

Collaborative Action Research:

The Daily Five

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Managing a literacy block in my first grade class was a very challenging task. This was my first year teaching first grade. I teach at Lincoln Elementary School, in Ellensburg, Washington. My class of 21 students consisted of a wide range of diverse learners. I had four ELL students, two students who received title one services, and one student who went to speech. My students DRA scores at the beginning of the year ranged from 3 through 24.

It became very clear to me during the first week of school that how I managed the literacy block would have a tremendous impact on my students' growth and success as readers and writers. I spent a great deal of time seeking out ways to manage my literacy block. I called upon mentor teachers, my colleagues, and veteran teachers who I greatly admired. I discovered that each one of them ran their literacy block in their own way. Some of them used literacy centers which changed weekly and were based on themes. These centers were created by the teacher and took hours of planning and preparation. Some of the teachers spent the majority of the time teaching lengthy whole group lessons and then kept the students busy doing worksheets while they tried to meet with small guided reading groups.

I tried to take the best of what I observed and created a literacy block which would be student driven and allow me to try and meet the diverse needs of all my students. However, it wasn't working. I was spending hours and hours planning and preparing literacy centers that would take the students only ten to fifteen minutes to finish and then I would hear, "I'm finished. Now what do I do?" Instead of being able to meet the diverse needs of my students I felt like I was just trying to stay one step ahead of keeping everyone busy and occupied during the literacy block. My students were

completely dependent on me. I was running out of ideas and most importantly was running out of energy. I knew this was not good for me but more importantly I knew this was not good for my students' learning.

I kept searching for a student driven literacy framework that would ease my students' dependence on me and allow for greater student engagement and more time for me to confer one on one with students, and meet with small groups. My administrator shared with me that at his previous building the teachers used a framework called the Daily 5. He explained that the Daily 5 was created by two sisters who have forty plus years of teaching experience between them and that they had a website and a book called the Daily 5. I immediately ordered the book, devoured the information and began to implement the Daily 5 as a framework for my literacy block in November, 2007. I have observed tremendous growth in my students' reading, writing, and independence. The Daily 5 has transformed my teaching, my life and has had a significant impact on students' learning in my class.

I intended to address the question of why The Daily 5 seemed to be such an effective framework for managing the literacy block. After thoughtful reflection and discussions with my colleagues, I created a graphic reconstruction using post it notes, chart paper, and colored markers. I was visually able to see relationships, connecting factors and theories which were worthy of examining with the two-step test. I felt the following factors and relationships were significant:

- Students stay engaged when they are motivated
- Students stay engaged when they have choice
- Students stay engaged when they have purpose

- Students stay engaged when they have developed stamina
- Students stay engaged when they are having fun
- Students stay engaged when they are independent

These factors seem to be what makes the Daily 5 effective. After giving each factor a rating of an S (significant) and U (uncertain) I discovered that each one of these factors would be worth further investigation. Each one of these factors is something I have observed in my classroom and something I believed to be a factor in the effectiveness of the Daily 5 but I was still uncertain as to why these factors contributed to the success of the Daily 5. I wanted to be able to research and demonstrate why each of these factors played an essential role in the effectiveness of the Daily 5.

The purpose of my review of literature was to see what the experts in the field of education have discovered about best teaching practices related to my research question: Why is the Daily 5 such an effective framework for managing the literacy block? I have selected four articles that address my research question. Each of the articles I selected addresses the need for teachers and students to work together to create an atmosphere which includes structure, academic choice, active student involvement, and student self-regulation.

The articles stress that effective teachers maintain and find a balance between teaching of skills, literature, and writing. In this essay, I described each individual study, providing the parameters of the topic, the methodology or approach of the resource, the questions it seeks to answer, its key ideas, and the conclusions it proposes.

