This study chronicles 10 undergraduate university students and their understanding and application of metacognition and executive control in reading. Students from two undergraduate reading classes from two different states received intensive instruction in metacognitive strategies which highlighted metacognition and executive control in the reading process. To document their understanding and application, students engaged in: 1) think-aloud analyses; 2) sharing of metacognition journals of their outside reading habits; and 3) developing metacognitive strategies. Additionally, the university students tutored young readers in order to apply their knowledge of activities learned in class and they kept a journal for all sessions. Finally, the university students responded to a case study that recommended reading activities and diagnostic teaching strategies for the young reader profiled in the case study. Results from the above data sources indicated that while university students understood and applied metacognitive strategies in their personal reading and were aware of these strategies that made them strategic readers, they applied little of these strategies to the tutoring and case study situations. These students appeared to operate under two definitions of the reading process witnessed through what they did and what they attempted to teach their tutees.

Metacognition, an essential element of comprehension, is described as “... one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them, e.g., the learning-relevant properties of information or data” (Flavell, 1976, p. 232). Theories of metacognition, founded in Piagetian developmental theory, focus upon the cognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and conscious access to knowledge and strategies (Garner, 1994).

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One component of metacognition, metacognitive knowledge, constitutes knowledge of ourselves, kinds of tasks we engage in, and strategies we use while engaged in tasks (Baker & Brown, 1984; Garner, 1994). A second component of metacognition includes metacognitive experiences which occur before, during, and after reading (Flavell, 1976, 1979; Garner, 1994). Before-reading metacognitive experiences refer to personal strengths readers bring to a topic, the type of text, and in schools, the demands of tasks to be completed. During-reading metacognitive experiences include cognitive strategies used in comprehending text. For example, realization of comprehension failure is a metacognitive experience, and the cognitive activity which considers comprehension, or lack of it, is comprehension monitoring (Baumann, Jones, & Seifert-Kessell, 1993). Comprehension monitoring also includes strategies used to correct comprehension failures when they occur. After-reading metacognitive experiences include cognitive activities used in completing postreading-related tasks. In all three instances, metacognitive knowledge is the basis for metacognitive experiences, and an awareness of metacognitive experience is the realization of cognitive success or failure (Garner, 1994).

A closely related area of inquiry—executive control—has foundations in information processing theory. While metacognitive research and theory have a strong focus on knowledge readers bring to reading tasks, executive control research and theory center upon readers’ control over strategies for comprehension. Executive control strategies are of particular interest in literacy education because they can be taught, and gains in executive control support the gains in comprehension abilities (Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981; Garner, 1994).

Evidence exists that comprehension monitoring ability discriminates between successful readers (Baker & Brown, 1984; Baumann et al., 1992; Kucan & Beck, 1996). Effective readers use a greater variety of comprehension monitoring and executive control strategies and use them more efficiently than less successful readers (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1994). Brown (1982) states a compelling argument for metacognitive instruction, “I state the need for “cognitive training with awareness” because the whole history of attempts to install study strategies in ineffectual learners attests to the futility of having students execute some strategy in the absence
of a concomitant understanding of why or how that activity works” (pp. 46–47). Clearly, studying metacognitive awareness and executive control is essential for teacher education programs in reading.

Context of the Study

Over the years, we have spent significant amounts of time dealing with metacognition processes in our university reading methods courses. The impetus for this study came about during a discussion of strategies we use for teaching metacognitive awareness and executive control. We reflected that our university students demonstrated little growth in this area and did not view it as very important. Further, in our supervision of university students in field experiences, we rarely saw our students making use of their knowledge of metacognitive training in designing and giving reading instruction. Occasionally, we saw students use and model a K-W-L chart (Ogle, 1986), as well as ask children to make predictions, but this was the extent of the metacognitive applications we had taught.

