

Abbey Galeza, one of my former students at Kent State University, conducted an action research project on the role of repeated singing/reading in her class of preschoolers. Findings from her study (in the accompanying research report) are quite promising. In addition to singing/reading being an enjoyable and community building experience, the children learned concepts of print, so important for early literacy development. Hope you enjoy reading Abbey's research and find it valuable.

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Singing as Reading:

How Singing May Improve Young Children's Concepts of Print

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Action Research Study

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Abstract

Abbey Galeza conducted a mixed method study in order to determine if singing a shared reading could aid preschoolers in learning to read left to right and matching each word read with one-to-one correspondence. The study took place among a group of preschool children for the duration of one month. The findings suggest that singing a shared text can increase student awareness in the defined concepts of print.

Section 1

Introduction

As an early educator, I understand that concepts of print are established as pre-kindergarten literacy standards by the Ohio Department of Education. I also recognize that regular engagement with music is beneficial for young children. The study's topic is important because I want to engage students in practices that are developmentally appropriate and beneficial towards their literacy development. Prior to this study, I read Dr. Rasinski's research documenting the successful use of singing to enhance reading fluency. The findings repeatedly show how singing can support older readers, so I decided to investigate if singing could assist young children in developmentally appropriate literacy practice. I decided to investigate how repeated singing could be used to positively affect concepts of print in a group of preschool children.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the practice of singing a shared text can positively affect preschool children's concepts of print. The study's intent is to determine if repeatedly singing a shared reading can help preschoolers read left to right and match words with one-to-one correspondence. The research will reveal if engaging preschool children in singing is developmentally appropriate and will define how to implement singing productively with pre-emergent readers.

Importance of the Study

The study proposes a practice that could potentially improve young readers' skills. The study is important to early educators, especially preschool and kindergarten teachers, who are

seeking to improve their students' concepts of print. Early educators who are searching for a different method, or those who have attempted multiple interventions without success, may be intrigued by the concept of singing with young children to practice reading. This study may be of importance to those involved or interested in Dr. Tim Rasinski's work chronicling his use of singing to successfully increase reading fluency. Those who find Dr. Rasinski's work beneficial may want to know additional uses for singing to support student literacy.

Important Definitions

Concepts of Print (or "print concepts")

Accurate understanding of text orientation and layout, direction of print, and one-to-one correspondence of words (Teachers College of Columbia University, 2006).

One-to-One Correspondence

"The one-to-one match between spoken and printed words" (Uhry, p. 322).

Shared Reading

"During shared reading, teacher and children read aloud an enlarged version of an engaging text that is beyond children's ability to read independently" (Fountas, Pinnell, 2019).

Repeated Reading

"... To read a text multiple times until they are able to read it fluently and with good comprehension" (Rasinski, p. 28).

Repeated Singing

"Sing the same song repeatedly until [students] are able to sing the song fluently" (Iwaski et al., p. 141).

Section 2

Source Review

Source 1

B. Bačlija Sušić (2019) conducted a mixed method study to examine preschool teachers' attitudes towards musical intervention and its influence on speech. Researchers created a questionnaire that included topics such as opinions of possible effects of musical and multi-modal activities on speech development. Preschool teachers completed the questionnaire for researchers, who then used descriptive and inferential statistics to understand the data. The findings show that preschool teachers believe that speech is influenced most by verbal musical activities, such as singing.

Source 2

Young, Valadez, and Gandara (2016) conducted a mixed study to compare student fluency before and after implementing karaoke. Teachers implemented a karaoke-style reading program called Rock N' Read into their regular literacy practice with students. Researchers collected data qualitatively, by viewing student performances before and after using Rock N' Read, in order to assess audibility and expression. Researchers collected data quantitatively by using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Oral Reading Fluency (Good and Kaminski, 2002) and the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Rasinski, 2004). The study's findings support that implementing singing can improve multiple aspects of fluency, including phrasing, pace, expression, and reading rate.

