

# Assessing Reading Strategies for Adolescent Readers



## Project Coordinators:

**Paulette Lippert,**

Instructional Leadership  
Consultant  
paulette\_lippert@bgcdsb.org

**Christine Teeple,** Literacy  
Coach, Holy Family School

**Michelle Downey,** Grade 7/8  
Classroom Teacher

**Deb Legace,** Grade 7/8  
Classroom Teacher

## Essential Question:

Do students who read and communicate regularly about their reading with an adult mentor demonstrate greater gains in reading fluency and comprehension than students who read regularly to a younger reading buddy?



## Background:

A group of 18 teachers (grades 7-12) formed a Differentiated Instruction focus group and examined issues related to assessment. From this focus group, the idea for this project was formed following a discussion about how to assist adolescent readers in transitioning to secondary school.

Two intermediate teachers from Holy Family School wanted to ensure that their students entered secondary school, reading at an appropriate grade level.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Data Collection</i>	2
<i>Discussion of Errors</i>	2
<i>Results &amp; Findings</i>	3
<i>Reflections &amp; Action</i>	5
<i>Contributions to MISA PNC</i>	5
<i>Suggestions for Future Research</i>	5

## Data Collection Methods and Analysis:

The intermediate teachers, at Holy Family School, identified students from their classes that they felt would benefit from daily reading and discussion about their own reading skills. Some of these students had demonstrated difficulty with reading comprehension as measured by the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

Three educational assistants at Holy Family School received a half day in-service on reading with students to develop fluency and comprehension.

*"Because paraprofessionals and volunteers are frequently asked to read with students, they require specific training in carefully matching books to readers, selecting books, prompting and praising students, and questioning and responding. Talking with students about the books and stories that have been read is important for checking their understanding and developing comprehension skills. Untrained volunteers and paraprofessionals will have limited strategies for working with students and supporting reading intervention*

*(for example, they may rely heavily on the "sound it out" strategy)." (Trehearne, 2006, p. 587)*

The educational assistants were encouraged to utilize a tracking sheet (see diagram) that focused on specific reading strategies and comprehension skills the students would be demonstrating. A file was developed for each student so that progress would be carefully monitored. It was decided that the same paraprofessional would work with the same student so that a trusting relationship would develop.

Prior to beginning the reading sessions, students' reading skills were assessed using a running record and a quick oral re-tell. A PM Benchmark was utilized, if appropriate for the student. Leveled text was selected from the school book room according to students' reading level. The texts are leveled according to Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. Students also completed a Reading Attitudinal survey.

Students were randomly divided into two groups. One group read regularly for twenty sessions to the

paraprofessional while the other group read regularly to a younger reading buddy for the same number of sessions. Each group read and discussed their reading for approximately twenty minutes per session. At the end of the twenty sessions, students' reading was re-assessed by the same assessor, using the same assessment tool. Students were allowed to choose a text within the appropriate reading level. Reading levels, self-corrections, types of errors, comprehension, and fluency were noted by the assessors and passed on to the classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. The groups then switched so that all students could benefit from both reading strategies.

Students who read to a consistent, younger reading buddy were supervised by a paraprofessional. Students were supplied with appropriate leveled reading material based on the intermediate student's assessed reading level. After twenty sessions with their buddies, the intermediate students' reading was assessed again.

## Discussion of Errors:

There are some individual circumstances to take into consideration when analyzing the data.

As indicated by the graphs, some students who did not appear to make any gains were already reading at a level  $z$ , the upper limit for Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. Although these students did improve their accuracy rate within level  $z$ , the chart does not show growth within a level.

Student #12 demonstrated greater growth when reading with a buddy. However, it is important to note that during his session in the buddy group, he was also requesting to read with a paraprofessional. The classroom teacher did not want to discourage his initiative and did allow him to do so.

Student Name:

Sample of student tracking sheet.  
(Adapted from Trehearne (2006), *Comprehensive Literacy Resource*, p. 592)

Date	Title	What the Student did...							
		Makes logical predictions (preview)	Read smoothly and with expression	"Read" the punctuation	Uses fix-up		Comprehension		
Does it look right?	Does it make sense?				Retelling the story	Answering questions about the story	Makes Connections		

## Results and Findings:

Reading with a Paraprofessional, set 1

Student	Beginning Reading Level	Ending Reading Level
1	Q	U
2	M	P
3	M	Q
4	Y	Z
5	P	T
6	O	T

Reading with a Buddy, - set 1

Student	Beginning Reading Level	Ending Reading Level
7	X	Y
8	Z	Z
9	S	S
10	V	V
11	Z	Z
12	T	W

