorial program. The tutorial program consisted of twenty-four sessions that lasted thirty minutes. Each lesson contained reading practice as well as related games and activities planned by the tutors. The ten Hispanic participants who were tutored were third graders performing at a level II in reading according to the North Carolina End-of-Grade test. The students who were used to tutor the third graders were ten level IV readers in the fifth grade. The research questions that drove the study were: 1) What are some effects when Hispanic students who are not proficient in reading are tutored by non-Hispanic students who are proficient in reading? 2) What are good reading strategies for Hispanic students? The study concluded with all twenty participants passing the End-of-Grade test in addition to other positive effects that will assist in gaining literacy skills. The study does not indicate the cross-age tutoring program alone contributed to students passing the End-of-Grade tests or gaining the positive effects observed.
THE EFFECTS OF A CROSS-AGE READING TUTORIAL PROGRAM: HISPANIC STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PROFICIENT IN READING TUTORED BY NON HISPANIC STUDENTS WHO ARE PROFICIENT IN READING

by

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Laverne Jones Daniels was born in Raleigh, North Carolina to Herbert Lee and Barbara Jean Jones of Wake Forest, North Carolina. She graduated in 1976 from Wake Forest-Rolesville High School. She married Curtis Lee Daniels and gave birth to a son, Curtis Jr., and daughter, Chasty. She began college at age 31 receiving a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education from Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1995. She continued her education to earn a Masters Degree in Elementary Education from North Carolina Central University. She became a National Board Certified teacher and received a Masters Degree from North Carolina State University in 2000. She began her career as an elementary teacher and assistant principal in Wake County. She joined the Moore County Public School System in 2002 as an elementary school principal where she is currently employed.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Issue

Illiteracy is one of our country’s biggest social problems. People who cannot read, write, speak or compute well can not function effectively in society (American Library Association, 2002). Reading connects us to others by giving us the ability to “share ideas, travel, learn, experience the pain and joy of others, and enrich our lives” (McEwan, 1999, p. 11). The United States Department of Education estimates that 27 million Americans can not decipher a street sign or the number on a bus and 45 million have never read a book or newspaper (McEwan, 1999).

According to Elaine McEwan, a former elementary school principal and author of How to Raise a Reader (1999), the ability to read is the foundation for academic success. In fact, it seems that “a child’s self-concept as a student is frequently centered in his earliest experience with learning to read” (p.11). The ability to continue learning can, therefore, be hindered by a deficiency in an individual’s reading skills. The issue is further complicated by the fact that many of the individuals who are functionally illiterate, cited in the Department of Education study, are parents of young children in elementary schools (McEwen, 1999).

When I took up my new position as Principal at Manswell Elementary School, the assistant superintendent made me aware of the reading achievement gap between white and non-white students in the school. At my previous school, the same problem existed. The reading gap there was between African-American and Caucasian students. However, I was surprised that the gap the assistant superintendent was referring to at Manswell Elementary School was between Caucasian and Hispanic students. Based on the NCEOG tests, Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary School in grades 3 through 5 were 68% proficient in
reading. North Carolina emphasizes accountability at the school level and instruction in basic core subjects. The state requires End of Grade tests (NCEOG) in grades 3 through 5 for elementary school students (www.ncpublicschools.org/abc_results/results_03/press_release.html, 2003). Although my previous experience had been with African-American and Caucasian students, and never Hispanic students, as a principal I felt responsible to seek ways to close the reading gap. The Hispanic students were 68% proficient in reading and the non-Hispanic students were 84% proficient in reading. That is a 16% difference that existed between the two subgroups at Manswell Elementary School.

This research explored a way to improve the reading experience among Hispanic students, so that they would read at a higher proficiency level.

**Background Information**

“The gap between the reading achievement of students of diverse background and mainstream students has been a concern for many years” (Valladares, 2002, p.393). According to Farstrup and Samuels (2002), it is becoming an even greater cause of concern because of the changing demographics of the United States. In the 1990s, students of non-white backgrounds constituted 35% of enrollment in public schools in grades one through twelve. Research needs to be done to find ways of improving reading in the United States particularly among Hispanic students because, “at best, the lack of education condemns people to a life of menial jobs and poverty. It can sentence them to a life of welfare, unemployment, or crime.” (Valladares, 2002, p.393).

**Manswell Elementary School**

Manswell Elementary School had 507 students enrolled in 2003-2004. The student population is 49.4 percent Hispanic, 36 percent white, 13 percent black and the remainder other races. It is a Title 1 school, which means that 83 percent of the students qualify to eat a
free or reduced lunch and a school-wide free breakfast. The school has two preschool classrooms and grades kindergarten through five. There are 89 staff members and 21 certified teachers in grades pre-school through five. Each teacher has a full-time assistant teacher. There are four early literacy teachers/reading recovery teachers and four English Second Language teachers (ESL) with a shared full-time assistant teacher. The school has full time music, art, and physical education teachers as well as academically gifted and computer teachers. The school has a full-time Hispanic parent coordinator. There are regular volunteers who work with children one day a week. The school also has bilingual volunteers for conferences and special parent meetings. There are two black female teachers and one Hispanic male teacher. There are no black or white male teachers and the rest are white female teachers. The office staff consists of a principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant and a secretary. Only five staff members are bilingual.

Although Manswell Elementary School had the required personnel and resources in place, at the time of the study only 68% percent of its Hispanic students were proficient in reading, according to the North Carolina end-of-grade test data. The data showed a large reading gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students and I believed this gap could be closed with the help of the staff and parents. According to Hall & Moats (1999), because reading is critical for success in school and in the world of work, the reality of reading failure is alarming, especially to parents. It is important for parents to understand why some children fail to learn to read with the instructional methods often used today to teach reading. Parents can make a critical difference in how well their child learns to read. The problem is that many of the Hispanic students are behind in reading and most of their parents have admitted that they do not know how to help them with reading.
Hispanics at Manswell Elementary School

According to school data, a large number of Hispanic parents with children at Manswell Elementary School are living in poverty, with very limited English to no English. The small town of Manswell has had a tremendous growth in the Hispanic population since 1990. In 1999, the Manswell Elementary principal stated that 37% of the school population was comprised of Hispanic children, compared to 49.4% in 2003, making them the majority group among African-Americans and Caucasians.

The American Library Association (2002) stated that nearly one in four children under the age of six lives below the poverty line. These children often enter school two or more years behind their more advantaged peers in pre-literacy skills, and many fall further and further behind each year. I have experienced situations where Hispanic families (with four to six children) were living in cold houses that had no heating system, had nothing to eat, and had no money to pay bills. Farstrup and Samuel (2002) report a strong correlation between poverty and poor reading skills. Their research indicates that a decline in scores was evident when 50% of the students in a school were from poor families and the trend continued with a further decrease in scores at the 75% mark. Since so many of our Hispanic students are experiencing these situations, the school staff assist to make sure that the physical needs of our students are taken care of, hoping that this will help them to focus on academics.

The Manswell Elementary School staff tries to assist in meeting physical needs for our Hispanic students because breakfast, snacks, and lunch are the only meals some of the students get in a day. The school guidance counselor goes so far as to coordinate a food and blanket drive at the school to make sure the students are warm and have food to eat during the winter break. Flyers go out to local churches, Rotary Clubs, and community members letting them know that we are accepting these items for the benefit of the students at Manswell Elementary School. From our experience as a staff, we believe this has helped
some. However, there still remains a large reading achievement gap between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic students.

Many parents of the Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary School seem to value education or at least want their children to learn what they can. They have not only verbally expressed this but their actions have shown it because:

1) Their children are absent only if they are very sick

2) Most of them are at every parent informational meeting/Migrant Night (meetings that give curriculum information as well as inform parents how they can help their children at home with what is being presented)

3) Most of the time they outnumber black and white parents at PTA meetings

4) Most of them always show up for parent conferences

5) If a teacher is having a problem with one of their children, most of them quickly respond by showing up at school to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

It seems that they support their children as well as they can. Hall & Moats (1999), state in their book, *Straight Talk About Reading*, that parents play a critical role in helping prepare their children for reading instruction, in monitoring instruction, in observing progress, and in advocacy if their children are struggling with reading. The research proposed here will be helpful to Hispanic parents and to their children’s reading experience.

**Purpose of the Study**

The importance of helping children become competent readers was recognized by the 1998 National Reading Summit. Former United States Secretary of Education Richard Riley noted that 44% of fourth graders read below grade level. He emphasized the goal of helping all children develop strong literacy skills. The summit recommended that teachers use a variety of teaching methods and provide more help for children with limited English and lower socioeconomic homes (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). A study conducted by
the Chicago Public Schools found lack of ability to read to be “the single most important factor in predicting which students would drop out of school” (Griffin, 1987). In his 1996 study, Honig cites teaching students to read as the primary responsibility of an elementary school.

The purpose of this study was to find a way to bridge the reading gap between Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students. The research process included exploring previous research on the topic and closely observing student outcomes. The focus was on researching reading strategies aimed at helping Hispanic students become better readers, as well as improving their self-esteem during the process.

To maximize the reading achievement for the Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary School, a tutorial program called Reading Together USA was implemented. Changes were made to the program to fit the needs of the students at Manswell Elementary. This tutorial program was used during school hours on the Manswell Elementary campus. A description of Reading Together USA and the changes made to fit the school needs are in the literature review section. The program consisted of cross-age tutoring. A non-Hispanic student who read proficiently tutored a Hispanic student who could decode words, but had comprehension and fluency problems in reading.

This study was done hoping to lead Manswell Elementary in the direction that will allow it to be more effective in educating Hispanic students in reading. This study should be of value to school principals, communities, districts, teachers, Hispanic parents, and anyone who is a stakeholder in effectively educating Hispanic children in reading.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined within the context of how they were used in this study:

**ESL**: English as a second language is a class for the majority of Hispanic students. This class helps them to learn the vocabulary of the English language.
**Level I, II, III, and IV:** Students scoring at levels I and II on the End-of-Grade tests in reading and math are considered not proficient (below grade level). Level III and IV are proficient reading and math levels.

**Migrant Night:** A night set aside once a quarter, to meet with all migrant parents with a Spanish speaking person facilitating the meeting. These meetings are informational meetings. Different speakers come to address different topics, such as available services, benefits, drugs, and other beneficial information. Every meeting ends with questions and answers. The principal and the English as a Second Language teacher are required to be present.

**More-At-Four:** A program working to provide quality early educational experiences for four-year-olds who are not attending preschool for various reasons. The program is community-based, voluntary, and designed to prepare four-year olds for success in school. The More-At-Four Program may be for children if: 1) the child is not enrolled in a preschool program; 2) the child was four years old on or before October 16 of that school year; 3) the child has health concerns or special needs; 4) the child’s family qualifies for financial assistance; or 5) English is the child’s second language.

**Newcomer’s class:** Designed for non-English speaking students who enter a grade other than kindergarten, this pullout class focuses on Basic English to aid in getting the students caught up. This class is taught by an ESL teacher.

**No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:** On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed this Act into law. The Act is a reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It defines the federal role in K-12 education and hopes to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. It is based on four basic principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work.
**Para-professional**: A person hired to assist the certified teacher in the classroom.

**Title 1 School**: Title 1 is the largest federal aid to education program. It aims to ensure that poor and educationally disadvantaged students have additional support to help them meet high academic standards. It emphasizes early intervention in reading. Beginning in 1995-96, schools with at least 50 percent poverty levels became eligible to become school-wide projects. In a school-wide project, Title-1 funds are used to develop school reform strategies that may be used for the benefit of all children in the school.

**Research Questions**

During the research, the following questions emerged as literature was reviewed:

1) What are some effects when Hispanic students who are not proficient in reading are tutored by their Non-Hispanic peers who are proficient in reading?

2) What are some good reading strategies for Hispanic students?

**Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

In a 1996 article, Williams asserts that increasing achievement levels for disadvantaged students is a team effort, involving the schools and families as well as the students. Although I am the principal at Manswell Elementary School, personal bias was avoided. I relied on observations and interviews with students and teachers of the Hispanic students in the study. I read journal articles, books, and newspapers to find solutions to help with reading as well as to fine tune the steps to help the students at Manswell Elementary School succeed. I sought answers to my research questions. Manswell Elementary School has the largest number of Hispanics in the county. Bright Elementary School, another school where I sought best reading practices, is in Montgomery County, which has a 65% Hispanic population, and is doing well according to an article published in *The Courier-Tribune* (Candor, August, 2003). The article stated that the students, including Hispanics, at Bright
Elementary School achieved high growth in reading and math, according to the North Carolina state standards.

Twenty students (ten tutors and ten tutees) at Manswell Elementary School were studied. At the end of the research, I had hoped to know how Manswell Elementary School could be more effective in bridging the reading achievement gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students by implementing and fine tuning best practices.

Summary

An applied educational research study was done by reviewing literature and implementing an after school cross-age peer tutoring program at Manswell Elementary School. Chapter I defines the need for the study and Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature. The methodology and the framework of the study are presented in Chapter 3. The findings of the study are reported in Chapter 4, followed by a summary, conclusion, reflection and recommendations in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Mills (2000) suggests that the review of the literature may offer, “Other ways of looking at your problem and help you identify potential promising practices that you might use that will correct the problem” (p. 29).

