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The effect of optimistic explanatory style instruction on the explanatory style, reading self efficacy, reading resilience and reading performance of third-fifth grade students with learning disabilities

Melba Rhodes-Stanford

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University of San Francisco

THE EFFECT OF OPTIMISTIC EXPLANATORY STYLE INSTRUCTION ON THE EXPLANATORY STYLE, READING SELF EFFICACY, READING RESILIENCE AND READING PERFORMANCE OF THIRD-FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

A Dissertation Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
Learning and Instruction Department

In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

By
Melba Rhodes-Stanford

San Francisco
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This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, Louis Leland Rhodes, who passed away three years ago on Good Friday. He filled my life with a love for learning from the time I was a little girl sitting on his knee to hear a favorite story, to now, as I complete the doctoral program. An educator himself, he inspired and encouraged me throughout my 25+ years of schooling and a career of teaching and educational administration. Daddy always had time to talk about education and couldn’t wait to hear the latest classroom tales. Thank you, Daddy. I know you were watching when I walked across the stage in St. Ignatius Church to receive my diploma. I could feel you there with me and I heard you whisper, “I’m proud of you, baby.”
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I would also like to thank my dear friend, Sherry Studley, whose keen wit and great notes kept me in the program year after year. I made it, Sherry!

Finally, I would like to thank the love of my life, Virgil Stanford, for hanging in there with me for all the “just two more years” promises for doctoral completion. Thank you, Honey, for all your love and patience. We did it! Now, time for bluegrass music...
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The United States is currently experiencing a literacy crisis. Today, more than half of the nation’s fourth and eighth graders cannot read at the proficient level which is considered grade level competency (NAEP, 2004). Having failed to succeed in the general education classroom, many students are identified as having learning disabilities due to their inability to read and are placed in special education programs to receive remediation. As a result, the special education population has more than tripled over the past 25 years and is now estimated to be approximately six million. Students identified as having learning disabilities affecting their ability to read represent over a third of this number (OSERS, 2004).

Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are typically taught specific prescriptive academic skills to improve decoding, comprehension, and fluency. Learning to read, however, is more than just acquiring a technical skill. It also involves incorporating important social and emotional factors, linking individual feelings of efficacy or competency, with academic information processing (Berg & Lick, 2001). Students with SLD often experience academic challenges when reading that can drain their self-esteem and further exacerbate low reading performance. Believing that they cannot be successful when reading, students with SLD often exhibit a lack of task persistence, giving up too quickly when faced with a difficult passage (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999). This study seeks to explore a reading intervention for elementary students with SLD that builds self-esteem and persistence in reading, or reading resilience, by infusing social and emotional factors with academic information processing during reading.

Bandura (1986), Entwisle (1987), Henk & Melnick (1995), and Schunk (1985) in their research involving self-efficacy (personal judgments of capabilities) and reading
performance found that improved reading resiliency traits such as task persistence lead to improved reading performance. Bandura (1986) explained that the process of learning to read involves continuously generating and testing alternative forms of behavior and strategies. This requires persevering efforts on the part of the reader. Self-doubters are quick to stop this generative process if their early efforts prove deficient, whereas those who believe in their ability will persist at the task and practice the various reading skills that are necessary for successful reading development. Bernard (1996) supported this theory in his research that focused on the importance of developing an internal positive mindset, characteristics of confidence, persistence, organization, and getting along with others in order to improve student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.

During reading instruction, teachers often include affective features in the form of positive reinforcement to motivate students to read or to reward good effort. Rarely, however, are affective features formally included during the process of learning to read with an emphasis on shaping the way a student thinks about reading and his or her ability to read. Benard (2000), Dweck (1982), Padron, Waxman, Brown, and Powers (2000), Seligman (1998), and others have suggested that strategies within the affective domain that foster feelings of self-efficacy must be linked with the academic (prescriptive reading skills) and meta-cognitive (thinking through the text using internal dialogue) processes of reading especially for those students who struggle to read. Their belief is that struggling readers need a strong inner self-help support system, or internal resiliency, regarding academic learning in order to persist at the task of reading when the material becomes difficult.

