

Educators agree that developing good reading comprehension skills is important, but what is the best way to foster these skills? Dr. Laurice Joseph, assistant professor in the School of Physical Activity and Educational Services at The Ohio State University, explored that question through research supported by funding through The Ohio State University P-12 Scholars Program. Joseph's work explored instructional effectiveness and efficiency in reading comprehension, specifically noting what methods were both effective and efficient. One school district's third graders who needed help with reading comprehension skills participated in Joseph's research efforts.



Comparison of Three Variations of Repeated Reading Lessons on Student Comprehension and Reading Passage Performance

Laurice Joseph



The study compared three strategies:

- Retelling the story
- Using flash cards
- A combination of both

The retelling and flash card combination strategy did not make as much of a difference as expected.

Joseph studied three variations of repeated reading to determine which variation worked best in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. After the initial reading of a passage, students would employ a strategy: retelling the story (using the same words as the original; paraphrasing would involve the student using his or her own words), using flash cards (error correction) to improve their ability to read missed words, or a combination of both retelling and using flash cards. After the strategy, the student would read the passage again and then be tested on their comprehension of the story.

The rate at which students comprehended what they read was of most interest to Joseph in this study. She worked to determine how much the students comprehended per minute. The per-minute rate is important because some students are able to come up with an answer, but they might take a long time to do so, Joseph explains. Speeding up the rate of comprehension helps to keep students' interest longer, she adds. Teachers have limited time during the school day for instruction, so they must use that time effectively. One option would be for teachers to implement peer tutoring with comprehension, thus allowing the students more time to practice their skills and less time waiting for their turn. According to Joseph, finding methods that teachers can use to help students improve comprehension skills is important to achieving the goal of effective and efficient teaching.

Joseph says that the most surprising discovery that she encountered in this research was that the retelling and flash card combination strategy did not make as much of a difference as she expected. That combination method might have been more effective if the outcome was based not only on reading comprehension, but also on accuracy of reading, as the combination method more likely increase accuracy of reading, she explains. "The bottom line," says Joseph about her research, "is that educators must pay attention to the rate at which students are learning, not just that they are learning. With limited classroom instruction time," she says, "educators must find ways to teach that are not just effective, but also efficient."

Researchers at The Ohio State University continue to study instructional effectiveness and efficiency in order to determine which method creates the most impact. Joseph recently presented a paper on this topic at the National Association of School Psychology annual conference in New York City, and an article about this research will appear in a special issue about Instructional Efficiency in *School Psychology Quarterly*. ■

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