Educators are challenged to find and implement methods that will give poor readers the boost they need to develop reading skills essential for success in school. At the same time teachers must meet the instructional needs of increasingly diverse groups of students, including the growing presence of students who speak English as a second language, minority children, and children living in poverty (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes & Simmons, 1997).

According to Wasik and Slavin’s (1993) review of five tutoring programs, one-on-one reading instruction was very effective when undertaken by certified teachers. Two programs that have been extensively studied and utilize highly skilled professional tutors and paraprofessionals are Success for All and Reading Recovery.

Success for All

In the Success for All tutoring program (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992), tutoring is a part of a comprehensive school-based reform system designed for high-poverty districts. Research on Success for All in nine school districts showed that first graders in the program, on the average, scored three months ahead of control groups in individually administered and standardized reading tests. Fifth graders were a year ahead on similar measures (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996).

The Success for All program is designed for pre-kindergarten to age five to prevent or intervene in the development of learning problems in the early years by organizing support
resources within the regular classroom. The program grew out of a partnership between the Baltimore City Public Schools and the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools. The research team was challenged to develop a program that would enable every child in an inner-city Baltimore Elementary School to perform at grade level by the end of grade three (Slavin and Madden, 2000).

In grades two through five, students use school-or district-selected reading materials, basals, and trade books. At this level, partner reading, exercises in identifying characters, settings, and problem solution of narratives and in summarizing stories, writing, and direct instruction in reading comprehension skills, together with a form of cooperative learning, are all used to develop reading skills. The teachers and tutors complete briefing forms to communicate periodically about students’ specific problems and needs (Slavin & Madden, 2000).

As a former classroom teacher, I used a similar program that was used by the inner city school in Baltimore. Conferencing with students helped me to identify specific problems and needs of my students.

**Reading Recovery**

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program for 1st graders who have been referred by their teachers, to get additional one-on-one help in reading. This twenty week program was first tested in New Zealand, where the program originated. A longitudinal study done in Ohio showed that after 2 years, children who had been in the program scored consistently higher in readings on their grade level than a comparison group who had received other early interventions in reading (DeFord, 1991).

Each Reading Recovery lesson includes reading, writing, and word work. The five essential components of reading instruction are: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and comprehension (Reading Recovery Council 2002). “By
Intervening early with the five components, Reading Recovery helps close the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving children and their peers before the gap becomes too large to bridge” (Reading Recovery Council, 2002, p.1).

After reviewing several tutorial programs, and learning that one-on-one situations are producing much success in reading, I found studies conducted by Ellis and Rogoff (1989) that looked at the effects of tutoring with a peer or adult partner. Their study concluded that the benefits of having an adult partner were greater than those of having a peer partner. In spite of their findings, at most schools, especially Manswell Elementary School, it becomes very expensive to implement programs like Success for All, Reading Recovery, and other programs that mandate teachers working with one student at a time.

“Peer tutoring, an alternative instructional strategy in which students support each other’s learning, shows promise for enhancing children’s early literacy development” (Thousand, Villa, Nevin, 2002, p.235). With this in mind, I decided to study a peer-tutoring reading program method that requires less time from teachers and para-professionals.

In an effort to correct the problem of the reading achievement gap that existed between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary School, the literature review in this chapter examines three specific areas: 1) peer-tutoring; 2) cross-age peer tutoring; and 3) reading strategies for Hispanic students.

**Reading Together USA**

Reading Together USA is a federal and state funded fluency comprehension tutoring program that has been in existence since 1995 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It is a tutoring program designed to assist second grade students who can decode words independently, but lack comprehension and fluency. The program also assists students in developing human relations, promotes self-esteem, and encourages positive attitudes, human interaction, and leadership thinking.
The focus of the program is to increase the student’s reading fluency and comprehension. Each lesson contains reading practice and enjoyable library and independent reading as well as games and activities (Reading Together USA, 2003).

**Peer Tutoring**

Why use peer tutoring to promote high reading achievement? Teachers are finding that conventional instructional methods are not sufficient for addressing the needs of all students in today’s heterogeneous classrooms (Vaughn, 2000). Peer tutoring, an alternative instructional strategy in which students support each other’s learning (Maheady, Harper, & Sacca, 1988), shows promise for enhancing children’s early literacy development. According to Fuch (2001) peer tutoring allows teachers to individualize learning materials to address a broader range of instructional needs and provides students with more opportunities to respond to and practice academic content than conventional teaching formats do, which is essential for student success. “Peer tutoring has the potential to facilitate positive changes in students’ social behavior and school adjustment” (Fuchs, Fuchs, Martinez & Mathes (1985, p.235).

According to Holt (1993), an effective way of ensuring language development interaction and achievement in elementary-level limited English proficient students is oral language development; the students need to be integrated at appropriate times with English proficient students in activities characterized by positive student-situations. In my study a Hispanic student who was not proficient in reading was paired with a non-Hispanic student who was proficient in reading; I was hoping to get proficient test scores on the end-of-grade test and an increase in comprehension and fluency skills.

In the 1960s, the professional literature began describing a new approach to corrective reading. The procedure is called the Neurological Impress Method (NIM). This program involved pairing a good and a poor reader, sitting side by side reading aloud and together for
15 minutes at a time. The good reader was to direct his voice into the left ear of the poor reader to imprint the sound-symbol match into the less able reader’s head. According to Heckelman (1969), the poor readers were able to make substantial progress in relatively short periods of time. He states that one student made gains of 5.9 grade levels after doing NIM for a total of 7 ¼ hours over 6 weeks. The average gain was 1.9 grade levels for 24 students over the same time period.

According to Adams and Hamm (1990), “Collaboration between peers clearly helps even young children learn how to take different points of view into account. And when children at different developmental levels work together to explore differences of opinion, they all improve their thinking skills” (p.47). Adams and Hamm state that the positive effects of such collaboration have proven to go beyond reading achievement to have a positive effect on cognitive development, self esteem and the ability to work with others. When children with different perspectives share a goal, trying to reach it together can, because of different perspectives, lead to cognitive conflict. Resolving that conflict leads directly to cognitive development for the students. Linda Baloche (1998) says that students learn through interaction with peers many things they are unlikely to learn readily from adults. She thinks peers provide models for appropriate social behavior. Peers help one another to gain in impulse control. They gain a sense of self-worth and self-acceptance.

According to Baloche (1998), Piaget believed that maturation, active experience, social transmission, and self-regulation were fundamental factors in cognitive development. Social transmission implies that a child understands the information being transmitted and that often children seem to be able to describe things to each other in ways that adults can not. Interaction with peers is important. Like Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) understood the essential link between social transmission and cognitive development, stating that “human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the
intellectual life of those around them” (p.88). According to Foot, Morgan & Shute (1990, p.118), “If children have not mastered the basics of reading by age seven or eight years, their educational prospects are bleak.” Their opportunities to read will likely become less successful. The use of peer-tutors can help to redress this imbalance by ensuring that frequent appropriate oral reading interaction will occur. Research has shown that peer-tutors, given thorough training in reading, can be employed to a very good effect, bringing about major reading gains in their tutees.

Greenwood, Carta, & Maheady (1991) say that although empirical evidence supports the use of peer tutoring to improve student achievement, research is still needed to determine the conditions under which peer tutoring is most effective and to compare peer tutoring to other empirically validated interventions. Pairing a Hispanic student with a non-Hispanic student was to allow me to see whether this use of peer-tutoring would be effective.

**Cross-Age Peer Tutoring**

A type of peer tutoring that has gained increased attention in recent years is cross-age tutoring. The process of cross-age peer tutoring involves an older pupil, under a teacher’s guidance, helping a younger student to learn or practice a skill or concept (Giesecke, 1993). The successful engagement of students helping one another can supplement classroom instruction for both tutor and tutee. Through purposeful engagement, cross-age tutoring provides learners with an authentic reason for practicing in order to improve their reading performance (Gaustad, 1993). Cobb (1998) agrees with Gaustad that cross-age tutoring is beneficial because the process allows tutors expanded opportunities to review material, to contemplate the purpose as well as the intended outcome of a task, and to improve communication skills. Additionally, cross-age tutoring or peer tutoring has been found to promote positive reading attitudes and habits.
According to Girard and Willing (1996), effective pairing occurs when cross-age peers are matched. Older students provide models of appropriate behavior for younger ones and gain in self-confidence through opportunities to be nurturing and patient. They develop listening and reading skills and experience a variety of activities. In helping younger children, a metacognitive process takes place—analyzing the task at hand, thinking about the sequence of instructions, and then evaluating their effectiveness as the helper. Younger students make gains in listening and reading skills. The sharing of experiences and the extra attention provided by the older partner can improve self-concept and accelerate learning.

In a 1996 study by Clements, an after school cross-age reading tutorial club was implemented in an elementary school that was 76% English language learners, of whom 99% qualified for a free lunch and 28% read at grade level. The philosophy of the after school program was that optimum learning occurs in an environment of intrinsic purposeful engagement through supportive instructional methods. Clements hypothesized that as the fifth grade struggling readers gained expertise as tutors, they would be motivated to read and to try the strategies that they were suggesting to the students they tutored. When using three measures to examine their outcomes, students’ scores were higher in the group that tutored compared with similar groups of students who did not peer-tutor. “In addition, the 24 students in the reading club had statistically significant increases in their reading achievement over the course of the year—more than two years’ growth during the year” (Clements, p.166). They were unable to conclude that the cross-age tutoring alone resulted in these changes, but believed that the direct reading instruction along with each student’s personal responsibility for teaching another child influenced the literacy growth for the students.

**Reading Strategies for Hispanic/LEP Students**

Some of the Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary have problems processing information when reading. According to Heterington & Parke, (1986) information
processing is a theoretical perspective that can be used to help explain why peer learning tends to promote high achievement. “From this perspective, the development of memory and problem-solving capabilities are due, in part, to strategies used to transfer information into memory, to world knowledge, and to planfulness” (p.4). Memory strategies that are likely to be enhanced by the use of cooperative learning include:

1) Oral Rehearsal: The repetition of the information that needs to be remembered.
2) Semantic Organization: The reorganization and reconstruction of information in ways to make it more meaningful.
3) Elaboration: The creation of a context into which different and unrelated ideas fit together.

They go on to define world knowledge as what children know about the world from past experiences that influences what they know about the present and can recall later.

“When children have the opportunity to share experiences within the cooperative context, they frequently help each other expand their capacity for understanding” (p.5). Planfulness is the development of systematic strategy for gathering and shifting information. It is an essential problem solving tool. (Heterington & Parke, 1986).

**Effective Teachers**

According to Stronge (2002) “effective teachers continually demonstrate respect and understanding, along with fairness regarding race, cultural background, and gender” (p.16). A North Carolina school with a 65% Hispanic population gives credit for student achievement in reading to having good teachers. According to the principal of Candor Elementary, “Hard work and cooperation, planning, attention to details, flexibility, belief in the children, and love for the children” are qualities of good teachers. The principal adds, “These children are precious and they know we love them” (Anderson, August, 2003).
“Teachers’ attitudes may be another factor tending to sustain the old pattern of schools’ failure to build on the existing language of students of diverse backgrounds. The negative attitudes some teachers have towards students’ home languages may cause students to feel alienated and resentful and eventually lead them to refuse to participate in school literacy activities” (Au, 1989, p. 131). From my experience, positive teachers who are willing to build on existing language can be effective with student achievement. Others have described similar findings. William (1996) says “Effective teachers understand the cultures of students in their classroom and adapt curriculum and instruction accordingly (p.34).” Donna Marriott, in an article in Education Week (October, 2002), quotes a teacher of a Hispanic student saying “Being a good teacher is as much about rapport and relationship as it is about curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment” (p.35).

According to Glasser (1990), if teachers would develop an understanding of the culture of Hispanic students, teach meaningful lessons to them, and believe that they can learn maybe the reading gap that exists will close.

Low expectations for student behavior and academic achievement often focus on poor students of color (Williams, 1996). When a teacher asked Marva Collins, author of Marva Collins’ way: Returning to excellence in education, what she sees as the primary component of her success with students, Collins replied, “I believe in my children.”

If a teacher believes her students cannot learn, then her students will not learn. If a teacher believes that children from underprivileged homes cannot achieve very much, then those children will not achieve very much. On the other hand, if you create a positive environment for your students, you will see miraculous things take place. If you tell your students that they are bright, intelligent winners, they will become that (Collins & Tamarkin, 1990, p.221).
The classroom setting should be one where there is minimal risk and a sense of belonging. Activities should be meaningful and collaborative, where students are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning as well as to help others to learn. Cooperative learning is one of the key instructional approaches that can be used to help accomplish these goals. (Holt, 1993). “Occasional or even frequent use of homogeneous grouping of students by language ability facilitates instruction of students from diverse language backgrounds. Whole-class instruction often leads to teaching a few students at the expense of others; cooperative learning with exclusively heterogeneous groups may not give all students access to appropriate language and content instruction” (Holt, 1993, p.57).

**Reading Instructions for Hispanic students**

“It is true that schools are less successful in raising the achievement levels of students whose families live in poverty, and who spoke a first language other than standard American English.” (Au, 1993, p. 2). McCauley and McCauley (1992) cite four factors that are important for acquisition of a second language: a low-anxiety environment, repeated practice, comprehensible input, and drama. A low-anxiety environment is one in which trust and respect reign; learners feel free to take risks. Repeated practice provides students with the time and repetition necessary to improve fluency. Drama allows students to see words put into action by acting out parts of a story.