Seligman (1998) has suggested that this internal reading resiliency can be learned through cognitive therapy or cognitive restructuring. Cognitive restructuring is defined as the process of reshaping the way a person thinks about a concept or a sequence of concepts. Using cognitive restructuring as a therapeutic tool, Seligman
prescribes a sequence of self-talk steps that address dimensions of permanence, 
pervasiveness, and personalization in order to develop an optimistic explanatory style. 
The dimension of permanence involves time. The causes of bad events are seen as 
permanent rather than temporary (“I’m all washed up” versus “I’m exhausted today.”). 
Pervasiveness involves space. When bad events happen they are seen as either 
universal, affecting every situation, or specific, affecting only that particular situation 
(“Books are useless” versus “This book is useless”). Personalization refers to internal 
versus external blame (“I’m so stupid” or “This assignment is stupid”).

Explanatory style has been defined by Seligman as the manner in which people 
routinely explain why events happen the way they do in their lives. A pessimistic 
explanatory style, “I can’t read anything, I’m so stupid” can drain a student’s 
motivation, reduce persistence, and render them vulnerable to depression. Alternately, 
an optimistic explanatory style, “I can’t read this word but I got a word right when I 
tried yesterday so I’ll try again today” can inspire students to problem solve and make 
them resilient in the face of adversity.

Current evidence exists linking the concept of cognitive restructuring through 
explanatory style with reading resilience, (Benard, 2000; Dweck,1982; Padron, 
Waxman, Brown, & Powers, 2000; Seligman,1998) and increased reading resiliency 
with reading performance and overall success among various populations (Bandura, 
1986; Entwisle, 1987; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1984). The link between 
explanatory style and reading resilience and reading performance should also be 
explored for elementary students exhibiting learning disabilities who struggle with 
reading. Early intervention for students with SLD who read poorly at the elementary 
level is particularly important. The sooner students acquire the skills needed to learn 
to read, the sooner they will be able to competently read to learn the content required 
across a variety of subjects in the upper elementary grades, middle and high school. If 
these formative reading skills are not learned in the primary grades, students will fall
farther and farther behind academically and their future academic and occupational success may be negatively impacted. This study was conducted to learn if elementary students with learning disabilities can improve their optimistic explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resilience, and reading performance by learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the process of reading in combination with learning and practicing specific reading skills.

**Background and Need**

Of the six million students enrolled in special education programs, half have been identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD). The majority of these students with SLD, an estimated 2.4 million, were placed into special education programs due to difficulty with reading (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, PCESE, 2002). Currently, in California, more than 340,000 children receive special education services under the designation of SLD due to reading difficulties (California DOE, 2003).

The development of reading skills serves as the major foundation for all school-based learning. Without the ability to read, opportunities for academic and occupational success are limited (Lyon, 2003). Research by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has consistently shown that children’s failure to learn to read can have devastating consequences with respect to self-esteem, social development, and opportunities for advanced education and meaningful employment (NICHD, 2003).

The importance of learning to read for students with SLD is magnified by recent statistical findings of the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (PCESE, 2002). The PCESE’s report suggested that many students with SLD not only fail to reach the academic achievements of their peers but are also twice as likely to drop out of school. By the time they are identified, and special education services are rendered, most students with SLD have already realized that they have
failed at their most important task, learning to read. Accordingly, they may have lost
much of their earlier motivation, enthusiasm, and positive expectations for, or about,
reading. A decade ago, once students with SLD were placed in instructional support
programs, such as a resource room or a more intensive special day class, they were at
risk of remaining on the remedial track for a lifetime, rarely progressing to the
performance level of their peers. Today, this is no longer true, although past practice
has impacted present teacher attitudes. Past practice of educating students with SLD
in isolation with students of like disability created a culture of lowered expectations
and curriculum modifications that has since transferred to the mainstreamed setting. In
general education classrooms today, teacher expectations for students with SLD are
often lower than for students not experiencing SLD (Babad, 1993; Cotton, 1999;
Jussim, Madon, & Chatman, 1994; Spitz, 1999).