Therefore, we designed various components for reading education courses which would include a strong focus on metacognition to determine our students’ understandings of metacognition as well as application of metacognitive knowledge in literacy instruction with children. The following questions served as the redesign for our courses:

1. what metacognitive awareness do students bring to class?
2. what impact will reflective writing on metacognition have on students’ understanding of metacognitive training for developing readers?
3. how will students apply their knowledge of metacognitive awareness and executive control in their work with developing readers? and
4. what reading instructional approaches will students propose given a teaching case of a student experiencing comprehension difficulty, especially after a semester of think-alouds, metacognitive journals, tutoring students, involvement in class sessions focused on understanding metacognition?
Design

Participants

We selected ten participants from a pool of over 70 students in two courses for this study. The selected participants were representative of the following characteristics of our student bodies: (a) traditional and non-traditional aged; (b) male–female; and (c) minority–majority composition. Three participants were selected from a course section consisting of 24 students in an “Elementary Reading” course taught in a northern, midwest state. Seven participants were selected from a group of 55 from two course sections of “Reading Instruction in the Intermediate Grades” taught in a southern state. We chose participants representing the populations in the two courses:

1. African American Non-traditional Female Southern University
2. Caucasian Non-traditional Female Southern University
3. Caucasian/German Traditional Male Southern University
4. Caucasian Non-traditional Male Southern University
5. Caucasian Traditional Female Southern University
6. Caucasian Traditional Female Southern University
7. Caucasian Traditional Female Southern University
8. Caucasian Traditional Female Midwest University
9. Caucasian Traditional Female Midwest University
10. Caucasian Traditional Female Midwest University

Procedure

We determined the following four requirements to best foster metacognitive processing in our methods courses:

1. a transcribed think-aloud for analysis in class,
2. a metacognition journal in which each student made ten entries,
3. course readings and class discussions on metacognition, executive control, and strategies for developing metacognitive awareness, and
4. a tutoring practicum involving work with a young reader.

Data Sources

The first data source, a transcribed think aloud conducted early in the semester, required each student to think aloud about an
assigned reading involving “the overt, verbal expression of the normally covert mental processes readers engage in when constructing meaning from a text” (Baumann et al., 1992, p. 144; Garner, 1994, 1994; Kucan & Beck, 1996). Students audiotaped themselves as they read, stopping whenever they were aware of their own thinking about the passage to orally discuss what they were thinking. Davey (1983) and Schmitt (1990), described this procedure, and we adapted it specifically for university students rather than children. Students transcribed their think-alouds to share in class. In cooperative groups, they conducted qualitative analyses of the transcriptions and created categories of metacognitive processes employed during reading for future reference.

Metacognition journals served as the second data source, in which students made ten entries of their metacognitive strategies used while reading self-selected materials (e.g., text books, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, recipes, internet text, letters, any leisure reading). Students detailed processes used and how these processes helped them comprehend their reading. As required, they wrote suggestions for using these metacognition processes with young readers.

Reflective journals, the third data source, contained records of work students completed in tutoring a young reader for at least one hour per week. In the elementary reading course, students were to focus their instruction on developing a variety of reading strategies for both beginning readers and intermediate readers. In the intermediate reading course, students focused instruction on vocabulary and comprehension development. In both cases, these experiences were rather unstructured. We encouraged students to experiment with a variety of strategies discussed in their texts and in class and record in their journals what took place during the lessons, what they learned about their children during the lessons, and what they should focus on in the next lesson.

For the fourth data source, students responded to a case study we had written about a fourth-grade student, José, who had serious comprehension problems. The case study provided diagnostic and informal data, and university students were to write about their understanding of José’s needs and how they would provide reading instruction for him. We designed the case study specifically to lead students to conclude that metacognitive awareness and executive control would assist José in improving his comprehension. See Appendix for case study.
Analysis

To limit the potential impact of our biases about our own students, the midwest literacy instructor analyzed data from the southern “Reading in the Intermediate Grades” course and the southern literacy instructor analyzed data from the midwestern “Elementary Reading” course using qualitative analyses procedures after Bogdan and Biklen (1992). We conducted analyses by data source, for example, all the think-alouds, then all the metacognitive journals, etc. Having created categories and examples of categories for each data source across the two groups, we met to compare data, noting similarities and differences.

Results

Think-Aloud Protocols

The midwestern students read articles from Civilization, Natural History, and Smithsonian magazines. Each article, a non-fiction text of historical/geographical topics, included colorful photographs. The southern students read a passage from Pat Conroy’s The Water is Wide, (1972). The passage was photocopied for the students and contained no photographs or illustrations.

Analysis indicated commonly-used metacognitive strategies: (a) making judgmental or evaluative comments, (b) questioning (author’s statements, characters’ actions, unknown information), (c) predicting, (d) activating schema (for story), (e) monitoring (identifying comprehension failure and rereading), and (f) connecting text information to prior knowledge/making inferences based on prior knowledge.