Source 3

Bintz (2010) conducted a qualitative study to investigate singing and songwriting as a means of teaching and learning. To begin, the teacher gave students a text set to use as mentor texts. The teacher sang multiple songs from the text set to the students to familiarize and expose students to singing. The teacher encourages students to write their own song that will teach the class something. Bintz then gave participants a survey to gauge their opinions on the experience. Findings from the surveys revealed that students found the use of singing and songwriting to be engaging and successful in teaching the group new content.

Source 4

Pentimonti, Zucker, and Justice (2011) conducted a mixed method study to determine what type of books preschool teachers are reading aloud for class instruction. Teachers were asked to document the books they used in full-group instruction. Researchers created a custom coding system to organize each book title that is collected into a genre code. Then, researchers used this coding data to show disparities between genres in number form. The study finds that narrative texts are read the most, while texts such as songs, nursery rhymes, and poetry only made up 0.3% of read alouds. Researchers imply this statistic is significant because of the new data showing the positive effects of using poetry and songs. “Educators should be encouraged to use [these texts] in the early childhood classroom because the internal and end rhymes, assonance, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and repetition may provide opportunities for preschool children to become familiar with patterns of language” (Pentimonti et al., p. 218).

Conclusion

These studies provide an understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding classroom use of performative texts such as poems, songs, nursery rhymes, chants, and reader's theater. The collective findings reveal that overall, teachers believe reading performative texts with students is beneficial. The studies also document how other educators have successfully implemented singing with their students. Multiple studies found that singing can be used to engage students in reading while demonstrating how singing is used to reach different reading goals.

Section 3

Research Plan

Participants: 7 children, ages 3-5 years old

Setting: Kent State University Child Development Center, classroom 8 meeting carpet.

Timeline

3/1 (M)	Initial exposure to shared reading/singing and incorporation into our routine. (Teacher introduces shared reading and student expectations).
3/3 (W)	Pre assessment using CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1 Print Concepts (revised)
3/5 (F)	Session 1: Shared singing as a whole group w/ teacher assistance
3/8 (M)	Session 2: Shared singing as a whole group w/ teacher assistance
3/10(W)	Session 3: Shared singing as a whole group w/ teacher assistance
3/12(F)	Session 4: Shared singing as a whole group

	w/ teacher assistance
3/15(M)	Session 5: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/17(W)	Session 6: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/19(F)	Session 7: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/22(M)	Session 8: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/24(W)	Session 9: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/26(F)	Session 10: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
3/29(M)	Session 11: Shared singing as a whole group w/ teacher assistance
3/31(W)	Session 12: Shared singing as a whole group w/ teacher assistance
4/2(F)	Session 13: Shared singing as a whole group

	w/ teacher assistance
4/5(M)	Session 14: Shared singing as a whole group w/o assistance
4/7(W)	Post assessment day 1 using CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1 Print Concepts (revised)
4/9 (F)	Post assessment day 2 using CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1 Print Concepts (revised)

Materials

- Laptop
- Speaker
- Large chart paper with notebook lining
- Sharpie markers in dark, readable colors
- Pointer
- Easel and clips
- Phone recording students reading
- Lyrics to *Row Your Boat*
- Song in musical form [Youtube row your boat](#)
- Assessment based on *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1: Print Concepts*

Section 4

Results

Background

After observing this new group of preschoolers, aged three to five years old, it was unclear how they interacted with print. Print concepts, such as one-to-one word correspondence and reading text from left to right, are preschool literacy standards established by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). It needed to be determined if the students are meeting these specific print standards. Easy day, for the entire month of March and into April of 2021, I engaged students in repeatedly singing a shared text. Children responded with varied behaviors, starting out unsure, but becoming cooperative, captivated, and comfortable overtime. Students remained enthusiastic about singing as reading after the study had concluded.

Implementation

The repeated singing of a shared reading was an entirely new practice for this group of students. The repeated singing was introduced into our morning meeting routine prior to officially starting data collection. I predicted the students may be uneasy and thrown off due to a change in their daily routine. By introducing the practice before using it for data, I was able to get a clearer understanding of student abilities by avoiding nervousness or confusion on their end. The materials used in the lesson helped to serve the intended purpose and enhance, rather than hinder, the practice.