According to Au, (1993) there is an urgent need for teachers to understand how to improve in school literacy learning of students of diverse backgrounds. One solution to schools’ difficulties may be found in the use of culturally responsive instruction, instruction compatible with the values of students’ own cultures and aimed at helping them achieve at high levels.
The English Second Language teachers at Manswell Elementary say, in order for a Hispanic/Limited English Proficient student to begin to achieve in reading, the regular classroom teacher should follow these directions:

- Encourage Hispanic students to speak English and provide ample opportunities for doing so, but do not force new students to speak before they are ready.
- Speak to Hispanic students in a normal tone of voice, at a normal rate using simple sentences. Use simple verb tenses (He went) instead of perfect tenses (he has gone). Use active voice instead of passive.
- Try to use and reinforce the language that these students will encounter every day. Include daily routines with repetitious language. Keep terminology consistent. Monitor vocabulary and use of idioms.
- Realize that students do not comprehend all the forms of expression, vocabulary items, and sentence structures in the content areas even though they seem to have mastered the basic forms of conversational English.
- Use gestures and examples to illustrate your oral statements, directions, and explanations. Write (print) on the blackboard and demonstrate whenever possible. Model what is expected of the student.
- Aid in comprehension by using charts, illustrations, maps, Venn diagrams, photos, media and other representations. Present information both visually and verbally. Summarize frequently through visual and auditory means. This helps the ESL students as well as other students who learn best visually. Students may use tape recorders to practice new vocabulary.
- Correct errors with sensitivity. Accept errors in grammar and pronunciation while continuing to model appropriate language. After they have more assurance, the
teacher may wish to concentrate on major or frequent errors in speech. React to the intended meaning first and then attend to form.

- Encourage these students to join activities which enhances their self-concept and which do not demand proficiency in English. Although they may not volunteer answers, their language is developing. Opportunities to hear and use meaningful language in real context could include science experiments, art activities, games, music, field trips, and role play.

- Check frequently for understanding. Adequate wait time is especially important for these students. Be patient and keep a positive attitude when teaching students to read.

Learning a second language is a cognitively demanding task.

Oral reading is important when promoting language learning for students whose first language is not English. Rigg and Allen (1989) suggest that teachers read literature aloud to Hispanic students (and to the rest of the class), so that students will become acquainted with the structure of narrative in English and with literary language, including phrases such as “once upon a time” which is a traditional way to start a story. To help students begin to read on their own, teachers will want to find comprehensible materials, such as picture books with illustrations and repetitive language. According to Rigg and Allen, “Well written, high-interest literature provides a better basis for reading instruction than material written in a simpler but stilted fashion” (1989, p.149).

Vocabulary building with second-language learners sometimes causes confusion. According to Williams (1996), methods of instruction that appear to work most successfully with poor ethnic and language minority students tend to focus on making meaning out of content. If vocabulary is not understood, students can not comprehend; therefore there is no meaning in content.
The vocabulary presented in textbooks, pre-selected for emphasis by the publisher, may or may not be relevant for second-language learners. Most subject texts are designed for native speakers of English; multiple meanings and idioms may cause difficulty for Hispanic students, but not for native speakers. Confusion also arises when vocabulary development precedes concept development. According to Spangenberg-Urbschat and Pritchard (1996), vocabulary instruction is most effective when it is used to label experiences or concepts or constructs that have grown out of experiences. “Vocabulary development for second-language learners should help to develop word knowledge rather than word memorization” (p.171).

Comprehensible input enables the learner to understand what is being said. The sensitive teacher deliberately uses language that the learner knows along with language that is unknown (Rigg and Allen, 1989).

“Research evidence suggests that reading extensively in a wide variety of genres is essential for developing high levels of both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.” (Garcia, 2003, p. 26). Garcia goes on to say that this is particularly the case for second language students, because they are attempting to catch up to students who are continuing to develop their English academic language proficiency. Drama, in particular, enables the learner to use language in a social setting. It can help the learner make connections between speech and action (Rigg and Allen, 1989).

Flood, Jenson, Lapp & Squire (1991) raise the question, “In what ways should our new national insights in the need for multiethnic, multicultural education affect the teachings of reading?” (p.32). They go on to mention other possible options for reading:

- *Peer tutoring* gives students the opportunity to learn from other students who have already developed the needed strategies or skills
• **Modeling** by the teacher or a capable peer shows students how reading strategies can be used successfully

• **Collaborative or cooperative learning** allow student to work and learn together (Flood, Jenson, Lapp & Squire (1991).

As I continued to review literature, I found that children are children and reading strategies work the same for most children when it comes to decoding, comprehension and fluency. Gilbert (2003) sums it up in her book *English learners: Reaching the highest level learners of English literacy*, by saying that:

- Immersion in a literate environment either in home or in school (and preferably in both) is a strong predictor of success in both decoding and reading comprehension.
- The development of phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and concepts about print is an important component of the development of initial decoding skills;
- An explicit instructional focus on developing phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and concepts about print, together with a significant instructional focus on actual reading, contributes to the development of decoding skills and early reading comprehension skills. A combined focus on the code and the meaning works significantly better for most children than instruction that focuses primarily on isolated sequential phonic drills alone or on exposure to authentic text alone.
- The amount of access to print and the amount of actual reading that students carry out is by far the major determinant of reading comprehension development as students progress through the grades (Gilbert, 2003, p.28).

In this study, encouraging a non-Hispanic student to work with a Hispanic student was aimed at increasing vocabulary for both students. In addition to an increased vocabulary, according to a School Improvement Research Series done by the North Western Regional
Educational Laboratory, there are three commonly cited benefits of peer and cross-aged tutoring: the learning of academic skills, the development of social behaviors and classroom discipline, and the enhancement of peer relations (Greenwood, Carta, and Hall, 1988). Researchers have also identified improvements in self-esteem and one of its components—internal locus of control as benefits of tutoring. It is important to note that all such benefits accrue to both tutor and tutee.

**Summary of Reviewed Literature**

Why is peer learning so critical?

“It is important to keep in mind that one of the biggest problems in schools right now is the gap between the high- and low-achieving groups of students. If many low achievers were successfully tutored they would gain more confidence and more acceptances and this gap would begin to close. Even if they did not reach the achievement levels of their tutors, they would become friends with students whom they do not even know now” (Glasser, 1990, p.56).

“Children and adolescents learn through interaction with peers many things they are unlikely to learn readily from adults” (Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. 1983, p.78). In addition to students learning from students it is said that: “One-to-one tutoring programs, such as peer and cross-age tutoring can result in emotional and academic benefits for the tutor and the tutee” (McCormack R. & Paratore, J., 2003, p.159).

After choosing a few successful peer tutoring programs to study, I designed an after school program based on Morrow and Woo’s research (2000) that a successful tutoring program includes:

1) A certified reading specialist to supervise tutors;
2) Ongoing training and feedback for the tutors;
3) Structured tutoring sessions that incorporate basic literacy elements;
4) Consistent and intensive tutoring;

5) Access to high-quality materials;

6) Ongoing assessment of students’ progress;

7) School-based plans to monitor tutor attendance; and

8) Coordination of tutoring with classroom instruction (Morrow and Woo, 2001, p.161).

**Summary**

Educators are challenged to find and implement methods that will give poor readers the boost they need to develop reading skills essential for success in school (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes & Simmons, 1997).

After reviewing literature, I have found tutorial programs can be an effective practice for poor readers. The literature reviewed shows that Success for All and Reading Recovery are two successful programs that use adult tutors. There are other types of tutorial programs, such as Reading Together USA that use peer tutoring, which is what was used at Manswell Elementary School to help meet the needs of students who speak English as a second language. The Reading Together USA Tutorial program was used as a model, yet changed as stated in Chapter I to meet the needs of the students at Manswell Elementary School.

In Chapter 3 the framework of the project is presented. It describes the procedures for data collection and analysis. There is information on the participants that were involved in the study by way of interviews and observations.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The Researcher

I am an African-American woman in a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. After receiving bachelor’s and master’s degrees in elementary education, and a master’s in school administration, I went from serving as a national board certified elementary teacher to become an elementary school principal. My professional training and personal experience inspired me to conduct a study in my school to generate ways to improve the reading experiences of Hispanic/ESL students who I believe are impacted by cultural differences.

I have experienced working with several races and ethnicities of elementary school age children and have found that when students have high self-esteem and a solid reading foundation, they usually read with fluency and comprehension. Most of the Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary School lack confidence because of their inability to be fluent in reading, therefore, most of them continue to lag behind in reading.

In my second year as principal at Manswell Elementary School, where the population is 49.4% Hispanic, 36% Caucasian, and 13% African-American, I found a need to take some type of action to improve the reading experience of the Hispanic students. While trying to improve reading skills, I had hoped to get a better understanding of what strategies were needed to bridge the reading gap between the Hispanic students and non-Hispanic students. A reading tutorial program was implemented at Manswell Elementary School.
Framework for This Project

“Case study methodology may make the greatest contribution where project purposes or aims are unclear or ambiguous. The research may tend to clarify and tidy up misunderstanding.” (McKernan, 1991, p 81). McKernan states in his work that case studies are reports on a full cycle of action.

In my study, when I mention action research, it implies to the action research that teachers and administrators do when implementing new strategies. We implement the strategy, observe, evaluate, make changes, and assess the outcome of the strategy to determine whether we will continue to use it.

The case that I implemented and studied was a reading tutoring program which took place during the day for twenty-four thirty minute sessions. This program was a fine-tuning of the Reading Together USA program described in Chapter II. This program consisted of ten Hispanic students who were not proficient in reading being tutored by ten non-Hispanic students who were proficient readers, with two trained reading coaches overseeing the students.

I studied the students for twenty-four tutoring sessions. The reading coaches were trained over a two-day period by the Reading Together staff from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. They received material for the program and began immediately training the tutors. The tutors were interviewed and selected according to their 1) responsibility; 2) love for reading; 3) enjoyment of working with younger students; 4) and reading level. Their teachers also took part in the selection process. After the tutors were trained, the program began. The students were grouped based on the Reading Together USA guidelines, adopted for the needs at my school. For my study the pairs of students were Hispanic and non-Hispanic. When the program began, the philosophy of Reading Together USA of pairing second graders with fifth graders was changed. At Manswell Elementary School, level II
third graders were paired with levels IV fifth graders. According to the North Carolina testing standards, proficient readers are reading at level III (on grade level) and IV (above grade level). Level II students demonstrate inconsistent mastery of grade level skills, strategies and competencies and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.

The Participants

The participants in this study were 20 students in grades 3 and 5 at Manswell Elementary School. Ten of the students were 3rd grade Hispanic students (tutees), who scored at level II on the North Carolina pre-test for third graders. These students are from homes where Spanish is the only spoken language. They all ate a free or reduced lunch at school and had been at Manswell since kindergarten. The other ten students were non-Hispanic 5th grade students (tutors) who scored at levels IV on the End-of-Grade test. Level I students did not participate in this study because this is a comprehension program and level I students have decoding problems, which made this program too advanced for them. Other participants were two trained certified teachers overseeing the pairs of students, as well as the regular classroom teachers and English Second Language teachers of these students. An English Second Language teacher from Bright Elementary participated as well, only to include helpful reading strategies to peer tutoring.

The Interviews

According to McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead (1996), “Interviews have distinct advantages over a questionnaire because you get richer feedback as a result of being able to probe further” (p.101). Questions asked were designed to assess academic needs to make improvements in student achievement. The study began with interviews of the participating students’ teachers (the interview questions are in Appendix A) hoping to get a good feel of the students’ self-worth and attitude about reading, and to provide a basis to assess their
reading progress upon completion of the program. There were two focus group interviews using the English language; one with the tutees and one with the tutors about their reading experience and what they thought it would be like to be in a peer tutoring situation. Then each student in the study was interviewed (the interview questions used are in Appendix B). Teachers and students were interviewed before the tutoring and again at the end of tutoring, using some of the same questions.

Observations

Observations of the tutoring sessions were done to be able to give a description of what actually took place during the tutoring as well as during the time the tutors prepared lessons for the tutees. I kept a journal to record conversations when the students were grouped after each session for reflections.

Data Collection

At the beginning of the after school tutoring program, teachers were interviewed to find out the reading (fluency and comprehension) level of each student. Each tutee was given a reading comprehension assessment at the beginning of the study as well as at the end of the study. At the end of the study the same data were collected as well as the teachers’ comments on the tutorial program. In addition, I collected data from the STAR Reading Lab, where the students read passages from a computer and took a comprehension test afterwards. I was interested in noticing the progress of these students from the beginning of school until the study was finished. I also had their teachers conduct a running record, which is a component of the North Carolina Kindergarten through third grade reading comprehension assessment tool. Throughout the study, I observed Hispanic students in their regular classes as well as their English Second Language class to collect data on what seems to be helpful and what the students were struggling with compared to their English speaking peers.
As part of my data collection I decided that it was not necessary to audio-tape any of the interviews, so I kept a journal and memos when collecting data. I also found it not necessary to video tape when the students were attending the tutorial program. To get a closer observation of the peer-tutoring relationship I attended most of the sessions.

At Bright Elementary School, I interviewed a second English Second Language teacher who said she was having success with her Hispanic students.

Additionally, I continued to collect information from books and journal articles on various reading strategies and peer tutoring. Articles that I collected were placed in a storage box labeled according to subjects.