Midwestern students indicated that they clearly understood the articles. The Conroy text was selected with the expectation that students would be able to understand its meaning despite a lack of context. This was not the case. The think-alouds of the southern students demonstrated a misunderstanding of the passage. They did not get the humor of the chapter. One student’s entire think-aloud involved all questions and ended with the following disclaimer: “My comments were mostly disbelief. This seemed to be a strange excerpt as a whole . . . In the end, I think I was just plain confused.”
Not surprisingly, there was one primary difference between the think alouds of both groups. There was a great deal of monitoring among the southern students and very little among the midwestern students. Notably, the midwestern students reported using and relying on the colorful photographs for meaning in the non-fiction magazine articles. We noted that readers monitor when comprehension fails, not when it is succeeding.

**Metacognitive Journals**

Metacognitive journals covered a span of time and involved choice of reading materials, therefore, a different picture of our students’ metacognitive processes emerged. Students reported using three basic strategies: (a) *monitoring* incoming data which involved re-reading, questioning, and restating/summarizing; (b) *formulating* possible scenarios which involved predicting and hypothesizing; and (c) *bringing self to text* which included judging/evaluating, calling up prior knowledge, inferencing, and imaging. These are common metacognitive strategies that effective readers use and apply which can be taught to young readers (Schmitt, 1990).

Monitoring occurred when readers found themselves in comprehension dissonance indicating something was not making sense or not coming together in their minds. Therefore, they would re-read, often reading the previous text segment aloud. Using questioning techniques, readers asked, “What does this word mean”, “Does the author really mean . . . ?”, “Can this be true?”, or “How can that happen when . . . ?”. A final monitoring technique involved readers’ restating incoming data in their own words. This restating tended to indicate ownership of text information. If readers could restate authors’ words into their words, they had “created” a text to aid their understanding. Summarizing, closely related to this ownership, had readers “composing” a summary in their own words. When readers knew they could successfully restate or summarize, they knew that they understood the text. Moreover, when readers formulated possible scenarios, they engaged in creative thinking. As students formulated scenarios, they used information to predict and hypothesize different possible future events, characters’ actions, or upcoming text. Student predictions and hypotheses were quite rich and related to personal experiences and prior knowledge. In bringing self to reading, students judged the con-
tent of authors’ writings as well as how authors wrote text. Relating prior knowledge to text, students created mental images based on previous experiences. However, it was not uncommon for students to “miss the mark” because they lacked personal experiences/prior knowledge. Often, they read too much into text based on prior knowledge that did not philosophically or ideologically match text.

As we read metacognitive journal entries, we found that students “got better” as they went along. In beginning journal entries, students engaged in one or two metacognitive activities while reading. In later entries, students noted a variety of metacognitive processes indicating that writing about metacognitive monitoring influenced metacognition awareness over time.

**Data Journals**

To determine transfer of personal metacognitive activities and metacognitive teaching strategies taught in class to their tutoring sessions with children, we analyzed students’ data journals. Students recorded their tutoring activities in these journals resulting in the following categories: (a) strategic monitoring activities, (b) isolated, out-of-context activities, (c) generative activities, (d) demonstration/modeling activities, (e) reflective exercises, and (f) oral reading activities.

**Strategic monitoring activities** involved students/tutors teaching the following strategies to access understanding: (a) directed reading thinking activity (DRTA), (b) paraphrasing, (c) summarizing, (d) predicting and hypothesizing, then reading to verify, and (e) cloze. These activities allowed readers/tutees to continually question and analyze comprehension in a strategic manner.

**Isolated, out-of-context activities**, used in vocabulary instruction, found tutors having tutees make “flash cards” of unknown words from stories they read. Tutees placed words and their definitions on cards for review and memory check for the next session. Nearly all tutors handled vocabulary in this way.

**Generative activities** referred to practices tutees could apply to text and use to generate other understandings. K-W-L was a popular generative activity. The children brainstormed about what they knew and wanted to learn, then read for verification and learning. When considering what they had learned, tutees generated other
learnings and areas of interest for future investigation. Tutors also employed webbing, mapping, and dialogue journals to generate learning.

**Demonstrating/modeling activities** referred to tutors reading aloud to tutees to model fluent reading processes. Questioning during read alouds modeled how active readers question when they read. All tutors did a think aloud with tutees, modeling the think aloud process first, then asking tutees to read and think aloud. Some students used (LEA) to model how the spoken word is written to be read. Additionally, the impact of orthography on the spoken word generated other lessons during LEA.

**Reflective exercises** found tutors asking tutees to reflect on what they read, usually in writing. Students used this strategy on a fairly limited basis.