My review of literature discussed tools for creating a respectful, caring learning community. This is something I knew was essential and provided a foundation for my

students' success during our literacy block. The focus of Horsch, Chen, and Nelson's article is on The Responsive Classroom Approach (1999). The authors stated that "The Responsive Classroom Approach acknowledges children's need to feel both pleasure and significance as members of a classroom community" (p.223). When The Responsive Classroom Approach is implemented it frames instruction in the social skills of cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control within the context of daily classroom life. This helps teachers create a respectful, caring learning community that promotes the development of both academic and social competencies. There are six components to The Responsive Classroom Approach they are: morning meeting, rules and logical consequences, guided discovery, classroom organization, academic choice, and assessment and reporting to parents. In this study, The Responsive Classroom Approach was implemented school wide at the John B. Murphy Elementary School on the northwest side of Chicago. The school serves children in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade and has a multiethnic and socio-economically diverse student body. Teachers at the school attended a summer training workshop and were provided professional development days throughout the year to work on the implementation of The Responsive Classroom. The study found that after three years since the school wide implementation began, The Responsive Classroom Approach has made a tremendous difference at Murphy School. Teachers, administrators, and parents believe that The Responsive Classroom Approach has had a positive effect on academic achievement at Murphy as well. Scores on standardized tests in math and reading have steadily risen and because there are fewer discipline problems in the classroom, teachers have more time to develop engaging learning activities and focus on small group instruction.

The second article I selected represented ideas on the “How” as well as the “What” in effective reading instruction. In this study Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez (2002) conducted studies in classroom practices to identify those that were most useful for improving students reading ability. They examined the relationship between teachers’ practices and students’ growth in reading achievement. I chose to review this article because it discussed how and what effective reading instruction looks like in the classroom. This study included eight high-poverty schools. Students in grades kindergarten-first grade were given a fall, winter, and spring literacy assessment. Teachers were also observed for several hours over the course of the year during reading instruction to document classroom practices in the teaching of reading. Some of the findings that stood out to me were that, “the greater occurrence of small-group rather than whole-group instruction was found to be a characteristic of the most effective schools/classrooms” (p.274). (Pressley., 2001, as cited in Taylor et al., 2002) “found that exemplary first –grade teachers had their students actively engaged in actual reading and writing” (p.274). The article ends with the conclusion that what teachers teach during literacy is just as important as how teachers teach. The results of the study show that an over reliance on telling as an interaction mode, indicative of a strong teacher-directed stance, does not appear to be very effective for enhancing students’ reading growth but when the focus is student driven there is greater achievement.

The third article specifically provided a plan for classroom management that provided meaningful activities for students’ independent work while the teacher is working with guided reading groups (Guastello & Lenz, 2005):

The activities discussed are designed for meaningful reinforcement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and National Council of Teachers of

English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts (IRA & NCTE, 1996) involving reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as student accountability. (p.144)

I was interested in this article because I was looking for a framework which was student-driven and would actively engage students in meaningful reading and writing.

Guided reading is an essential component of a balanced literacy program and gives teachers the chance to observe and listen to each child read aloud. Meeting with small groups to conduct guided reading instruction is paramount in the creation of independent, lifelong readers (Cunningham, Hall, & Cunningham, 2000, as cited in Guestello & Lenz, 2000). “However, the success of guided reading as an effective instructional practice is contingent upon the implementation of a classroom structure conducive to working with the guided reading group while other students are independently and actively engaged in meaningful literacy experiences” (Guestello & Lenz, p.145).

This study implemented the kidstation model in a U.S. inner-city school in the South Bronx, New York, for grades one through six. Teachers had to spend time modeling what the students’ role would be in the process. They would have four kidstations and students would rotate through the teacher-centered station. They based their success on teachers’ reporting the students’ successful completion rate of kidstation activities at 98%. They also noted that students’ ability to comprehend the text increased as noted in their teachers’ observation forms and anecdotal records. “Running records showed an increase of reading fluency, especially with ELL students” (p. 155). One final comment that greatly concerns me with the kidstation model is, “Another successful aspect of the model was the increased collaboration between and among teachers because they shared ideas as they constructed new activities for the kidstations” (p.155).

My final review is of The Daily 5 literacy framework. Boushey and Moser (2006), have developed and implemented a literacy framework which is a student-driven management structure designed to fully engage students in reading and writing. The

Daily 5 was not only developed by using research based practices but was also designed to help teachers work smarter and not harder. There are no elaborate literacy centers to create each week. Reading and writing are a complex process that state good readers and writers need to have Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. According to Boushey and Moser, the following five tasks have had a positive impact on students' reading and writing achievement:

1. Read to Yourself- The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day, with books you choose, on your just-right reading level. It soon becomes a habit.
2. Read to Someone-Reading to someone allows for more time to practice strategies, helping you work on fluency and expression, check for understanding, hear your own voice, and share in the learning community.
3. Work on Writing- Just like reading, the best way to become a better writer is to practice writing each day.
4. Listen to Reading- We hear example of good literature and fluent reading. You learn more words, thus expanding our vocabulary and becoming better readers.
5. Spelling and Word Work- Correct spelling allows for more fluent writing, thus speeding up the ability to write and get thinking down on paper. This is an essential foundation for writers.