Data analysis

Glesne (1999) explains that, “Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p.130). After organizing the data and making sense of what I had learned, I noted patterns that pertain to successful and unsuccessful reading experiences. I shared the findings with the teacher participants for them to better teach their students who participated in the study.

According to McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead (1996), many researchers feel they have failed if a solution doesn’t work, or doesn’t have the anticipated result. I have compiled research and am making a claim that the particular practice that I have focused upon is knowledge that is useful to others. We administrators are always trying out new ways of working to make reading experiences better, some of which are more successful than others. I agree with McNiff; we don’t always get it right the first time. I will learn from my mistakes and try again.

Ethics

I ask the same question that Regan-Smith (1991) asked in her study. “Could my research harm the students or teachers” (p.134)? I would go a step further and ask if it could also harm
the parents of Manswell Elementary School students? This study was aimed at making reading a better experience for Hispanic students and their families.

According to McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead (1996), I had a good grasp of the ethical considerations of the research. Guidelines have been set by different researchers. I chose to follow the guidelines presented by McNiff (1996). The following guidelines were used as a basic checklist:

**A) Negotiate access with:**

*Authorities:* I am the principal at Manswell Elementary School, and I had received written permission from the superintendent of the schools in which I work to conduct a research study. I also interacted with my assistant superintendent, who suggested that I do a case study of some sort when she heard that I was working on my doctoral degree in education. I also got permission from the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board also.

*Participants:* I got permission from the teachers to involve them in my research. I kept them involved and informed. I made it clear from the start that they were participants and co-researchers; they were not subjects that I was studying. I let them know that I was studying in relation to them and that they were central to my research.

*Parents or guardians:* Since I am working with children, I got permission from parents. I also explained to them what the study was about.

**(B) Promise of confidentiality of:**

*Information:* I have only reported information that is in the public domain and within the law. I did not reveal anything of personal or compromising nature. I did not obtain any information that seemed sensitive, so I did not need to seek permission from the originator to use it.
Identity: I did not reveal the real names of people or places. I used numbers instead of using fictitious names because many participants share the same names. I received full permission in writing first.

Data: I checked to make sure data were accurate; I encouraged the teacher participants to check the data for accuracy before publishing.

(C) Ensure participants’ right to withdraw from the research:

I checked continually to ensure that participants were comfortable with procedures and were always in full command of their own involvement in my research. I let them know that their rights were protected and that if they wished to withdraw they could do so.

(D) Keep others informed:

I let all interested parties know what I was doing from the start. When I started collecting data, I produced a plan and made it available for research participants.

(E) Keep good faith:

I established from the beginning that I am a person to be trusted, and that I will keep my promises concerning confidentiality and reporting. I did not take anything for granted. I always checked back with people to see if there was any doubt and in matters where there was some possibility of misunderstanding.

“Regardless of tradition of inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports” (Creswell, 1998, p.35). The guidelines above were always followed during my study.

Validity

“Validity refers to the essential truthfulness of a piece of data. By asserting validity, the researcher is asserting that the data could reflect the specific phenomenon claimed” (Sagor, 2000, p.110). According to McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead (1996) validity in traditional
research depends on the belief that what is to be known can be objectively assessed. This is not the case in my research, which emphasizes the importance of the person’s interpretation and negotiation of events. In action research, personal experience that can be meaningfully shared by a number of people is seen as a good basis for establishing validity. Validity is the property of the interpretations and conclusions which people make of information and the theoretical frameworks which guide its collection and use (McTaggart, 1997).

By my being available for questions or concerns, this study was made public to those involved. Also there were participants discussing, sharing, implementing, and being observed throughout the study. According to McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead (1996), making research public is the best way to get it validated. It indicates that I have nothing to hide and I am willing for others to scrutinize what has happened to help me move my thinking forward. With my study, it was in my best interest to make it public because as McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead (1996) state “making it public is part of the discipline of action research because it invites corroboration or criticism” (p.27). Corroboration and criticism are both needed to help me to move forward or to evaluate and perhaps change directions.

Sagor (2000) also says that to ensure reasonable validity and reliability, action researchers should avoid relying on any single source of data. Most qualitative researchers use a process called triangulation to enhance the validity and the reliability of their findings. In this study multiple sources of data were used to answer my questions and according to Sagor (2000), “to establish the truth and accuracy of a claim” (p.112).

I understand and agree with McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead (1996), that an important outcome of my research will be my changed understanding about my professional practice as a principal. I show how this has happened by describing my changed thinking over time and explaining how this has resulted from my investigation of my own actions in the summary in Chapter five. The collected data were kept in a file with notes that helped me to know when
and how they were collected, so that I was able to understand how information led to new insights about helping Hispanic students become better readers. While systematically monitoring and evaluating, I was able to identify the points at which learning took place. Being systematic allowed me to generate valid data.

The teacher interviewees and interviewer should have had no reasons to give false data in the study, because the data collected in this study were aimed at helping students become better readers. I found this to be a goal for everyone involved and that everyone understood the importance of giving true data to help students become better readers.

**Generalizability**

According to Sagor (2000), one misconception that many educators have about research is that it is only helpful when it is generalizable. Generalizability refers to the degree to which findings of a study can be applied to and transferred to another contextually different setting. My study of “finding ways to help improve reading for Hispanic students” specifically targeted Manswell Elementary School, but may be useful in other settings with similar problems if changes are made to target the population in which it is used.

**Summary**

Mills (2000) says that “action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (p.6). Doing this study, I had goals of gaining insight, developing a reflective practice, and effecting positive changes on educational practices and improving student outcomes in the wonderful world of reading.

Chapter four gives a description of the outcomes of the study. It gives background information on the students who were studied, as well as three types of reading assessment data on the student participants. At the end of the chapter there is a summary of the study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to find a way to assist the Hispanic students at Manswell Elementary to become better readers by enhancing their comprehension and fluency skills. The interviews of the teachers, students, and reading coaches and the tutorial program observations and reading assessments provided the data for the study. To present the findings of the data, this chapter is organized as follows: (a) tutees; (b) assessment data; (c) tutors; (d) the tutorial sessions; (e) the guiding research question: “What are some effects of a cross-age peer tutoring program?” (f) teachers/reading coaches (g) summary of findings.

Tutees

At the beginning of the study all tutees were brought together for a focus group interview. Since my office may be intimidating to some students, I met with the tutees in the media center hoping they would be more comfortable and feel free to share. During the discussion most of them were very talkative. There were two males and eight females. Five were from the same classroom, two were from another classroom and the other three were each from different classrooms. After letting them know that each of them would be paired with a fifth grade student and would read to the fifth grade student one or two times a week for 30 minutes, they seemed excited to participate in the study. One student commented that he would get to read more because his teacher does not like calling on him much when the whole class is reading aloud from a text book. He said it was
because he reads too slowly. One student said he hoped he would like the person that he
would be paired with and wished that it would be a boy. One girl said she bet it would
“feel awkward.” One of the male students said he did not like reading and a female
student immediately asked him, “How are you ever going to read a sign if you do not like
reading?” She said this with confidence as if someone had said those same words to her
before. He went on to say that nobody in his family liked reading. After that comment, I
felt it was appropriate to ask, “Is English spoken in your homes?” Just as I had thought,
there was no English language spoken in the homes of these students. Not only did I
discover that there was no spoken English but the parents of 8 out of 10 of the students
never learned to read the Spanish or English language. The other two had only one
parent that could read the Spanish language.

The main concern most of the students had was if they would be able to read books
on the Accelerated Readers list. They had hoped that they would be able to accumulate
some points to be like the rest of their classmates who had many points because of their
ability to comprehend what they read. The Accelerated Reader program is an
individualized reading program at Manswell Elementary that encourages reading. For the
Accelerated Reading program, teachers set point-goals for students and if they
successfully reach their goals they receive some type of incentive. It is obvious that these
students typically fall short of their points each six weeks. Therefore, they were hoping to
obtain them through the tutoring program with the help of their tutors. Unfortunately the
books to be read were not accelerated reading books. They were books that were in the
Reading Together Kit that went along with the planned activities provided by Reading
Together USA.
One student said she had hoped to read a chapter book, a book that is made up of several chapters and most of the time has more pages than a regular elementary school book. She said that she could complete one if the tutor would read a page and let her read one. She also stated that “it would be worth a lot of points.” One student also asked if they could read big books with small words, sort of like a chapter book, she said.

The students seemed very excited after the group discussion. When I was ready to end the discussion, one of the boys asked, “Mrs. Daniels, if we learn to read better and we all make threes on the EOG, can you do something crazy?” I indicated that I would, but I would not shave my head or be dumped into a dunking booth---no water activities. I told them that I would leave the room to give them a few minutes to discuss what I would do if they all scored at level III on the reading EOG. I felt that if they all were to score at level III then there could possibly be some developed comprehension and fluency skills. When I returned they had come up with an even larger challenge for themselves. If they all scored at level III, my husband would have to come to school and throw me into the dumpster after the whole school has had lunch. If everyone scored at level IV, I would have to wear shorts to school and my husband would roll me in a mud puddle created by them. It was suggested that I wear a bikini in the mud puddle instead of the jeans that I had suggested, so I met them half way and we agreed on a pair of shorts. The 35 minute group discussion ended and the students were excited.

The next day all the tutees were interviewed individually, using the questions in Appendix B. Each student was asked, “Where did they want to go to talk about the tutoring program?” They chose different areas, anywhere from the picnic tables to the
media center. It is “cool” to be seen “hanging out” with the principal, but not in the principal’s office.

The following discussion on each tutee includes: (a) student background (student and teacher interviews); (b) reading assessments (STAR Reading Lab, Whole Story Comprehension, K-3 Assessment; pre and post - End-of-Grade Assessment) (c) Summary.

**Tutee 1:**

This student is 8 years old and has been at Manswell Elementary school since Kindergarten. She has never repeated a grade, and receives ESL services (additional reading). Other strategies used in the classroom included paired reading, whole/small group reading and one-on-one with a volunteer at least every other week. Her strengths are that she is very helpful and tries to please her teacher. Her self-esteem seems low when she is among other students, and she has difficulty solving any type of problems. According to her teacher she thrives on attention. Her teacher also says “She is a very slow reader and does not understand what she reads.”

When she was interviewed before the sessions she seemed confident and very happy to talk about herself. I interpreted this as “thriving on attention,” since she had my undivided attention. Out of six people living in the home, she and her first grade brother are the only ones that speak English. She indicated that she loves reading but it is “hard” when the book has big words. “When I get to a big word, I just skip it and keep reading.” She indicated that she is happy that she was “picked” to be in the tutoring program because the person that she will be paired with can tell her what the big words are in a story.
**Tutee 2**

Tutee 2 is also an eight year old, with four brothers and one sister all younger than she. She also seemed happy to talk about herself. She says she doesn’t get a chance to practice reading much because she has to keep her younger siblings a lot. She said “we live in a very small house which can be a problem, but we always work it out.” She loves Junie B. Jones books. When she runs into words that she doesn’t know she “keeps saying it until it comes.” “I really like funny easy books.” “I don’t always understand my teacher when she is reading because sometimes she talks funny, you know, like country people.” She indicated that she can not wait to meet her tutor and that she hopes she is with a nice person who can help her read better. “I just have to get used to the person first.” She has never repeated a grade, and receives ESL services. Other strategies used in the classroom included paired reading, whole/small group reading and one-on-one with a volunteer. According to her teacher her strengths are story telling. She can tell a story but has difficulty writing one. She has trouble with reading because of her weak retelling skills. She has made very slow progress in reading since the beginning of the year. She does not have a problem “sounding out” words, but understanding the words becomes problematic for her, according to her teacher. Her teacher thinks she is weak because she doesn’t get a chance to be read to at home or even get assistance with reading. Her teacher says, “I believe her parents want what is best for her and will do everything they can to support her, but they can’t read.”

**Tutee 3**

This student has one sister and three brothers, and they have been in the United States for nine years. She and only one other sibling in her home can speak English. She has
attended Manswell Elementary since kindergarten. She appeared to be very shy during the interview. She had no eye contact with me during the entire interview. When asked what she liked about reading, she said, “I like imagining things when reading when there are no pictures. When I don’t understand what I read, I just skip it and keep going. I don’t like reading alone because the words are too hard when they are big.” According to her teacher she participates in small groups, receives ESL services, and is paired with high readers when shared reading takes place in the classroom. Her teacher says “she can do math fairly well, though reading and comprehension are difficult for her to retell. With math she can watch someone do it and pick it up immediately, unlike with reading she normally has to have it read and re-read to her.”

**Tutee 4**

This student was very talkative during the interview. He had much more to share than any of the other students. He has nine people living in his home. His cousins are planning to move out when they find a house. He indicated that he likes to read when they are having social studies because he likes to learn about the world. He expressed a desire to read chapter books. When he tries to read a chapter book, his teacher always asks him to put it back and try another book. Most of the students in the room read chapter books. They are worth a lot of Accelerated Reader points. “I read Harry Potter books. They are hard but I still read them. I like reading in front of the class because the other students will help me when I get stuck on a word.” This student seemed very confident, not shy at all. His teacher described him as “very active, outgoing and not focused on his school work.” Since his reading level is so low she modifies his assignments. She may give him a shorter passage to read or fewer questions to answer
when checking comprehension skills. She seems to think that he can retell a story when
he is read to, but if he has to read it, he has a more difficult time retelling the story. His
parents speak no English, but his father is enrolled in an ESL class held at Manswell
Elementary School in the evenings.