At the start of each session, the expectations for students were reviewed. The expectations consisted of singing the words with the music, continuing to try even if a mistake is made, and watching each word as the pointer moved to it. These tasks were reviewed everyday,

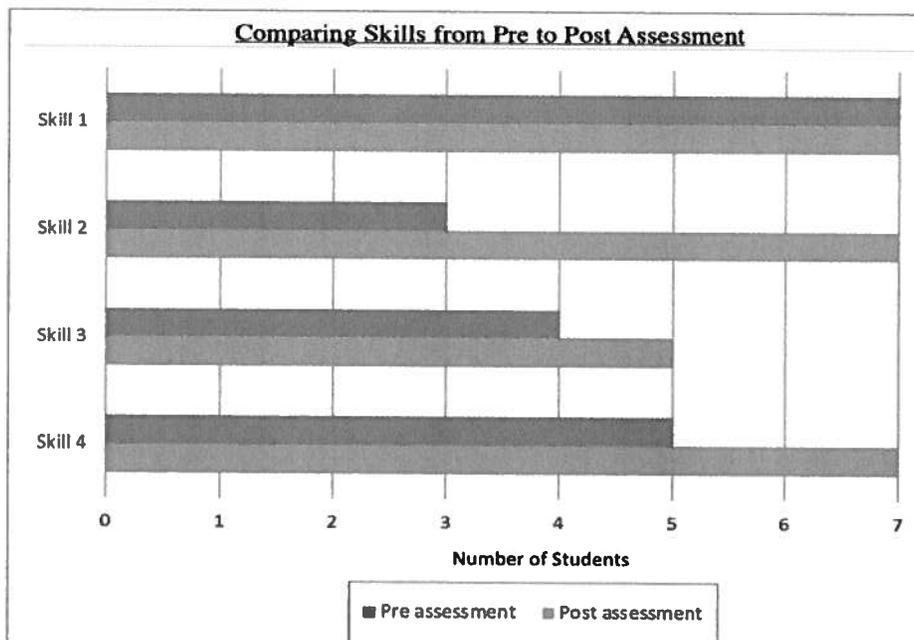
in varying terms, for the entire study. Eventually, students took over the duty of reviewing the expectations and also inquired about the purpose of these actions. I explained my goals and reasoning to the students and this aspect was added to our daily preparation prior to singing. The daily review was necessary, as there were multiple tasks students needed to engage in at once. Consistently reviewing for the activity served to ease student misunderstandings or embarrassment. Over time, children found joy and balance in the daily practice of repeated singing. The group steadily progressed in stamina and their ability to track words as they sang synchronously. Shy children found their voice in the collective group sound, making the practice engaging to all students in the class. As students learned and memorized the words and rhythm, they began to sing the song alone or together during lunch, play, and choice time! Towards the end of the study, children started to manipulate the song lyrics to make their own, but keeping majority of phrasing and the same rhythm. I would classify this act as using a mentor text (our song) and changing it to be one's own idea, a future writing concept that is taught to older children!

In addition to discussions, modeling, and practice revolving around print concepts, fluency was brought up during our experience. Children often noticed how breaking fluency sounded wrong and wanted to talk about that aspect. The study does not focus on fluency in the lesson, nor was it included directly, but students picked up on how singing too fast or slow for the music did not sound correct. This opened up the discussion into why we sing on tempo with the music, why good readers take their time, and what happens if the singing is too loud or soft? After these inquiries, students steadily improved in their fluency skills due to their new understanding of how to sing fluently and an intrinsic want to sound good! Overall, the

experience covered this study's main goals and supplied multiple directions for young students to engage in literacy practice.

Results

The data set, consisting of seven preschoolers, showed an overall increase in skills related to concepts of print. Data was collected using an assessment based on *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1: Print Concepts*, video recordings, and individual teacher-student interactions. After implementing daily repeated singing of Row Your Boat, each student achieved skillsets 1, 2, and 4 on the post assessment. The data shows that all students are able to distinguish pictures from words, know where to begin reading, and can accurately track words from left to right with one-to-one correspondence. Of the seven total students, five showed improvements based on the pre and post assessments. Three students improved their scores by 1 point, one student improved by 2 points, and another student improved by 3 points. Two students originally scored 100% on their pre-assessments and maintained this score in the post assessment. The bar graph represents the number of students who were able to complete each skill between the pre and post assessments. The graph provides a visual of each skill that was improved upon in the time between the study occurred.