The Daily 5 helps students develop independent literacy habits, so the teachers are free to work with small groups, have individual conferences, or assess individual students. "It is about developing shared awareness and instructional routines with students, through

specific focused teaching, while balancing students' needs for choice and independence” (Boushey & Moser, p.14).

As I considered the evaluation of these four articles, I looked at how they were all related in some way and fit into the puzzle of my research. All of the articles related to my topic of how and why the Daily 5 is an effective framework for managing my literacy block. Horsch, Chen, & Nelson (1999) provided information on creating a responsive classroom which leads to greater student responsibility and self-control both of which are essential for independent learning to take place. Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez (2002) directly correlated greater student reading achievement on how teachers taught and what they taught. They related working with small groups and allowing the structure to be student-driven as having a positive impact on student learning. I agree with the research of Guastello & Lenz (2005), but I feel the kidstation model creates more work for teachers and really is not student-driven. I found Boushey and Moser to be the most comprehensive in the sense that they have combined some of the most current research in reading, writing and brain research, in addition to forty plus combined years of teaching experience to develop the most well balanced literacy framework which not only positively impacts students' learning but positively effects teachers by not overwhelming them with extra busy work.

I feel that the kidstation model is a framework which would create more work for myself and forces me to lose valuable learning time explaining a new center each week. Although I completely agreed with their research, I do not agree with the kidstation model.

It is essential that I worked with guided reading groups, differentiated instruction, gave and used assessments to drive my instruction and conferred one on one with students. It was also essential to create a classroom environment which was student-centered, positive, warm, and safe. The review of literature has enabled me to understand how and why the Daily 5 is the ultimate framework for creating, balancing, and maintaining a student-driven literacy block.

High-quality research requires high-quality data. Data must be both valid and reliable. Validity means that the data collection tool measures what it says it does and reliability means that the data is accurate and precise (Laureate Education, Inc., 2007). Another important component of data collection is triangulation. Triangulation involves using multiple data sources (Sagor, 2000). My data collection plan used data that was valid, reliable, and was triangulated.

My data collection proposal included a data collection matrix (see Appendix A), copies of my data-gathering instruments, and an anticipated timeline (see Appendix F) for my data collection. The data collection process occurred from May 29-June 3. My three research questions were as follows:

1. Are students truly independent and engaged during Daily 5 independent time? My data collection for this question was in the form of direct observations from my administrator, colleagues, and practicum students. I gave them a checklist, and some guided questions that they responded to.
2. How does providing choices during the Daily5 increase students' motivation and stamina during independent time? My data collection

included a student survey and teacher observation and practicum student observation.

3. Why does setting purpose and urgency during the Daily 5 have such a positive impact on my students reading and writing? My data collection was students writing journals, DIBELS scores, and DRA scores.

The data collection I proposed to answer my questions were valid and reliable because the tools measured specifically what it says it does and were accurate and precise. I have also used multiple independent sources of data (triangulation) which make the data believable because they are supported by a variety of measurements.

I began my data collection by scheduling an observation time with my administrator. I gave him a checklist (see Appendix B) and some guided questions (see Appendix C) of what I would like him to specifically observe during the Daily 5. I also scheduled an observation time for colleagues who were interested in implementing the Daily 5 in their classroom. They also received a checklist (see Appendix B) and some guided questions (see Appendix C) and specifically observed if students were truly independent and engaged during the Daily 5. I had practicum students in my classroom everyday and they were there during the Daily 5. I gave them a checklist (see Appendix B) and some guided questions (see Appendix C) and asked them to specifically observe if students were truly independent and engaged during the Daily 5.

The next phase of my data collection was a whole class discussion with my first grade students about the Daily 5. I explained the survey (see Appendix D) I would like them to fill out. I asked students why they thought they had built up their stamina and why they were motivated to read and write during the Daily 5. I also asked them what

they really liked about the Daily 5. After our discussion students were given a survey to fill out. For a few of my lower students I allowed a practicum student to be a scribe for them. I also included teacher observation and practicum student observation (see Appendix E) to record increased student motivation and stamina during independent time.