**Tutee 5**

When this student was asked how many siblings she had, she gave a blank stare, and
then asked? “What’s that?” When I told her what siblings are, she used her fingers to
count in the air, before she came up with the number 2. There are more people in
addition to her four family members living in her small home. Her uncle speaks English
“just a little.” She likes reading funny books like Junie B. Jones books. She is looking
forward to reading to her tutor because she will get to read more. She likes her teacher
very much because she tells her what hard words mean. Her teacher lets her use the
dictionary when she needs to look a word up to see what it means. Her reading
assignments are modified, giving her less to read compared to her peers, because she is
not reading on a third grade reading level. Although she receives ESL services, she still
has a great deal of difficulty thinking of the English words to say when retelling
something. Her teacher describes her as “very shy, quiet, very low social skills. She has
trouble speaking aloud and sometimes sounds foreign.”

**Tutee 6**

This student comes from a family of seven boys ranging in ages from one to fourteen.
When he proudly shared this, I asked him to tell me the ages of the seven boys. His reply
was: “one, three, six, eight, ten, twelve, fourteen and I am the eight.” He stated that he
hated reading, it makes his head “hurt” and he would just rather not feel that way. “My
whole family hates reading.” He went on to say that “some books are okay if they are scary or have a lot of action in them.” Then he started asking me questions about my family and what I liked about reading. He had more questions for me than I had for him. When I gained control of the interview again I asked him what did he dislike about reading and his reply was,

“them hard words, I don’t know what they mean. The teacher said to look words up in the dictionary when you don’t know what they mean, but sometimes the dictionary has hard words and I still don’t know what they mean---man, that makes my head hurt. If I get a tutor I hope he can read them big words because I don’t need help with all of them.”

His teacher uses other strategies such as ESL, and balanced literacy, where students read and write in small groups according to their reading levels. She described him as a very nice boy who wants to learn. His teacher has seen small reading growth since the beginning of this school year.

Tutee 7

According to this student’s teacher, this student needs lots of reinforcement. She is a very cooperative student, but has to have assistance in every assignment. She is very inconsistent in reading as well as math. She is receiving both ESL and Early Literacy, a reading program that allows students to read in a small homogeneous group. Both services are offered twice a week during the school day. She shared that her mother is expecting a baby soon. She said she likes reading, but has a hard time remembering what she reads if there are a lot of words on the page. She wants to learn to read chapter books very fast so that she can get a lot of points when she takes tests. She wants to learn to
read fast so that she can “pass the end-of-grade test and go on to fourth grade.” She wants to be in the tutoring program because she would rather read with one person than with a lot of people. When asked why she would rather read with one person she says, “It’s just a lot easier, and you don’t have to hurry up.”

**Tutee 8**

This student was quite different from the other students. She seemed like a student who wanted to be impressive during the interview. I got the feeling that she tried to say what she thought I wanted to hear. She loves reading; she loves school; reading is very easy; she says she has no trouble at all reading. “I always understand everything I read. I like reading about everything. All books are good!” She comes from a family of five children, with twelve living in their home currently. She reads nightly to everyone before she goes to bed. I thought to myself that is not a bad idea to practice reading. Her teacher says that she takes medicine for attention-deficient disorder. In the classroom she gets whole group instruction, independent reading, and lots of focus on comprehension skills, and word attack, where words are divided into sounds and syllables for pronunciation. Her teacher disagrees with her having no trouble at all with reading, stating that she wants to learn, but does not have the comprehension skills needed to be successful in reading. According to her teacher she has no one to help her at home, because her parents can not read. Her teacher thinks that one-on-one reading is vital to students who are having problems with reading; therefore she has a senior citizen reading with her at least twice a week.
**Tutee 9**

Tutee 9 has to have lots of assistance when reading. Her family is so large and because both parents work, she has a lot of responsibility for an eight-year old. Her teacher says this student gets up at four in the morning to help get babies ready to go to the sitter. She baby-sits regularly for her parents. She never turns in homework assignments because of the many responsibilities at home. Although she receives ESL services, her reading skills are very low. She is happy to be a part of the tutoring program because she likes doing activities. She stated that she hopes she learns to read fast so that she can read chapter books and get lots of accelerated reading points. She said she could read but she can not read as fast as the students in her classroom.

**Tutee 10**

The teacher describes this student as “very pleasant.” She loves her teachers, and loves school. She is very low in reading and often inconsistent. She is not very detailed when retelling. She often needs assistance when reading aloud. She has four siblings, and three of the children speak English. No one else in the home speaks English. She does receive ESL services. When asked if she likes reading she says, “I like reading, but I’d rather do math. Sometimes reading is hard. I don’t like it when we have to read and then take a test about the book. I like math tests better.” According to her teacher she is low in math but does better in math than in reading. She started the school year in third grade on a second grade reading level.

**STAR Reading Assessment**

The STAR Reading Assessment scores represent how students performed on comprehension and fluency compared with the performance of a nationally representative
sample of students. The students read passages and answer questions on computers to assess fluency and comprehension. The data on the following chart determine the reading grade level of the students; example, 2.6 refers to the student reading at second grade after the sixth month of the school year. The growth shows the number of months the students have gained. According the North Carolina guidelines, students should show a school year’s growth, from August to May, which is nine months. On the STAR Reading Lab assessment we assessed growth for eight months (.08) because the students use the lab from September to May. Although the study did not start as early as September, I found it interesting to see the reading level of the students earlier in the year.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutee1</th>
<th>Tutee2</th>
<th>Tutee3</th>
<th>Tutee4</th>
<th>Tutee5</th>
<th>Tutee6</th>
<th>Tutee7</th>
<th>Tutee8</th>
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<th>Tutee10</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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*Star Reading Assessment Chart*

Tutee 3 is the only student who regressed according to this assessment. She made only a month’s growth between September and February. Tutees 5 and 6 regressed from February to May and fell short from making a year’s growth. Tutees 1 and 8 made the highest reading growth. Tutee 2 made more growth than the others between September and February. According to these data, Tutee 7 made expected growth and Tutee 5 did not make a year’s growth for this school year. Based on this assessment, if all students
are promoted to the fourth grade seven of the students will begin the school year below
grade level in reading.

Recommendations made by the STAR Reading Lab for students who did not show
reading growth are in chapter five of this study.

**K-3 Reading Assessment (retelling/comprehension)**

A running record is a component of a North Carolina kindergarten through third
grade reading assessment. It assesses the student’s reading grade level as well as the
retelling level. The retelling levels that the teachers use to level students are: 1- Unable
to provide information related to the text; 2- Limited detail with some inaccuracies and
vague language; 3- Accurate information, some detail and some precise language; 4-
Accurate information, elaborate and precise details that exceed expectation. I requested
these data from teachers on each of the students. These data were collected to get the
retelling scores for each student. Although Tutee 2, 6, 8 and 10 were retelling at level 3
before the study, the teachers indicated that their reading was very inconsistent.
According to the teachers one day the students would retell well and on another day they
would not. In order for these students to do well in retelling their teachers would have to
assist by asking lots of questions.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tutee1</th>
<th>Tutee2</th>
<th>Tutee3</th>
<th>Tutee4</th>
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*K-3 Assessment retelling Chart*
In May, 2004 six of the ten students were at level three which means that they can retell a story with some detail and some precise language. Tutee 3 shows regression in comprehension skills. According to these data, after the tutoring sessions none of the tutees comprehended at level 4 and four of them comprehended below level three, the level that I had hoped to see all of them rise to.

**Reading Whole Story Comprehension Assessment**

This assessment was done at the beginning of the tutoring session and at the end of the sessions. Each student had 45 minutes to read 4 short passages and answer 8 multiple choice questions at the end of each passage, which totals 32 questions. The format of the assessment was very similar to the End-of-Grade test. When reading the graph 25/32 means that the student answered 25 of the 32 questions correctly.

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<tr>
<th>Tutee1</th>
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<th>Tutee4</th>
<th>Tutee5</th>
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<tr>
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<td>+5</td>
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<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+3</td>
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*Whole Story Comprehension Chart*

No regression was shown according to these data. None of the students answered all questions correctly after the twenty-four tutorial sessions. Tutee 9 scored lower than the others, but shows growth. This assessment does not show that the students made much gain from March to May in comprehension and fluency skills. The least gain was made by tutee 6. Although Tutee 3 only answered 19 out of 32, she shows growth according to
this assessment. The K-2 reading assessment indicated that she has shown regression since the beginning of school.

**North Carolina End-of-Grade Test**

All of North Carolina Public Schools take End-of-Grade pre-tests and at the end of the school year, an End-of-Grade test to assess the amount of growth students have made during the school year in reading and math. The test measures what a student has learned from the curriculum during the grade. Students are scored using four levels: Level I performance means insufficient mastery; Level II means inconsistent mastery; Level III is consistent mastery (at grade level); and Level IV is superior mastery (above grade level).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>EOG</th>
<th>Tutee1</th>
<th>Tutee2</th>
<th>Tutee3</th>
<th>Tutee4</th>
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*End-of-Grade Tests Chart*

According to end-of-grade reading scores all of the tutees passed except tutee 5, scoring at level II. On the NCEOG test the number of questions a student answers correctly is called a raw score. The raw score is converted to a developmental scale score. The developmental scale score is like a ruler that measures growth in reading from year to year, which means the scores are likely to go up each year. For grades 3 through 5 the developmental scale scores for reading range from 240 to 295. Tutee 1 scored a level 4, which was impressive because the developmental scale score to meet the state standard is 240 and she scored a 261. Tutee 7 earned a developmental scale score of 240, whereas the other scores ranged from 244 to 250. Tutee 5 earned a developmental scale
score of 238, two points below the state standard for proficiency. Although tutee 3 has shown regression on the K-2 reading assessment and showed less gains than the other tutees, she still passed the NCEO test in reading.

**The Tutors**

All tutors were chosen according to: their level of responsibility, their love for reading, and the enjoyment of working with younger students. All level IV readers were chosen according their last year’s end-of-grade test. In addition to making sure the students had the qualities listed above, they were also highly recommended by their teachers for this project.

All tutors were in a discussion group interview at the beginning and at the end of the study. At the beginning of the study the focus question was: Why should you tutor a third grade student? They all considered themselves as “good students.” When asked, “What makes a good tutor?” their list of characteristics were: “responsible, good reader, lots of friends, always does home work, obeys teacher and parents, make good grades, comes to school every day, and loves school.” They all had much to say on the subject. At the end of the twenty-four sessions, I met with them again and the focus question was: Do you think the program helped you and/or the third graders, and if so in what way? To make sure the tutors did not say what they thought I wanted to hear, I asked them to please tell the truth, because it was okay if the program did not help; and that it does not mean that they had done a bad job, because not all programs work. I told them that I needed to check to see if we should use the program again next year. Most of the students at my school are usually honest whether it helps or hurts.
Each of the tutors were numbered according to their tutees. Below is their feedback about the program:

**Tutor 1**

This student is a fifth grade white female. She has no brothers or sisters and her mom works in the school system but not at the same school in which she attends. Her teacher describes her as a “social butterfly,” a very talkative person. Her teacher says she seems to enjoy reading and being class helper. Although she loves reading and is above grade level in reading, her strength is in math.

“When I first started tutoring I was scared and shy. But since I got used to it, I’m wide open. It made me feel like an adult. I like helping people. I hope my tutee grows up to be a good person. When I grow up, I don’t really want to be a teacher but I don’t mind helping one person at a time.”

This student is not at all shy. When she told me that, I spun around in my chair and said, “_______you are not shy!” She laughed and said that she was not shy but scared that she might make a mistake or could not pronounce a word. But she found the words to be very easy.

**Tutor 2**

This student is a white male with a younger brother. He is very competitive in the Accelerated Reader Program. He is popular among his peers. His parents are strong school supporters and are very involved in his education. This student seemed the happiest when he was chosen to participate. His teacher describes him as her “teacher assistant.” He was chosen because of his leadership skills in the classroom. He always does his work and often asks to help others. He is above grade level in reading and math.
and does well in all subjects. When asked how was the tutoring program, he said, “It helped me because it made me read better and get new friends, and understand how it feels to be in another place. Also it helped me on EOG. I got a higher score than I did last year. I think it helped them too. They could read a whole lot better. I would change Reading Together so we didn’t have it on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I miss having PE with my class. I don’t have many friends in the other PE class.” Each tutor is given a plastic carrying case with a handle to keep their books and activities used for tutoring. Tutor 2 seemed a bit aggravated with the carrying case. He said, “Also y’all need to get new baskets to carry the books and things in. The handle keeps breaking on the baskets. A small suitcase would be good.”

Tutor 3

This student is a black fifth grade female. She performs on grade level in reading. Her mother and father both work at Manswell Elementary School. Her dad is the school’s custodian and her mom is a second grade teacher assistant. She has a brother in third grade and a brother in middle school. She is a very friendly girl, small in stature and very much liked by her peers. She participates in community sports and girl scouts. She enjoys reading and is very dependable when it comes to her school assignments.