Reading with a Buddy, set 2

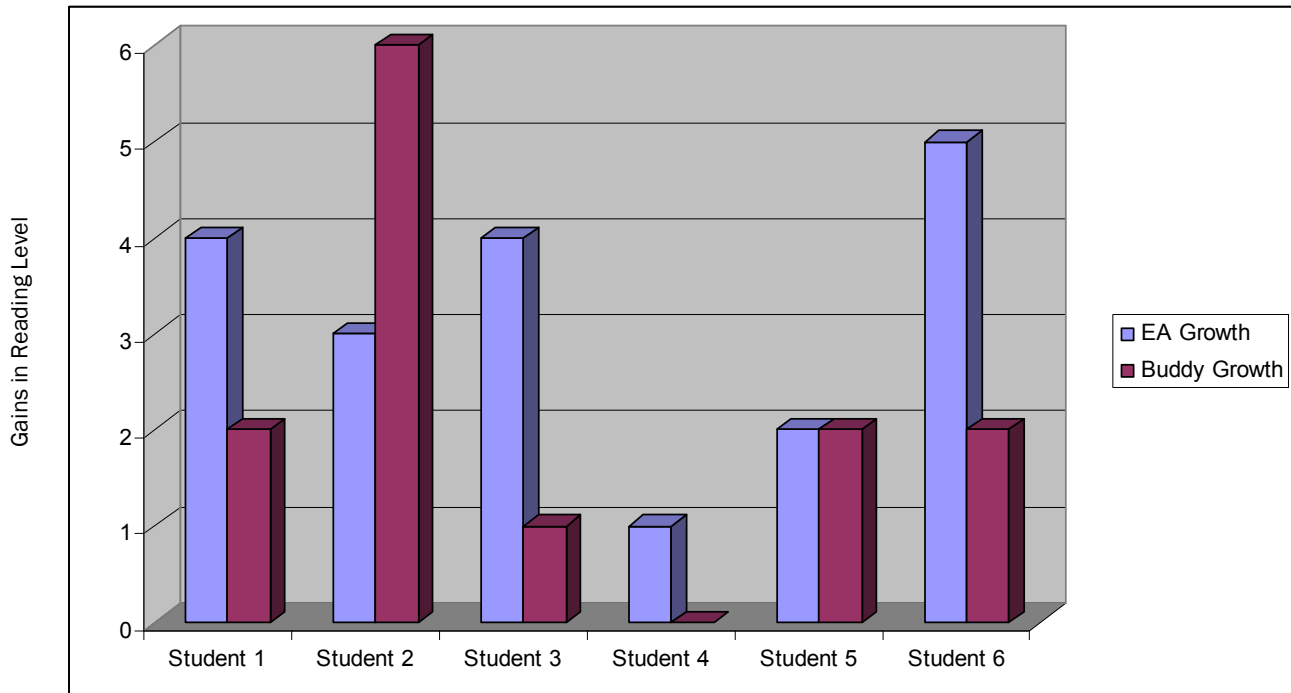
Student	Beginning Reading Level	Ending Reading Level
1	U	W
2	P	V
3	Q	R
4	Z	Z
5	T	V
6	T	V