The final phase of my data collection demonstrated the positive impact the Daily 5 has had on my students reading and writing. The data collection for this was in the form of students writing journal books, DIBELS scores (see Appendix G), and DRA scores (see Appendix H).

My data collection proposal plan used data which was valid, reliable, and triangulated. Each of these components led to research which answered the research questions and allowed me to learn about my classroom and share my findings with colleagues who were interested in implementing the Daily 5 as a framework for their literacy block.

The methods I used to interpret the data were both intuitive and scientific codification. I also analyzed the data for both quantity and quality. From the data I collected I was able to learn if students were truly engaged and independent during the Daily 5. The data collection also showed how providing choices during the Daily 5 increases students' motivation and stamina during independent time. Finally the data I collected shows how setting purpose and urgency during the Daily 5 had a positive impact on my students reading and writing.

Using the Observation checklist (Appendix B), I was able to determine if students were truly engaged and independent during Daily 5 time. The findings are illustrated in the following:

Figure 1 Results of the Observation Checklist filled out by my administrator, practicum students and selected colleagues.

Observation Checklist

Appendix B

This checklist was used by my administrator, colleagues, and practicum students to observe if students are truly independent and engaged during Daily 5 independent time.

| Observation | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Do students get started right away? | 5 | |
| Are students engaged in reading? | 5 | |
| Are students engaged in writing? | 5 | |
| Are students engaged in listening to reading? | 5 | |
| Are students engaged in word work? | 5 | |
| Are students working independently? | 5 | |
| Is the students' independent work meaningful? | 5 | |
| Are students on task? | 5 | |
| Are students independent? | 5 | |
| Are students engaged in meaningful learning? | 5 | |
| Do students know where to find their materials? | 5 | |
| Do students put their material away when given the clean up signal? | 5 | |

Using this data, I was able to determine that in fact the Daily 5 framework had allowed my students to become independent learners who were engaged in meaningful activities which contributed to their successful growth as readers and writers. I had five people observe and fill out this checklist at different sessions of our Daily 5. They all marked yes and there were zero No's marked. All observers were very impressed by the students' independence and their high level of engagement.

Another method of data collection that I used was Observation Response (Appendix C), which allowed the observer to respond to focused questions in regard to students' independence and engagement in meaningful learning.

Figure 2 Observation Response

Observation Response

Appendix C

This observation response sheet is for my administrator, colleagues, and practicum students. They responded to the following questions after observing the Daily 5 in action. The following response is from observations made by my administrator after observing the Daily 5 in action.

1. What were some observations that show students were engaged in meaningful learning?

During the Daily 5 I observed outstanding behavior. Independent workers have built significant stamina and are engaged in meaningful learning. They required no redirect from you. Exemplary, independent work. I commend your instructional presence. Students were excited about reading books from their book boxes and writing in their journals. Your teaching is filled with instructional points and students respect you, each other and the learning environment. You have established a warm, rigorous classroom culture.