**Oral reading activities** involved all manners of oral reading. We classified oral reading performed by tutors as demonstration/modeling. Tutors also asked tutees to read texts aloud to them. Other oral reading activities included echo reading and choral reading.

In large measure, the most popular activity reported in their journals was oral reading. In not one instance did a tutor mention using silent reading with a tutee. Great amounts of time were devoted to echo reading, choral reading, and modeling, irrespective of the book or the reading level of the child. The majority of tutees were in grades 4–6, grades in which most reading is performed silently, but all tutors opted for oral reading.

All tutors reported concern for self-esteem and comfort levels of their tutees. Tutors made sure that tutees were in literacy-friendly environments (e.g., the library, or their homes—tutees’ or tutors’). Tutors also considered their own comfort level; two tutors mentioned that they felt comfortable with the tutees because they could identify with them and their reading/learning styles. Tutors’ selections of reading materials and strategies in many instances mirrored how they learned.

All tutors demonstrated a great deal of empathy, care, and concern for their tutees. One tutee wrote, “I told ____ that what goes on during this session would be between us, so I am not including any information from this meeting. I will say we shared feelings in her room and this made the whole session personal, and ____ opened up.” Selecting *Everett Anderson’s Goodbye* (Clifton, 1983),
the tutor put the young tutee at ease with her feelings about a recent loss in her immediate family, a bibliotherapy effort afforded by a caring and concerned tutor.

There was some evidence that the tutors’ study of metacognition carried over to their work with their tutees. The most popular strategies involved encouraging tutees to predict, self-question, reread, and summarize. In all instances, tutors modeled these strategies.

Teaching Case

In the teaching case about José, all students used similar terms to identify José’s strengths and needs and matched expectations. All students identified some instructional methods to help José become more metacognitively aware: K-W-L, DRTA, self-questioning, rereading, predicting, and repeated readings. Students viewed these as strategies José could eventually use on his own to provide him independence and confidence. After modeling these strategies with José and providing guided practice, tutors held José responsible for demonstrating use of the strategies in his reading journal, dialogue journal, or “Reading Accomplishment Notebook.” In effect, these students asked José to keep a journal similar to their metacognitive journals.

Suggested vocabulary activities for José were quite vigorous—most were strictly out-of-context activities. Students asked José to keep a vocabulary journal, have his own word wall, do word webs and semantic maps, make flash cards, and learn 3–5 new vocabulary words per day.

In order for José to read aloud comfortably, tutors suggested echo and choral reading for tutoring sessions. Tutors also encouraged repeated readings so that José could learn to read aloud comfortably in front of the class starting with easier books and working his way forward to some grade level books. Many of the tutors stated that oral reading should extend to José’s home. For instance, one student said that José should read to his parents and “act like the teacher.” In class, José could be paired with a buddy for reading to each other.

Overall, tutors recommended most of the activities and strategies they used with their own tutees. Therefore, there was some carry-over of metacognitive strategies and activities.
Discussion

There are some limitations to generalizing our results. Although our group was small, it was diverse and represented the hundred plus students we see per academic year. Next, instructor effects should be taken into account. Even though we have taught these courses frequently and team taught for a number of years, we may have translated strategies and their importance in different ways. Finally, repeating this study with larger numbers and other instructors may help to validate the generalizing of results.

These results demonstrate that the think-aloud protocol, the metacognitive journal, the tutoring work, and the teaching case response, taken together, had a powerful impact on the development of metacognitive understandings in our university students. In other words, for the most part, the students quickly figured out what we wanted, and they gave it to us.

With the major focus on metacognition through required assignments, we “lost out” in some other areas. The students centered on oral reading in their tutoring and in their recommendations for José. Oral reading was not stressed in class; in fact, we identified repeatedly the need for time to silently read in school. We would not have expected students to spend so much time on oral reading with their tutees. Perhaps, in the one-on-one setting, it may have been awkward to ask for silent reading. However, we would not have expected recommendations for oral reading for José. Our thinking was that if José was not comfortable with oral reading, it was not a problem; he would be given silent reading assignments. We suspect that in addressing José’s reading difficulties, our students fell for the age-old assumption that poor readers need to learn to get every word read correctly. And how could they address the need for José to get every word right if they did not engage him in oral reading?