Discussion

The research for this study was based on the inquiry can singing a shared reading aid preschoolers in learning to read left to right and match words with one-to-one correspondence? The results of this study reveal that singing a shared reading can aid young children to better understand specific concepts of print: reading left to right and one-to-one word correspondence. The experience finds that singing exposes young children to the concept of fluency in a natural and detectable way that aligns with their developmental abilities.

Throughout the implementation, I was surprised by how quickly and steadily the group's concept of print skills improved. I predicted they would improve some, but the practice aided the entire group with their skills and led all students to mastery in skill 4 (tracking words with one-to-one correspondence, left to right). I was also surprised by how simple and quick the practice was to perform each day. The practice was easy to keep up with on a daily basis. It took around five to ten minutes, but only occurred once a day! Children were able to energetically participate each time, without overexertion. Additionally, I was surprised when students began manipulating the song lyrics to make their own version. I did not predict this being an outcome, and thought the concept of using a mentor text as inspiration would be too complex for this age group. The children exceeded my expectations and showed me how to use songs as mentor texts!

I was not surprised that the children were hesitant at first, but then quickly became accustomed to singing the shared reading. I predicted that children would require time to accept the new practice, but would eventually enjoy singing. I did not expect to engage in discussion about fluency with the group, but I was not surprised when this occurred. I knew singing was used to help students gain fluency skills prior to conducting this study. I developed my lead

inquiry based on Rasinski and Padak's Fluency Development Lesson: Synergetic Fluency Instruction (2004), a lesson that engages older elementary students in fluency practice through the use of repeated singing.

The results conclude young children benefit from reading nursery rhymes, poems, songs, and chants. Young children are usually pre-exposed to popular nursery rhymes or other pieces, increasing interest for students. Nursery rhymes, poems, songs, and chants enhance the spoken aspects of good reading. "Educators should be encouraged to use [nursery rhymes, poems, songs, and chants] in the early childhood classroom because the internal and end rhymes, assonance, onomatopoeia, alliteration, and repetition may provide opportunities for preschool children to become familiar with patterns of language" (Pentimonti et al., p. 218).

Section 5

Reflection

As the study progressed, I learned that the use of singing is versatile in regards to literacy practice. I read of other educators who had implemented singing to increase fluency aspects and comprehension skills in their students. Based on those findings, I learned how to differentiate the act of singing to support various reading goals. Through this experience, I learned how singing is a valuable scaffolding tool. When participating in singing, students began to notice and wonder about fluency. I thought this group would be too young to notice or understand fluency, but the concept was able to be communicated through singing.

I now know that repeated singing is a successful method to teach the concepts of print to young children. The results of this study show that singing helps students understand specific concepts of print such as one-to-one word correspondence and reading left to right. Letter identification is another element to concepts of print. With what I know now, I would have shifted the study to determine how singing could be used to gain letter recognition. I believe that starting out with the concepts of print that involve letters would have better supported students when they went on to learn how one-to-one correspondence involving words.

This experience will heavily influence how I teach reading in the future. Through this experience, my belief that singing engages participants in reading was confirmed. I plan to use the successful methods of singing that I learned to teach literacy skills to my future students. I will take action by sharing the results of this study with my colleagues who also teach preschool. I want to document their students' experiences and determine if others experience success with

this practice. If others are successful, I would take further action by showing the findings to an expert in the field and discuss the data's significance.

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Appendices

Assessment based on *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.K.1: Print Concepts*

Distinguishes pictures from words by pointing when prompted Teacher opens the book and says, <i>Point to a word on this page.</i>	Yes	No
Locates on a printed page where to start reading with multiple lines of text <i>Show me where I would begin to read.</i>	Yes	No
Demonstrates that the left page of a book is read before the right page of a book <i>Which page do I read first? Teacher points to the left page and the right page, & student shows where to begin reading.</i>	Yes	No
Track text with a finger on a printed page from left to right <i>Show me how you would read the words on this page. The teacher could also model by reading and sentence aloud, and then the student demonstrates.</i>	Yes	No