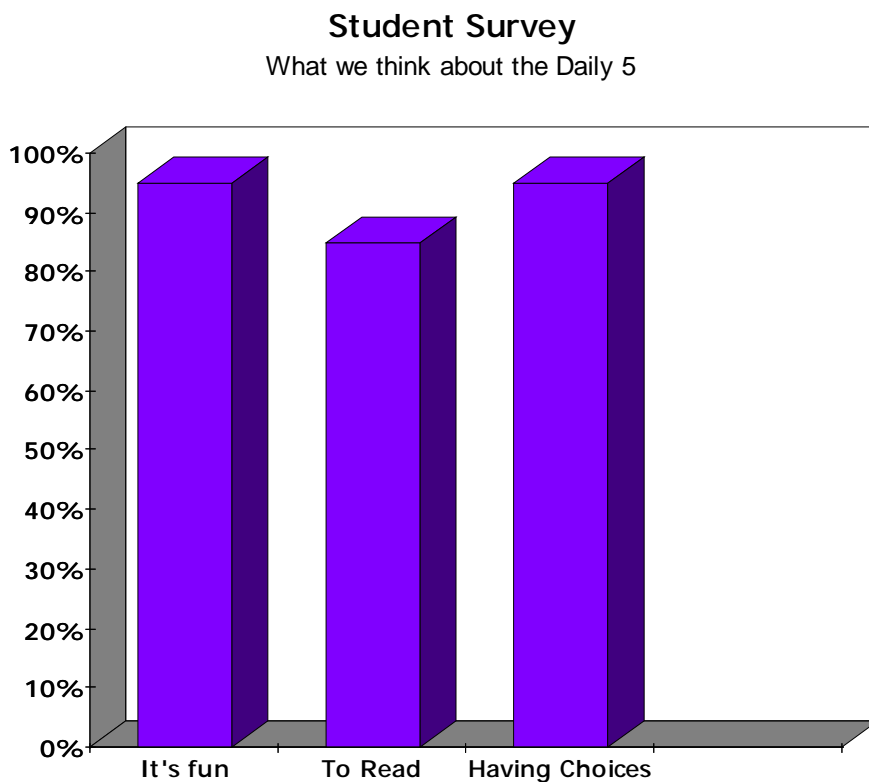
2. What were some observations that showed students were truly independent during the Daily 5?

Students needed no direction from you and knew where all materials were, knew the expected behaviors and if there was a problem students were able to solve it independently.

Using this data which was completed by my administrator I was able to reinforce what I believed to be true from my own personal observations. I had been observing that my students were able to work independently without any guidance from me for up to thirty minutes. During this time I had been able to confer on one with students, guide small reading groups based on needs not levels, administer assessments, and truly meet the diverse needs of all my students.

Another form of data collection that I felt showed the positive impact of the Daily 5 was the student survey (See Appendix C for the specified survey).

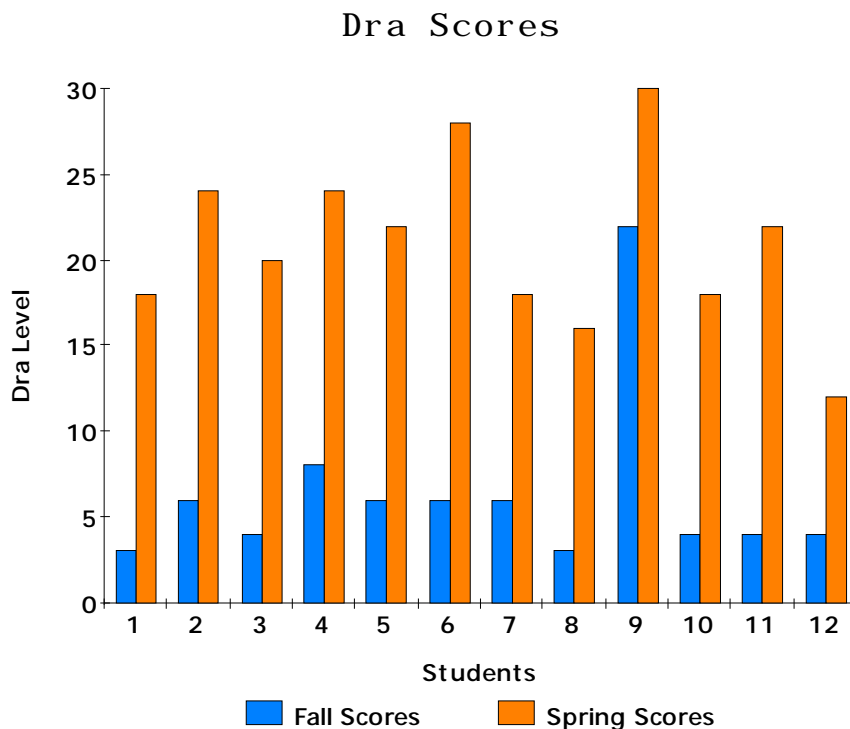
Figure 3 Bar Graph with results of student survey



The results of the student survey demonstrated the positive impact providing choices had for students. Ninety-five percent of the students responded that they like the Daily 5 because it is fun. Ninety-five percent of the students responded that their favorite thing about the Daily 5 was that they got to choose what they would like to do. Eighty-five percent of students said that the Daily 5 helped them become a better reader and writer. The results of this data made it very clear to me that when students are given choices it makes the learning fun and meaningful to them. I also believe that this demonstrates that students are able to articulate the positive benefits of choice because they claim that is what has helped them become better readers.