Reflecting on the heavy emphasis given the oral reading required of tutees, a pattern emerged indicating that our university students appeared to operate under two definitions of reading. In university classes, our students readily defined reading as a process of getting meaning and emphasized the importance of metacognitive processes. After all, they had just completed metacognitive journals on their reading processes and described reading as a thinking and metacognitive process they underwent. However, when
they worked with their tutees and heard them miscue, they immediately went to a “code emphasis” definition of reading and had their tutees do several oral readings so that they could be “taught” or “corrected” in the graphophonic cueing system. Therefore, our university literacy education students defined reading in our classrooms as a process of making meaning, using metacognition, and calling up prior knowledge, while with their tutees, they operationally defined reading as a process of “breaking the code.” They looked at what the student could not do (e.g., they could not read as fluently as I read), and therefore their young tutees must learn to pronounce the words before they can get to metacognition. Our students tended to treat metacognition as something only fluent readers could do, perhaps because they had just become aware of doing it in their assignments. How could they expect young readers to know this is if they, as university students, just became aware of metacognitive processes? Yet the metacognitive processes they identified and used: (a) monitoring incoming data which involved rereading, questioning, and restating/summarizing; (b) formulating possible scenarios which involved predicting and hypothesizing; and (c) bringing self to text which included judging/evaluating, calling up prior knowledge, inferencing, and imaging, were not employed with their tutees. More importantly, our students did not see them as helpful strategies which could be employed to help “break the code.”

Because oral reading was so widely used with no prompts or teaching of it from us, we realized that our students fell back on what they did as students. Our students did not make the connection between metacognitive processes and how these might have helped in oral reading. An important aspect we noted about oral reading regards the type of texts used. It would have made a great deal of sense to engage in oral readings of plays or poetry with the tutees, but our university students used no such literature with their tutees.

We had similar concerns with students’ attention to vocabulary, both in their tutoring and in their response to the teaching case. In both university courses, students were taught that teaching vocabulary in isolation can be problematic. Yet, all tutors taught vocabulary in a “flash card” manner, and made serious plans to help José build his vocabulary. In the case study, data indicated that José had a fairly strong vocabulary (particularly as evidenced in
his oral reading scores on the Reading Inventory Qualitative) (Leslie & Caldwell, 1995). The strong student focus on vocabulary activities may unintentionally have been caused by a particular task instruction (“Be VERY SPECIFIC in your planning. For instance, rather than saying “20 minute vocabulary building,” describe exactly which vocabulary building strategies José will be using during those 20 minutes and what you expect the result to be”). Again, our university students did not see vocabulary as part of language development in the larger picture of making meaning. If they had, they would have encouraged their tutees to do what they had reported doing in their metacognitive journals—use context, predict, use picture cues, recall prior knowledge, rely on meaning and then verify through graphophonic cueing systems. Tutors planned activities in opposition to what had been recommended in class as meaningful vocabulary exercises (i.e., children select words they are interested in learning and create word banks based on student choice and interest).

A common teaching problem is evidenced here. By providing in-depth instruction and activities related to metacognition, we apparently “solved” the problem of getting students to understand metacognition and take it seriously. In order to accomplish this, other topics were not given the in-depth coverage needed, and students came up “lacking” in other areas. We also noted that more time needs to be spent on helping university students see the importance of metacognitive strategies for very young readers. In beginning reading, miscues are an indication of the thinking process in which young readers are engaged. It does not immediately call for graphophonic training but needs to be a part of the thinking process for making meaning. University students tended to see metacognitive training for intermediate and older students.

We see the need for requiring university students to go through a step-by-step process in which they determine a metacognitive protocol which works for them and then have them do it with their tutees using an appropriate children’s book. Together tutor and tutee need to come up with a protocol that works for the tutee. We need to emphasize that children need what adults need in reading. An effective reader is an effective reader irrespective of age, and the ability to monitor comprehension is a hallmark of all successful readers.
References


Appendix
Scenario

You teach 3 reading and language arts groups for 2 hours each day in a fourth grade departmentalized intermediate classroom. In reading, one child stands out in your mind, José, who struggles with everything he reads. José’s permanent record shows that he failed first grade and repeated with little improvement in his grades. In second grade, José’s low grades continued. José was tested early during third grade for special education, but he did not qualify; his I.Q. was average and his achievement scores were consistent across all areas. There was no indication of a learning disability. In third grade, José’s grades remained low. José’s yearly formal achievement test scores (SATs) showed continuous low achievement with percentile scores below 25% in every area. Since first grade, José had dozens of “D” grades, but no failing grades, and attended summer school every year.