Reading together helped me to help the little ones learn more reading skills. It helped me do a lot better in my reading and math on the EOG. I had a III in reading and a III in math last year. This year I have made a III in reading and a IV in math. I think it helped my tutee do better in her reading skills. I think she had learned more reading skills than her teacher has taught her. She did not know what the word poultry meant. I told her that that was chicken. Let’s not have the
program on Wednesday and Thursday. I think if you have the Reading Together you should have it on Monday or Tuesday. It helped me and my tutee pass our EOG. Keep this program running.

**Tutor 4**

Tutor 4 seems to be a very shy girl. Her teacher says she does not participate in class discussions that much, but she makes good grades in all subjects. She was chosen to participate in the study because she always does her homework, and enjoys reading. She told her teacher that she enjoys reading to her two younger sisters, therefore, she would be a good tutor.

“Learning Reading Together helped me with many things. I learned how to teach a little bit. I taught him new words.” She said her tutee was reading and when he got to the word “extinct” he did not know how to pronounce it. She helped him with the pronunciation and then asked him if he knew what it meant. “He did not know what extinct means. I told him that it means that dinosaurs are dead and are not coming back. I made some new friends. And I helped some kids with school-work and the EOG. Reading Together has been fun too. I’m happy I was chosen for Reading Together. I like tutoring.”

**Tutor 5**

This student is a fifth grade white female with a brother in first grade. She is well liked at school by her peers. She seems very shy around adults, however, very outgoing around her peers. According to her teacher, she is a very bright student who reads above grade level. She is proficient in both reading and math. She is engaged in many after school activities. Her parents are very involved in her education and were very happy for
her to participate in the study. They were looking forward to her growing as she helped someone else to grow in reading.

The program went really good. I learned a lot from it. If I were ever to be a teacher I would know how to treat a student and if somebody needed help reading, I would know how to help them. It has been a big experience for me and the child. I know they have learned a lot from reading together with us. They did well on the EOG. I would like to do Reading Together again. I love it. It has been amazing what these kids can learn from it and what I can learn from it. It helps them a lot. It seems that this tutor was feeling powerful for the time that she had spent with her tutee.

Her tutee did not pass the End of Grade Test.

**Tutor 6**

This student was chosen because he enjoys reading. He has three siblings older than he. His teacher described him as nice and responsible. She has used him in the past as a peer helper in the classroom to work with students who are having trouble with assignments.

“Tutoring is a great experience for tutors and tutees. The tutors can gain more strength in reading and tutees can read better. It has helped tutees understand words better. They will pay attention better in a reading process. They will also like to read aloud better. They will want to show their level in reading now. Maybe they will be tutors to help other people.”

This student also expressed that before he became a tutor, he did not like to read aloud. He said it is okay now, because when he is called on, he thinks about his tutee, who is
really not a good reader and he reads aloud to him. He says that he is a good reader so why should he be afraid to read aloud. It seems that his experience as a tutor has made him a more confident person when reading aloud in front of his peers.

**Tutor 7**

This student is a white student female who is performing on grade level in math. She does not perform as well in math as she does in reading. Her teacher wanted her to participate as a tutor assuming that she might gain confidence which will help improve her math skills. She is an only child and has been at Manswell Elementary school since kindergarten. Her father had the same teacher that she now has in fifth grade. She was excited when she was chosen to participate in the study.

I am happy that I was in the program because I learnt some stuff to not only help my tutee, but myself. I learnt how to teach kids. I learnt how to handle them if they get out of hand. I also learnt how to correct kids if they misread the word. I think that I helped her on her EOG so that she understands the words. I also think I helped her by helping her read better. I helped her (tutee) by encouraging her to do good on the EOG and to read more.

**Tutor 8**

This tutor’s parents are not as involved in her education as the other tutors. She is a white female with three sisters, two attend Manswell Elementary. Her teacher says she chose her because she is very patient with slow learners. When she pairs her students, for cooperative learning, she always pairs this student with slow learners because of her caring behavior. She does well in all subjects and really enjoys reading. Although she
does not have much support at home she is very responsible in completing homework assignments.

I am happy for my tutee. She was nice and I liked her. The last day of tutoring she told me she liked to have someone to talk to and to learn how to read with. We would play games and we did activities with them. When I started it was hard but once I got to “be better” at all the stuff in tutoring; it was all right. My tutee was very nice and I like seeing her smile. Now we are best friends. I hope she passed the EOG so she can go to fourth grade. I hope she did.

It seems as if a caring relationship has developed between tutee and tutor 8. When she was interviewed she had not heard whether her tutee had passed the End of Grade test. She cared enough to wish that she did.

Tutor 9

This tutor is described as a very fun and reliable person to work with. His teacher also said he will go beyond what is expected of him. This student is above grade level in every subject. When asked if he would tutor again, he said yes.

“I enjoyed reading with my person. She told me a lot about her family. She always knew what to do once she learned how we did things each day. She did not like for me to help her much and she always says that she knows how to do it. I planned activities for her. I think she learned more about the activities than about reading. If we were in the same classroom I could help her more. We just did not have enough time each day for me to teach her how to read better. I hope she does a good job reading when she goes to 4th grade. Now I know how our teacher feels when we don’t always listen to her.”
Maybe from this tutor’s experience from participating in the study he will become a better listener when his teacher is teaching.

**Tutor 10**

This tutor performs on grade level in math and reading. She was chosen because she enjoys reading. She is a leader on the playground as well as in the classroom. She gets along with everyone in the classroom and seems to love school. She has two brothers in middle school and her parents are very supportive of her education.

“My teacher says I have gotten smarter since I started teaching that kid that I work with. She learned all kinds of things from me.” I assume when tutor 10 quotes her teacher saying she has “gotten smarter” she is referring to her being able to read better or has become more responsible. Sometimes teachers make similar comments to raise a student’s confidence level or to motivate them to do better.

We read together. We did activities together. I helped her with hard words that were not so hard for me. I have been reading a long time. My mom said I have always loved books. That is one reason I could help her. I like being a tutor. I like helping people. I don’t really like planning the activities but you got to do what you got to do. If my tutee gets there and I don’t have the stuff ready, that means I am not a responsible person. They picked me because I am responsible.

My tutee was a nice girl.

The tutors agreed that planning the activities for the tutees was not fun. Some described it as being very boring. They would prefer that the reading coaches plan the activities. The part that they enjoyed the most was having the tutee read to them. All of them said that they did not like the reading coaches walking around looking over their
shoulders. It makes them very nervous. One tutor said “I was afraid the kid wouldn’t
know a word and I wouldn’t know it either.” When asked why they thought the coaches
were walking around one tutor said, “I don’t think they trust us too much.” Another
student said, “Sometimes they would tap you on the shoulder or head and say ‘good job’
to us.” One student implied that the coaches made him stutter when reading to his tutee.
One complaint they had about the sessions was the interruptions such as announcements,
and people walking through the area where the sessions were held. These distractions
made the tutees lose their focus. “They always look up at all kinds of noises and lose
their places and thoughts,” said one of the tutors.

The Tutoring Sessions

As soon as North Carolina State University gave me the go ahead to begin collecting
data, I began the 24 tutoring sessions. The tutors had already been trained from previous
tutoring that had taken place at the school. During each of the following 30-minute
tutoring sessions the following was observed:

1) A warm-up chat- the tutors would always start off asking the tutee about her day
or weekend. This gave the tutee a chance to talk about herself or any topic of
interest. The tutor was trained to keep the discussion going by asking simple
questions and showing great interest in the sharing. The more the students had
these opportunities the more they wanted to share.

2) Tutors read short passages to tutees—this was to introduce what would be read
for the day. The tutees were always very attentive during this time, because this
passage was what the entire session would be about.
3) Pre-reading activity—the tutor would allow the tutee to make predictions based on the title and illustrations. The students always seemed to enjoy this as it piqued their interest to see if they were correct.

4) Tutees read passage—as the tutee read the passage the tutor was making corrections, recording progress and praising the student.

5) Questions—after the tutee read the passage the tutor asked literal level questions, which are basically yes or no questions about the passage. Almost all of the tutees were successful in answering literal level questions.

6) Rereading and paraphrasing—the tutee reread the passage to the tutor and paraphrased afterwards.

7) Questions—after rereading the tutor asked higher-level questions. Some tutees did have trouble with the higher level questions even after rereading the passage. The tutor was trained in rephrasing the question which often helped.

8) Activity—there was an activity planned by the tutors for the tutees that was related to the passage. Most were fun activities, making things, nature walks, and sometimes comprehension questions.

9) Reflections—when the tutees were dismissed the tutors wrote reflections in their journals, which gave them a writing opportunity as well as enhancing their organizational skills.

10) Group discussion—after writing reflections the tutors met for about ten minutes to share their findings on how the session went. From this group discussion they were able to get strategies if they had a difficult time with helping their tutee. They made comments such as, “he only missed one word today, or he could not
Another student might suggest how to rephrase the question to get the correct answer. The group discussion helped the tutors with developing reading strategies and communication skills for themselves.

In the later sessions the tutors became more organized, which made their lessons flow more smoothly. The tutees seemed more relaxed once the tutors were relaxed and more confident in what they were doing. The tutors and tutees admitted being very nervous when the coaches walked around. None of the students in the study mentioned being nervous when I was present. It could be that I did not train them, so how would I have known if it were done correctly?

The Guiding Research Question: What are some effects of a cross-age tutorial program when Hispanic students who are not proficient in reading are being tutored by non-Hispanic students who are proficient readers?

To answer the research questions that prompted this study the answers came from interviewing the students, teachers, reading coaches, and the different assessments. Different observations/comments from the interviewees that were repeated were used to develop a matrix to determine some of the effects of cross-age peer tutoring.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutee</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made a new friend</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had fun reading</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned at least one new vocabulary word</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seem more confident when reading</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disliked the tutoring and would not like to participate again</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks activities helped with comprehension</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned at least one new reading strategy from tutor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared cultural experience with tutor</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used newly learned strategy during the reading EOG test.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed EOG</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Effects from the tutorial program (data taken from participants interviews)*

The only tutee who said that he would not like to participate was tutee 6, which does not surprise me because he started the program saying everybody in his family hates reading and it makes his head hurt. I was hoping this program would change his attitude towards reading but he did not enjoy it. Most of them had fun and according to their teachers, seem more confident when reading. It was interesting to find that the related activities helped with comprehension and the new strategies learned from the tutors played a part in the reading EOG test.

**Teachers/Reading Coaches**

Although the reading coaches made both tutees and tutors nervous, they had very positive comments about the student interaction. They observed students trading Spanish words for
English as the students developed relationships. Relationships did not only develop between tutee and tutor but between tutors who worked together as a planning group and a reflection group, finding better ways to assist their tutees.

One of the reading coaches thought of the program as being just as valuable for the 5th graders as it was for the third graders she said:

“The fifth graders made a commitment and stuck to it. They enjoyed working with the students. Both kids got a double bonus during the silent reading time of the program. The fifth graders read his/her own accelerated reading book and had time to share with his/her tutee. I saw lots of interest there. It indicates to the tutee that reading is great.”

**Interviews of English Second Language Teachers**

One of my research questions: What are good reading strategies for Hispanic students? could be better answered by Manswell Elementary School English Second Language teachers. All four teachers have been regular classroom teachers for more than 15 years, therefore they have worked with many Hispanic and non-Hispanic students. They gave me background information on Hispanic/Limited English Proficient students in addition to good reading strategies for Hispanic students.

According to all four teachers some Hispanic students are accustomed to the conventions of school culture and have a realistic understanding of expected school behavior; however, their former educational experiences may differ from the public school environment. Such differences may include:

- Very competitive educational systems which discourage cooperative learning
- Cooperative educational systems which diminish the importance of the individual
- Classes segregated by gender and taught by a teacher of the same sex
• Large teacher-student ratios as high as 50:1
• Emphasis on memorization and rote learning
• Lowering the eyes when addressed by a teacher
• Homogeneous class groupings or heterogeneous class groupings
• Teacher-directed learning activities
• Remaining with the same teacher for two or three years

As a result of these differences, Hispanics/Limited English Proficient students may find it difficult to:

• Work with a student of the opposite sex—Sexes may be stereotyped in defined roles within certain cultures
• Participate in group activities or work alone
• Adjust to student-directed learning—They are reluctant to assume independence in learning
• Relate to a teacher of the opposite sex—(some male students find it difficult to accept the authority of a female teacher)
• Look directly at the teacher
• Ask questions or express opinions in large group discussions
• Work with students from many different cultures

At Manswell Elementary Hispanic students seldom create discipline problems. However, discipline techniques and practices are often very different in various cultures, and there may be misunderstandings. Some behaviors merely reflect cultural or socioeconomic status differences. For example, some behaviors considered problematic by teachers are in reality characteristic of students who are in the process of normal
second language acquisition. Generally, these students are respectful, eager to learn, and will make tremendous progress in school.

Some Hispanic students have attained a level of communicative competence with the sounds, vocabulary, semantics, syntax, and rhythms of their native languages. Already they understand the nature and purpose of language. Other Hispanic students, however, have had little or no formal education in their native countries. Regardless of their proficiency levels, these students face tremendous challenges as they adjust to rigorous curricula within a demanding and difficult academic environment. These findings are experiences from Manswell Elementary School according to our English Second Language Teachers.

Several months may pass before Hispanic students communicate willingly with teachers and peers. During this time, they are learning English by listening; in other words, they are in the preproduction stage of oral language acquisition. Despite their preproduction levels, LEP students are learning and are able to demonstrate their knowledge if appropriate tasks reassigned. Students are gaining basic interpersonal communication skills, usually occurring first and informally within one to two years. Cognitive academic language proficiency skills take longer; conservative estimates are five to seven years. Other estimates suggest up to nine years for students to reach local, state, and national standards of academic achievement according to the ESL teachers.