Another form of data collection I used were my students DRA scores (See appendix H).

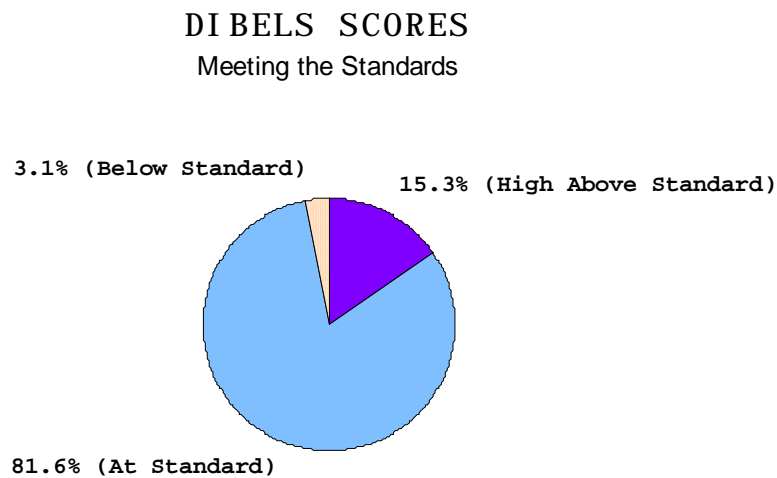
Figure 4 Graph of DRA Scores



This graph gives a clear visual of the progress the majority of my students made this year. I believe one of the key elements to seeing such tremendous growth in their DRA scores is directly correlated to using the Daily 5 framework in my classroom. Based on the results of this data collection I believe that when students have a sense of urgency and understand the purpose of what they are doing and why they are doing it, leads to a positive impact on learning. I believe this data collection demonstrates significant growth in student reading achievement and was attained because the Daily 5 framework allowed students to practice becoming a better reader through short focused modeled lessons, clear understanding that in order to get better at reading and writing they must practice. Students clearly understood that the purpose of the Daily 5 was so they could get better at reading and writing. Ultimately students knew that they were responsible for their own learning and to get better at reading and writing they needed to practice.

One final piece of data collection that I gathered was my students’ spring DIBELS scores.

Figure 5 DIBELS pie graph for literacy scores



This data collection shows that an overwhelming majority of my class is at or above standard according to the DIBELS testing. Two of the students who did not meet the standard are ELL students and one student is receiving help from Title 1. I feel that this data shows that my students are doing extremely well and I correlate that to the Daily 5. I believe this data collection shows that when students have a purpose and a sense of urgency to practice and get better at reading and writing it has a positive impact on their learning. I believe this data collection demonstrates that the Daily 5 has allowed me to meet the diverse literacy needs of my students which has led to greater student achievement.

When comparing the results of the data collection to the review of literature I discovered that the literature supports my findings. As I considered the comparison of my literature review to my data collection I looked at how they were all related in some way and fit into the puzzle of my research. All of the articles related to my data collection of how and why the Daily 5 is an effective framework for managing my literacy block. Horsch, Chen, & Nelson (1999) provided information on creating a responsive classroom which leads to greater student responsibility and self-control both of which are essential for independent learning to take place. The Daily 5 released learning as the students' responsibility which led to self-control and independence.

Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez (2002) directly correlated greater student reading achievement on how teachers taught and what they taught. They related working with small groups and allowing the structure to be student-driven as having a positive impact on student learning. The Daily 5 framework provided a student-driven structure which allowed for many opportunities for me to meet with small groups and confer one

on one with students. The Daily 5 also provided a framework which incorporates time for teaching short, focused mini-lessons on specific reading strategies.

I found my data collection to be aligned with Boushey and Moser's research based outcomes from their experience with the Daily 5. According to Boushey and Moser, the following five tasks have had a positive impact on students' reading and writing achievement:

1. Read to Yourself- The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day, with books you choose, on your just-right reading level. It soon becomes a habit.
2. Read to Someone-Reading to someone allows for more time to practice strategies, helping you work on fluency and expression, check for understanding, hear your own voice, and share in the learning community.
3. Work on Writing- Just like reading, the best way to become a better writer is to practice writing each day.
4. Listen to Reading- We hear example of good literature and fluent reading. You learn more words, thus expanding our vocabulary and becoming better readers.
5. Spelling and Word Work- Correct spelling allows for more fluent writing, thus speeding up the ability to write and get thinking down on paper. This is an essential foundation for writers.