The school district’s policy states that children can only be failed in one grade during elementary school and one grade during middle and high school. Since José had failed first grade, he could not be failed again until sixth grade. Previous teachers report that they “like” José.

José is obviously devoted to pleasing you. He has attempted every task he has been given, and puts forth his best effort. He is charming and always has a ready smile. He is never a behavior problem; in fact, he encourages other children to quiet down and behave when they push the limits. Socially, José is a classroom leader with close friends; others respect him. He is always among the first chosen for activities (even when activities are academic and the children know that José may have trouble). On the playground, he selects the games and is always the voice of sportsmanship.

José is failing, but you know that it takes intelligence to maintain such exemplary behavior and to be so socially adept in school. Surely, a child with this level of intelligence should be able to apply it to academic tasks such as reading. And José appears to try so hard.

You decide to conduct a series of informal assessments. Results are as follows:
**IRI—Qualitative Reading Inventory**

**QRI Word Lists:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Primer</th>
<th>1st Grade</th>
<th>2nd Grade</th>
<th>3rd Grade</th>
<th>4th Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QRI Third Grade Level Passage:**

- **Concept Questions -** Very Familiar, 85%
- **Oral Reading Miscues -** Total Accuracy, Instructional
  - Total Acceptability, Independent
- **Passage Retelling -** No recall of Main Ideas, about 1/3 recall of Details
- **Comprehension Questions -** Frustration Level: 2/3 explicit, 0/3 implicit

**Think Aloud**

To provide a model and practice, you did a think-aloud with José about a book called *Mrs. Barnett’s Birthday* (Noonan, 1996). Then you asked José to think aloud while reading two books. The first book is a primer level, titled *Bill* (Gunther, 1996). José read *Bill* orally and thought aloud. Next, José read another primer level text, *The Carrot Seed* (Kraus, 1982). For this text, he read silently and thought aloud.

José’s think-alouds revealed that José relied heavily on illustrations and made inferential statements consistent with the illustrations. He talked directly about the illustrations and made some personal connections to the stories based on his prior knowledge. There was no evidence of predicting, self-questioning, comprehension monitoring, making inferences based on text which were not reflected in illustrations, restating text ideas, or recalling earlier points in text.

**Cloze/Maze**

On a cloze procedure on a first-grade readability text, José had a strong start and got half of the first ten answers correct. Of the final 15 answers, José missed 13. He got a total of 7 answers correct for a score of 28%. Next, you asked José to complete a maze procedure on a first-grade level text. He got 13 of 25 (52%) answers correct, again at the beginning of the passage only.
José completed the interest inventory enthusiastically and appeared to be interested in almost every category, except horses, camping, and mysteries. He noted the Goosebumps book as his favorites (which you did not feel he could read and understand on his own).

Anxiety and Self-Perception Scales

José’s responses indicated a great deal of anxiety about reading aloud in class and being asked questions. When he has to read aloud, José’s stomach feels upset and he is very nervous. He does not like reading with other children nor getting help from other children. José’s self-perception as a reader is negative. He sees himself as a “very poor” reader (the “worst reader” in class), and he is “very embarrassed” about his reading.

Reading Availability Inventory

José’s inventory indicates his having more than 100 books at home. He gets books as gifts, and there are magazines and newspapers in his home. His mother reads to him “sometimes” which he likes. His father reads to him “never,” and he “does not like” his father to read to him.José reads to both parents when they have time to listen. However, his father works a full- and part-time job, and his mother has a full-time job with five children to care for. José watches television 3 hours per day; his favorite show is Friends.

Interview

You are struck by José’s embarrassment about his inability to read, his realization that it affected every aspect of his success in school, and his desire to be a better reader. José stated clearly that he knew that he needed to read more to become a better reader. He says he tries to read at home everyday, but it does not help because he cannot understand what he reads.

Your Task: Do a critical analysis of José as a reader/learner. What are his strengths, his weaknesses, and the areas in which you might consider José to be “average?” Next, set up a plan of action for
helping José. You can work one-on-one with him three times a week, for 20 minutes a day. The rest of the time, either José will have to do what everyone else is doing, or you will have to make individual plans for him. Plan what you will do for the next nine weeks. Be VERY SPECIFIC in your planning. For instance, rather than saying “20 minutes vocabulary building, describe exactly which vocabulary building strategies José will use and the expect the results. Finally, tell how you will evaluate José’s progress.

**Children’s Books Used for Think-Alouds**