Second language acquisition follows a continuum of progress beginning with preproduction, followed by early production, emergent speech, intermediate fluency, and near native fluency. Appropriate characteristics and implicated instructional activities are included in the Stages of Language Acquisition.
The English Second Language teachers said it is important that Hispanic students become comfortable with their classmates and their teacher. They, English Second Language teachers consider themselves a best resource to a regular classroom teacher in identifying the needs of Hispanic students.

**Advice for Teachers from English Second Language Teachers**

- When a Hispanic student comes to school for the first time they may not know English, but they understand body language.

- Try to learn the correct pronunciation of the students’ names. Help other students learn them, too. In some cultures students are referred to by last names, and may continue this practice here. Some students have a double first name. Use both names since one can be meaningless without the other. If the student selects an “American” name, teachers are to use them.

- Seat the Hispanic students in the middle of the classroom towards the front with other students in front and to the side, providing the students models to readily observe.

- Assist the new students who may not know or be able to tell what they want for lunch. Make a conscious effort to interact with these students daily, on a one-to-one basis.

- Pair a Limited English Proficient student with another student who will be acquainting him with the school and classroom routines. Whenever possible, choose a bilingual buddy who is willing and able to communicate in the newcomer’s native language.
- Do not assume that students have the same background just because they speak the same language. They come from a variety of social classes, economic groups, and family educational backgrounds. Also, the history, the culture, and the traditions vary from country to country.

According to the experience of my English Second Language Teachers at our school, Hispanic/English Second Language students have states of language acquisitions. In the pre-production stage the students: 1) listen, 2) do not speak, 3) comprehend little. In the early production stage the students: 1) have limited understanding, 2) speak few words. In the speech emergence stage the students: 1) use simple phrases, 2) comprehend well, 3) use short sentences. In the intermediate fluency stage the students: 1) have great comprehension, 2) make few speaking errors, 3) and use complex sentences.

**Language Development Stages and Teacher Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Behaviors</th>
<th>Teacher Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1 Pre-Production (Silent Phase)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student at 1 benefit when teachers:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| At stage 1, student will: | - provide abundant opportunities for active listening, utilizing props, visuals and real objects.  
- surround students with language-chants, songs, simple poems, etc.  
- avoid forcing students to speak prematurely.  
- pair or group student with more advanced learners.  
- conduct shared reading and storytelling with ample visual support and the incorporation of prior knowledge  
- use physical movement in language activities.  
- encourage use of art, mime, music, and other forms of creative expression to represent meaning,  
- are enthusiastic, animated, and |
| - try to make sense out of oral language  
- gain familiarity with the sounds, rhythm and patterns of English  
- show limited comprehension of “chunks” or gist of language.  
- attend to shared readings, but rely on picture clues for understanding.  
- respond non-verbally by pointing, gesturing, nodding, or drawing | - surround students with language-chants, songs, simple poems, etc.  
- avoid forcing students to speak prematurely.  
- pair or group student with more advanced learners.  
- conduct shared reading and storytelling with ample visual support and the incorporation of prior knowledge  
- use physical movement in language activities.  
- encourage use of art, mime, music, and other forms of creative expression to represent meaning,  
- are enthusiastic, animated, and |
accepting.
• use questions stems:
  Point to…..;  Do you have the…?;
  Who has the…..?
• give tasks that require matching, drawing, acting out.

Stage 2 Early Production
At stage 2, students will:
• demonstrate increased confidence
• listen with greater understanding
• identify people, places, and objects
• use routine expressions independently
• repeat and recite memorable language

Students at stage 2 benefit when teachers:
• continue to provide ample opportunities for listening comprehension with contextual support.
• have students label or manipulate pictures and/or real objects.
• conduct shared reading and storytelling with visual support and the incorporation of prior knowledge
• expose students to a variety of experiences with understandable texts, such as patterned or predictable books.
• continue to provide opportunities for creative expression.
• introduce interactive dialog journals.
• use questions stems:
  Is this a….or a…..?  Who, what
  Where, when?

Stage 3 Speech Emergence
At stage 3, students will:
• speak with less hesitation and demonstrate increasing understanding.
• produce longer phrases or sentences with grammatical inaccuracy.
• use newly-acquired receptive vocabulary to experiment and form messages in English.
• participate more fully in discussion, including those with academic content.
• explain, describe, compare, and retell in response to literature.

• focus on communication in meaningful contexts where students express themselves in speech and print for a wide range of purposes.
• model, expand, restate, and enrich student language.
• have students describe personal experiences, objects, etc.
• conduct shared reading, guided reading, and storytelling, especially with patterned and predictable text.
• use visuals to aid in retelling.
• provide content-area texts, trade books, newspapers, magazines, etc.
study key concepts in content areas.
engage in independent reading based on oral fluency and prior experiences with print.
use writing for a variety of purposes.

to promote conceptual development.
allow students to choose topics for writing.
respond genuinely to student writing and hold conferences that highlight student strengths and progress.
focus on one writing need at a time. don’t overwhelm students with too many corrections.
ask open-ended questions.
use question stems: Why, how…?, Tell me about…; Describe……
provide cooperative learning opportunities.

Stage 4 Intermediate Fluency (student may appear orally fluent, but will experience difficulty with high level academics and literacy for several years.)

At stage 4 student will:

- produce connected discourse and narrative.
- use more extensive vocabulary
- demonstrate increased levels of accuracy and correctness
- demonstrate use of higher-order language (persuade, evaluate, etc.)
- read a wider range of narrative genre and comprehension.
- explore concepts in subject matter in greater depth.
- write using more standard forms, using more creative and analytical writing.
- conduct research projects.
- participate successfully in classroom tasks if supported or scaffolded.

Students at stage 4 benefit when teachers:
- structure group discussion.
- guide use of reference materials for research.
- facilitate more advanced literature studies.
- provide opportunities for students to create oral and written narratives.
- provide a variety of realistic writing experiences (creative stories, newsletters, pen pals, business letters, etc.)
- encourage drama, art, music, and other forms of creative expression to represent meaning and increase comprehension.
- use question stems: Describe, compare…..; What do You think about…..?; What would Happen if…..?

Stage 5
At stage 5, student will:
- produce language with varied
grammatical structures and vocabulary, comparable to native English speakers of the same age.

When these strategies are put to practice by classroom teachers, students learn to read with fluency and comprehension a lot faster than students who are not offered such strategies.

When talking with an English as a Second Language teacher from a school similar to Manswell, I found that one of her strategies for comprehension and fluency was peer reading. She used peer tutoring as one of the components of her lessons. Each day she would teach her whole class reading and the last fifteen minutes of the class each student reads for five minutes aloud to another student. The last five minutes is used to share what they read. In doing this the students read for meaning because they knew the sharing would follow. She always circulated to check student progress during the peer tutoring. She too says the best way to become a good reader is for students to have many opportunities to read.

**Summary of Findings**

All of the reading assessments give only one picture of how a student is doing in school. As with any test many factors can affect students’ scores. Although the students say otherwise, I am in no way indicating that the nine tutees passed the EOG reading test solely because of their participation in the tutoring sessions. Perhaps some of the newly learned strategies, confidence, new vocabulary and additional reading practice may have contributed to the EOG success; supplementing the reading instruction the students receive from day to day in the classroom. This study was aimed at seeking a way to assist the Hispanic students in gaining comprehension and fluency skills in reading. This study finds that many of the students were lacking in comprehension and fluency and
were having trouble with vocabulary and reading practice. When talking about the
difficulty of reading, the students always blamed it on “those big words.” Many of the
tutees talked about how their tutor taught them how to attack those words. Tutee 1 said
her tutor told her if she did not understand a word to just go around it, and see if any
details support it and then you can figure it out. Tutee 6’s tutor told him to “cut the word
in half if it is a big word like handsome it becomes hand--- some. Put it together and you
can say it and go on.” Tutee 10’s tutor said to “reread the sentence. Start from the
beginning of the sentence even if you have to do it twice. Soon it will make sense and
you will figure out what the word is.” Most of the tutees agreed that the strategies from
the fifth graders helped them with the reading EOG test. Besides passing the EOG and
experiencing many reading strategies, the students had fun during the twenty-four
tutoring sessions. Last but not least, they made new friends and shared new experiences
that they are unlikely to forget.

**Findings Verses Previous Studies**

This study was aimed at examining the effects of a cross-age reading tutorial
program where Hispanic students were tutored by non-Hispanic students. Although there
have not been many cross-cultural peer tutorial studies of Hispanic and non-Hispanic
students, there have been numerous studies done on peer tutoring. Ryokai, Vaucelle and
Cassell (2003), conducted a study addressing the specific discourse genre of storytelling
as a bridge to literacy using preschool peers as participants. The storytelling occurred in
the context of peer play, and while a fun activity for children, it also involved the kind of
linguistic activities that can bridge children’s competence and knowledge of oral
language with that of written language. Ryokai, Vaucelle and Cassell state that:
One of the key skills to reading and writing is the ability to represent thoughts symbolically and share them in language with an audience who may not necessarily share the same temporal and spatial context. Children learn and practice these important language skills every day, telling stories with the peers and adults around them. In particular, storytelling in the context of peer collaboration provides a key environment for children to learn language skills important for literacy. The results were that children who played with the virtual peer told stories that more closely resembled the virtual peer’s linguistically advanced stories: using more quoted speech and temporal and spatial expressions (2003).

Learning from peers and having fun was a positive experience that the Hispanic students received during their twenty-four tutoring session with their non-Hispanic peers. Like the preschool study, it allowed peers to learn from each other.

Eliane Rubinstein-Avila (2002) says the benefits of peer reading programs, both across grade levels and among same-age peers, have also been well documented for students with learning disabilities. “Programs such as Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, in which same-grade peers engage in highly structured, collaborative literacy events, have also been successful among diverse learners in classes as low as first grade. This success is due to the relative simplicity of the tutoring routines, which enable children to mediate the instruction of their peers” (p. 83). The general consensus among literacy researchers who have studied peer reading is that it can play an important role in bridging the gap between a student’s total reliance on the teacher and complete self-reliance (Block and Dellamura, 2000).
Peer tutoring, quite popular until the mid-nineteenth century, had a resurgence in the late 1960s with the increase in diverse classrooms and the widening achievement gap between the mainstream students and the minority and poor students (Fuchs, 1997). Until the 1980s studies in reading were mostly evaluative and outcome-oriented: little attention was given to the collaborative nature of interactions among students and their potential impact on the reading process (Dyson, 1992). Several studies documented the impact of peer interactions on language development and writing in the early grades, and the enriching impact that a wide variety of participatory structures had on language and literacy development for second-language learners (Johnson, 1994).

Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (ZDP), describes how a child internalizes higher-level thought processes activated by social interaction with capable others (Vygotsky, 1978) for a positive literacy experience. Drawing on Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development, Dixon-Krauss (1995) found improvement in word recognition and in the complexity of journal writing among first and second graders in a cross-age reading program she observed.

MacGillivray and Hawes (1994) reported that peer readers engaged in reading for longer stretches of time, and that emergent peer readers seemed more motivated to interact with books.

Freppon (1991) found that the nature of peer readers’ interaction reflected the instructional ethos to which students were exposed in the classroom.

MacGillivray (1997) reported that, in spite of being part of a context in which the importance of meaning making was stressed consistently, the tension between appropriate decoding and meaning making was salient. While the first grade peer readers
in his study exhibited a tacit awareness that decoding specific words was highly valued, they also used five strategies in creating meaning with books: 1) describing the pictures in their own words; 2) employing written language-like talk, as they used the illustration for sequencing the narrative; 3) parroting the text, thus relying mostly on memory; 4) using a combination of text memorization and pictures to self correct when disruptions in meaning occurred; and 5) decoding word-for-word with varying fluency. Students creatively switched strategies within and across storybooks.

MacGillivray (1997) also noted the high value students placed on word recognition; pointing to printed words as one read was a way to signal to others the mastery of this particular competence. He says in spite of the high value students placed on decoding skills, they did not do so at the expense of meaning making.

Working collaboratively on various literacy tasks, peer readers regardless of age or cultural experience, are more likely to experience the multiple strategies that are necessary to use reading and writing meaningfully.

Joan Gaustad (1993) believes that children have certain advantages over adults in teaching peers. They may more easily understand tutees’ problems because they are cognitively closer. As in my study, tutors also benefited academically from the time spent reviewing and practicing material with their tutees as in the Valued Youth Program, whose training classes encouraged critical and higher-order thinking skills. Organizing material to teach facilitates long-term retention, as well as aiding in the formation of a more comprehensive and integrated understanding (IDRA 1991).

Gaustad (1993) found as I did in my study that tutors’ self-esteem rises as they see their tutees improve. Knowing they are making a meaningful contribution is a powerful
experience. Some of the students in the study told me they too felt powerful when they had heard that all but one of the tutees passed the End-of-Grade test.