The Daily 5 helps students develop independent literacy habits, so the teachers are free to work with small groups, have individual conferences, or assess individual students. "It is about developing shared awareness and instructional routines with students, through specific focused teaching, while balancing students' needs for choice and independence"

(Boushey & Moser, p.14). I found that my data collection was completely supported by Boushey and Mosers research based framework and not only was apparent in the data collection through greater student independence and achievement but by also by reducing the amount of preparation and planning on my part.

After reflecting on the data collection I feel that the data has answered my research questions which were as follows:

1. Are students truly independent?
2. How does providing choices during the Daily 5 increase students' motivation and stamina during independent time?
3. Why does setting purpose and urgency during the Daily 5 have such a positive impact on my students reading and writing?

The data collection answered these research questions through direct observations, student surveys, DRA, and DIBELS scores. The results all demonstrated the positive impact the Daily 5 had on student achievement.

Because of the results of the research, I have determined that I will continue to use the Daily 5 as a literacy framework. I would like to create a model Daily 5 classroom so my colleagues, practicum students, and education majors from Central Washington University can come and observe the Daily 5 in action. I would also like to present my findings to some of the Central Washington University Reading Professors. I am looking forward to beginning the new school year with the Daily 5. I would also like to present my findings to our staff. The Daily 5 has not only had a positive impact on student achievement but has had a positive impact on my life and teaching. I wish I would have

learned about the Daily 5 in my University Education Courses. I hope to enlighten as many Elementary Education Majors as I can about the positive impact of the Daily 5.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Matrix

| Research Question | Data Source #1 | Data Source #2 | Data Source #3 |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1. Are students truly independent and engaged during the Daily 5? | Direct observation from my building administrator | Direct observation from selected colleagues | Direct observation from practicum students |
| 2. How does providing choices during the Daily 5 increase students motivation and stamina during independent time? | Student Survey | Teacher observation | Practicum student observation |
| 3. Why does setting purpose and urgency during the Daily 5 have such a positive impact on my students reading and writing? | Student writing journal books | DIBELS scores | DRA scores |

Observation Checklist

Appendix B

This checklist will be used by my administrator, colleagues, and practicum students to observe if students are truly independent and engaged during Daily 5 independent time.

| Observation | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|
| Do students get started right away? | | |
| Are students engaged in reading? | | |
| Are students engaged in writing? | | |
| Are students engaged in listening to reading? | | |
| Are students engaged in word work? | | |
| Are students working independently? | | |
| Is the students independent work meaningful? | | |
| Are students on task? | | |
| Are students independent? | | |
| Are students engaged in meaningful learning? | | |
| Do students know where to find their materials? | | |
| Do students put their material away when given the clean up signal? | | |

Observation Response

Appendix C

This observation response sheet is for my administrator, colleagues, and practicum students. They will be responding to the following questions after observing the Daily 5 in action.

3. What were some observations that show students were engaged in meaningful learning?

4. What were some observations that showed students were truly independent during the Daily 5?

Teacher and Practicum Observation

Appendix E

This form is for myself and my practicum students observations of how providing choices increases student motivation and stamina during the Daily 5. We will record our observations of the effect of choice on motivation and stamina

| Choice | Increased Motivation | Increased Stamina |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Writing | | |
| Read to Self | | |
| Read to Someone | | |
| Listen to Reading | | |
| Word Work | | |

Time Line

Appendix F

| Data Collection | Date | Teacher (myself) | Support |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Administrator Observation | May 29, 2008 | | Administrator |
| Colleague Observation | May 30, 2008 | | Colleagues |
| Practicum Observation | May 29, 2008 | | Practicum Students |
| Student Survey | May 30, 2008 | | First Grade Students in my class |
| Teacher Observation | June 2, 2008 | | |
| Practicum Observation | June 2, 2008 | | Practicum Students |
| Gather student journals, DIBELS, DRA | June 3, 2008 | | |

DIBELS Graph

Appendix G

On this page I will show a graph depicting our DIBELS Scores.