Reading with a Paraprofessional, set 2

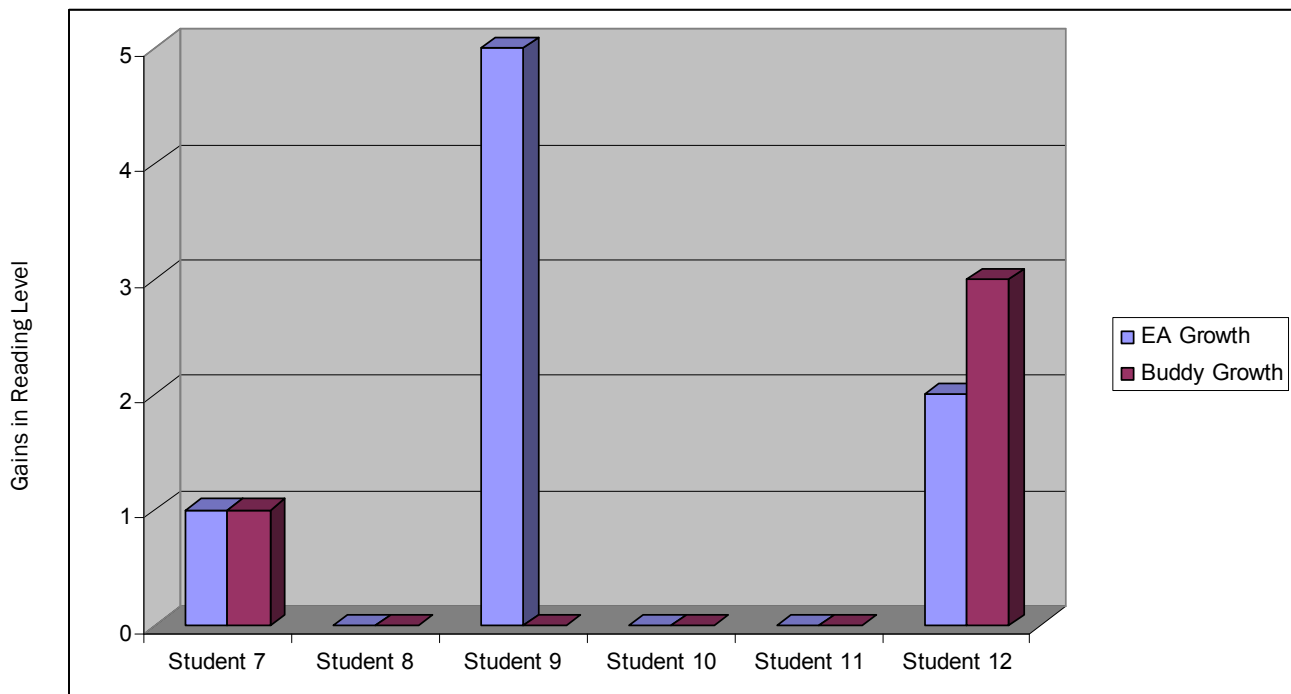
Student	Beginning Reading Level	Ending Reading Level
7	Y	Z
8	Z	Z
9	S	X
10	V	V
11	Z	Z
12	W	Y

## Results and Findings (cont'd):

Set 1 - Reading with a Paraprofessional first, then a buddy



Set 2 – Reading with a buddy first and then a Paraprofessional



While all students benefited from reading aloud to another person, most students who read and discussed their reading with a paraprofessional made greater gains in their reading level.



*Let Your Light Shine*

Bruce Grey Catholic  
District School Board

799 16th Ave  
Hanover, ON  
N4N 3A1

Tel: 519-364-5820  
Fax: 519-364-5882

E-mail:  
bruce\_grey@bgcdsb.org

## Reflections and Action:

All students clearly benefit from regularly reading aloud to others. Any school can provide these opportunities. Sharing the gains made by this particular group of students may encourage other principals, literacy coaches and classroom teachers to replicate the process in their own schools. Collaborative planning between teachers, support from an administrator, the sharing of paraprofessionals' expertise amongst many students, and a culture of continuous assessment all contribute to student progress.

It is important to note that while we were most interested in the gains students made in their reading levels, teachers gained valuable information about the students to add to their class profiles. For example, information about the types of errors students made consistently while reading and the way students' learning styles affect their reading comprehension helped teachers plan their future instruction for these students. One particular student who did not improve with either strategy will receive further assessment to investigate possible reasons for the lack of improvement.

This study illustrates the valuable role that paraprofessionals can play in the lives of our students. Students developed a trusting relationship with the paraprofessional. This relationship fostered risk-taking, goal setting and growth. Discussion beyond the literal text gave students the opportunity to develop their oral communication skills and increase meta-cognitive awareness about their reading. Regular feedback from a trusted adult gave students the information required to adjust their performance and the motivation to continue to improve.

## Contributions to MISA Professional Network Centre:

Members of the D.I. focus group were made aware of the MISA Professional Network Centre and as a result, two action research projects from the group were implemented. As the focus group develops direction for the 2009/2010 school year, action research will be an option for continued professional development.

## Suggestions for Future Research

To truly evaluate the effectiveness of the reading strategies that were examined, more students should be evaluated over a longer period of time. To improve validity, the same type of text should be used when conducting reading assessments. Because students were allowed to choose a text within their assessed level, some students chose non-fiction which is naturally more difficult to read due to terminology they may not be familiar with.

Comparisons could also be made between paraprofessionals and other adult mentors within a school.

For the purposes of this project, student DRA data was not examined even though the classroom teachers were using the diagnostic with their students. As more teachers strive to implement differentiated instructional strategies into their classrooms, they are very willing to allow students to show what they know in multiple ways. Teachers are noticing that DRA results are sometimes negatively impacted by a student's ability to write. It would be interesting to compare students' oral and written responses on a DRA. Are scores negatively impacted by student attitude toward writing? As students' writing skills improve, does the DRA score improve?