Gaustad (1993) also says that simply putting two students together won’t result in successful tutoring. She encountered problems such as: threats of punishments and scornful put-downs by tutors; students who did not understand the material to be taught; the resistance of tutees being tutored by their own classmates when it is not cross-age tutoring; and scheduling challenges in arranging cross-age tutoring. In my study I did the cross-age tutoring to avoid problems of lowing students’ self-esteem. The problem of threats of punishments and put-downs were not demonstrated because the tutors were trained in how to behave when tutoring, they were very kind and caring toward their tutees. Scheduling was a problem, once we shifted things around to make sure all twenty-four sessions would take place. Scheduling would have been more problematic if more students had been involved, especially at Manswell Elementary School. Students are pulled out from the regular classroom for Exceptional Education, English Second Language classes, Physical Education, Music, Art, Reading Plus Lab, Reading Recovery, and Early Literacy. So pulling students out of class for a Reading Tutorial program would be a challenge. A longer study would be ideal; however, it would have to be done with students within the classroom during reading to avoid another pull-out.

Keith Topping (2001) did a study on Paired Reading and his findings were similar to mine also. His results from peer-tutoring were:

- Social gains
- Motivation to read more
- Positive effects to other subject areas
• Ability to relate to others
• Reading more accurately
• Reading more fluently and with better comprehension
• Greater confidence in reading
• Liked reading more
• Found reading easier
• Liked reading better and said they would go on doing it

Topping concluded his study by pointing out that the development of skill in communicating information obviously requires practice in a socially interactive context—but it is asserted here that social interaction can also be a powerful and differentiated learning context for information access, processing, and self-management skills, when properly structured and managed by professional teachers.

I have learned from my study that professional teachers need to make sure students have lots of time reading during the school day. Going a step further, Allington (2002) says, “More than anything else struggling readers need plenty of opportunities to read text that makes sense to them. Requiring students to spend most of their school time reading books that are too difficult makes it impossible for them to learn and to develop as readers. Students should spend most of their school reading time with texts that they can read and want to read” (2002, p.37).

From reading articles, books, and examining a cross-age reading tutorial, I must conclude with the belief that cross-age tutoring with interesting books for the students to read will be a wonderful experience for struggling readers as well as non-struggling readers.
The last chapter has a summary, conclusion, and recommendations. There is an overall summary of the findings from the participants’ interviews and observations as well as the tutoring program. Recommendations are given for further study on assisting Hispanic students in reading.

Summary

In some schools, teachers are allowing students to assist and guide the academic growth of their fellow students, which is called peer tutoring. Some students may learn more from one another than they learn from a teacher in addition to gaining self-worth and becoming more responsible.

Most of the tutees in this study think reading is better when having someone to assist them with the “big words.” The increased interest in the use of students as tutors has stemmed in part from the realization that, for many students, school-life guarantees their failure.

From my educational experience teachers in self-contained classrooms with twenty or more pupils seldom have enough time to individualize their instruction as fully as they would prefer. Peer tutoring may be the strategy to use to individualize instruction.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Tutees and Tutors

At the end of the study the tutees were still reading below grade level according the reading assessments used in the study. According to the students’ last assessment the STAR Reading Lab program made recommendations to the students’ teachers and parents to enhance their reading skills. For tutees 5, 7, and 9 the recommendations followed the observation of the third grade students performing on a second grade reading level. These scores indicate that these students have mastered most of the basic sounds related to word recognition. More spoken words are becoming part of these students’ vocabulary, enabling them to spend more time thinking about reading. Students at this level begin to spend more time reading silently and can read unfamiliar easy-reader materials. Students at this level still need models of fluent reading. Reading orally with these students is a powerful way of demonstrating the skills needed to become a fluent reader.

Both teachers and coaches agree the timing of the program needs to be worked out better. It is difficult finding the right time to do the program. The 5th graders had to change their special class schedule (physical education, art and music) to participate. They still had specials, just with a different class. The third graders traded a reading computer class to participate in the study. In a computer class students read passages from a computer and take a test afterwards.
The overall comment from all participating teachers said they would want to put their students in the program again. They did notice some change in their students. They all think that much would come from a tutoring program that was done all year because the key to reading comprehension and fluency is spending time reading. This program allows students to read one-on-one with assistance. The teachers agree that “the more we do anything, the better we get at it.” It would be hard for the teachers to say anything negative about the program when their students passed the end of grade test. As educators we know that there is no one thing that contributes to success, but the many things that are done every day, all day, make the difference.

**Tutorial program**

My teachers and I believe the tutoring program had a lot of components needed for students to be successful. The students practiced reading orally and silently. They had time to discuss what they read with someone as well as complete an activity that helped with comprehension. According to all interviewees no time is a good time for the program. During school hours the students must be pulled from other activities. The tutees agree that all of the books used in the program should be accelerated reading books, which would allow them to gain points when they get back into the regular classroom.

The reading coaches and the teachers both agree that using second graders instead of third graders would be better because when a student gets to third grade she should already be on grade level and would be successful when taking the end-of-grade test.

The program was held in the back of the cafeteria in the afternoons. Too many interruptions were noted by the tutors and coaches. When someone walked through the cafeteria the tutees lost their focus, which hinders comprehension and fluency skill building. One tutor said “they always look up to see who is walking through.”
Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to address the questions that made this research of interest to me: a) What are some effects when Hispanic students who are not proficient in reading are tutored by non-Hispanic proficient readers? b) What are some good reading strategies for Hispanic students?

Cross-age tutoring allows students to feel free to discuss and ask questions. When observing the tutoring sessions there was much conversing among the students, even the students who were described by their teachers as being shy and having low self-esteem. One of the reading coaches noticed that “third graders were more at ease with asking fifth graders questions.” Working with younger students allowed the older students to gain more confidence as they are very careful in teaching the third graders. One of the tutors stated, “I have to read the story before my tutee reads it, and sometimes I have to reread it to be very sure.” The older student gets more practice with reading and also practice being responsible. Cross-age tutoring can be a great experience if the older students have a love for reading and enjoy working with younger students; and if the younger student can at least decode words and do not mind the assistance of another student.

The study was aimed at measuring the effects of Hispanic students being tutored by non-Hispanic students. I do not think there would have been much difference if the tutees would have been tutored by high-leveled Hispanic readers. More than likely if Hispanic students are reading above grade level, they pretty much understand just as much vocabulary as the high non-Hispanic student. It was noted in the coaches’ interview that “some of the students traded off English words for Spanish words.” Because of the Hispanic tutees speaking and hearing only Spanish in their home, they lack the understanding of English words. One Hispanic girl, for example, didn’t know the word “sibling” in her initial interview. If the word sibling were to come up in a story, the non-Hispanic student would be able to help with
the meaning. The English language has words that have multiple meanings, which can often confuse a young reader, especially a primarily Spanish speaking child.

Good reading strategies for Hispanic students are the same strategies used for non-Hispanic students. Paired reading, shared reading, vocabulary building, interest reading, and oral reading are all good strategies for successful readers. From all of the participant interviews, the best strategy for Hispanic students to become fluent and comprehensive readers is to practice reading both orally and silently, using strategies to attack difficult words. According to the study these seem to be good strategies that work for most students.

Peer tutoring would be recommended as a strategy due to the lack of time in the classroom for individual reading practice.

Terry Mada, an English Second Language consultant for the county where Manswell Elementary School is located, said the methods that teachers must employ in every class, and on a daily basis include:

- Extra linguistic cues such as visual, props, and body language;
- Linguistic modifications such as repetitions and pauses during speech;
- Increased wait time; giving the student time to formulate an answer;
- Interactive presentations with frequent comprehension checks;
- Cooperative learning strategies;
- Focusing on central concepts rather than on details by using a thematic approach;
- Adapting materials by adding graphic organizers, pictures, charts, maps, time-lines, and diagrams;
- Building on a student’s prior knowledge as often as possible (while considering cross-cultural issues);
- Development of reading strategies such as mapping and writing to develop thinking;
Using an integrated approach; subject matter and English language skills.

Beverly Feldman (1989), the author of *Kids who succeed*, says that one of her children was having difficulty learning to read; despite special tutoring, he seemed uninterested in the process. They noticed that he took apart just about everything he could get his hands on. Her husband got the idea of setting up a basement workshop for their son. There he spent hours happily taking apart their old televisions, radios, and phones, and then putting them back together. He would race up the basement steps to show off some gizmo he had “invented” that would light up and twirl. In his thirties her child is still not a great reader; but is much sought after for his mechanical skills. By providing a place where her son could use and practice his talent, she helped his self-esteem to grow.

We may be able to assist in developing self-worth, whereas we may not always assist in developing good readers. Teachers should never give up applying new reading strategies, however, in addition to teaching reading, other opportunities should be made available to enhance talents.

I am unable to conclude that the cross-age tutoring alone resulted in fluency or comprehension gain or caused nineteen of the twenty students to pass the NCEOG test. The teachers would agree that the additional reading practice and related activities planned by the tutors has helped to influence the literacy growth for the students that participated in this study.

**Recommendations**

Finally, I recommend a future study of a cross-age tutorial program done for an entire school year with a second grade class being tutored by a fifth grade class, using accelerated reading books. The student participants seemed motivated in reading due to their participation in the Accelerated Reading Program. When this is done class wide it can
become part of the daily schedule. Given that every fifth grader should be a better reader than a second grader, both students would probably gain from the one-on-one reading practice.

I believe one-on-one practice with continual assessments and reading recommendation will lead to reading growth. According to the STAR Reading Lab recommendation for optimal reading growth, these students need to:

- Continue to develop oral reading fluency and rate
- Listen to books read aloud at school and at home daily
- Increase time spent on silent reading
- Learn how to select books for independent silent reading practice

Recommendation given to the teacher:

- Increase the amount of time spent reading aloud to the students
- Actively involve parents, paraprofessionals, and volunteers to act as tutors
- Use paired reading to help the student succeed with unfamiliar or difficult texts
- Further assess the nature of the reading difficulty

The program also suggests that the nonfiction reading level be reduced by one half to one full grade level. For read-aloud activities and paired reading, the level of books read should be increased one to three grade levels and the students should be taught how to select books to read based on levels.

The program also says to the teacher that if Accelerated Reader is being used in the classroom, the students should be encouraged to select books with reading levels on their grade level and slightly above. These books will provide an optimal reading challenge
without frustration. Successful reading of books slightly above the student’s reading level also depend on individual interest and prior knowledge of a book’s content.

For the rest of the tutees, the observation indicated that these students are comparable to those of an average third grader. These students are likely starting to place less emphasis on identifying words and more emphasis on understanding what they read. Students at this level select fewer picture books for their own reading. They start to challenge themselves with longer picture and chapter books. These students are also probably aware of their abilities and interests in choosing books to read. For optimal reading growth, the students need to:

- Practice sustained silent reading every day
- Practice reading more challenging books
- Continue reading aloud and reading with others
- Develop additional strategies for acquiring vocabulary in context

During this project the tutees had fun while learning, which is what most educators desire. This reading practice would resemble the multi-age classroom from the 1700s and 1800s. Many private schools have been teaching young children through non-graded classrooms for years (Elkind 1987).

Manswell Elementary is a very diverse school. Studies have shown that students learn best in a diverse classroom environment. Children need to be surrounded by other children of various backgrounds, socioeconomic status, abilities, age, and other factors (Nieto 2000).

Children and adults learn a lot from their peers. When people are surrounded by others who are exactly the same as they are, it is hard to see different viewpoints, be open-minded, or acquire different experiences. The same is true for children. Studies of children’s cognitive development have shown that children, whose intelligence and capabilities are
similar but not exactly the same, stimulate each other’s developmental and intellectual growth (Elkind 1987).

Lastly, peer-tutoring scheduled with second graders tutored by fifth graders closely monitored by the two teachers and the assistant teacher serving as reading coaches; making sure students continue to stay on task would contribute to the one thing that develops comprehension and fluency---just reading.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Teacher Interview Questions

Teachers interviewed are the tutee/tutor’s classroom teachers. The same questions will be asked at the end of the study.

1) What is the reading level of the student at the beginning of the program?
2) What reading level was the student on at the beginning of school?
3) What reading strategies do you use in the classroom for this student?
4) Has this student been retained before?
5) Is the student receiving other services during the regular school day?
6) How are the student’s retelling skills?
7) How long has the student lived in the United States?
8) Can the student’s parents speak English?
9) What are the student’s strengths?
10) Is the student a visual or auditory learner?
11) Any additional information that you wish to share about the student?
Appendix B

Student Interview Questions

1) Tell me about yourself.
2) What do you like reading about?
3) What is your favorite subject and why is it a favorite?
4) Tell me about a book you have read.
5) What is difficult about reading?
6) Pretend I am an author of children books, what would you say to me?
7) Do you enjoy being read to or would you prefer to read alone? Why?
8) Do you understand your teacher when she is teaching reading? Why?
9) Would you like to share anything else about reading?
10) What do you think about reading and doing reading activities with an older student?
Office of Research and Graduate Studies

North Carolina State University is a land-grant university and a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina

From: Debra A. Paxton, IRB Administrator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: May 6, 2004

Project Title: The Effects of a Cross-age Tutorial Program: Hispanic Students Tutored by Non-Hispanic Students
IRB#: 088-04-4

Dear Ms. Daniels:

The project listed above has been reviewed in accordance with expedited review procedures under Addendum 46 FR8392 of 45 CFR 46 and is approved for one year from its date of review. This protocol expires on April 23, 2005, and will need continuing review before that date.

NOTE:

1. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429; the IRB Number is: IRB00000330.

2. The IRB must be notified of any changes that are made to this study.

3. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Please provide a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debra Paxton
NCSU IRB