In order to better meet the needs of students with SLD, a variety of promising
instructional reading strategies emerged during the 1970s and 1980s within special and
general education settings including direct instruction (Engelmann, 1964), mastery
learning (Bloom, 1968), neuro-linguistic programming (Bandler & Grinder, 1983), and
the use of multi-modality techniques (Kolb, 1984; Messick, 1976). Over the next
decade, when the authorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA, 1990) encouraged students with disabilities to be educated in regular
education classrooms whenever possible, a variety of inclusion programs such as
consultant, collaborative, and teaming models were implemented (Daak, 1999; Erwin,
1993; Rogers, 1993). The promise was that special needs students could be better
educated with their peers in the mainstream setting with some modifications.
Differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), a hybrid of previous special education
modifications, was implemented with the signing of the 2002 Elementary and
Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into federal law, also known as No Child Left
Behind (NCLB). NCLB stipulates that educational standards and school
accountability systems must also apply to students with disabilities. Through
differentiated instruction, special education students are exposed to the same content
standards and assessments within the general education classroom as their general
education peers. Modifications are made to the content, instructional delivery is multi-
modal, and alternative assessments are administered in order to meet the needs of
students with SLD in the general education setting. Current teaching practices are
driven by the NCLB philosophy. If standards are raised for special education students,
if they are exposed to the same content standards curriculum and receive the same
general education advantages as their non special education peers, the supposition is
that they will perform better than they have in the past.

It is clear that many children are not responding to the new NCLB
requirements for improved reading instruction whether placed in general or special
education classroom settings (PCESE, 2002). As this current educational practice
continues, an ever growing number of students are failing to read while special
education and remedial instruction costs rise (NAEP, 2004). When these students
become adults, the costs to society, although difficult to translate into actual dollar
amounts, stand to be high in terms of lower productivity, higher underemployment,
greater use of mental health services, and other measures (Snow & Burns, 1998). The
need for improving reading performance, nationwide, has reached a critical level.
Educators must continue to discover and implement interventions which ensure that
virtually every child learns to read successfully, long before their productivity,
employment, and mental health are negatively affected.

Reading involves not only fluidly decoding and comprehending text, but also
the ability to demonstrate resiliency during the reading process (Berg & Lick, 2001).
Resiliency, defined as the ability to develop coping strategies or to bounce back
despite adverse conditions (Brodkin & Coleman, 1996), motivates and enables the
child to persist when reading becomes difficult. Rather than give up, the resilient child
will try again using a different approach or strategy and will persist at a task until successful.

Bandura (1986), Schunk (1984), and Henk & Melnick (1995) determined a strong connection between self-efficacy, resiliency, and reading performance. Bandura & Schunk (1981) and Schunk (1984) found that self-efficacy judgments affect achievement by influencing an individual’s choice of activities, task avoidance, effort expenditure, and goal persistence. Persistence at the task of reading was found to be critical. To be successful at reading, a child must persevere at generating and testing alternative forms of behaviors and strategies. Bernard (1996) agreed with this concept saying that developing characteristics such as confidence, persistence, organization and getting along create an internal positive mindset that is important to a student’s success in reading. He termed these characteristics the four internal foundations and identified 11 habits of the mind (HOMs) that work together to form them: self-acceptance, risk taking, independence, optimism, internal locus of control for learning, high frustration tolerance, goal setting, time management, tolerance of others, reflective problem solving, and tolerance of limits. Researchers Pina (1996), Call (1999), Brown (1999), Pruzek (2000), Brooks (1999), and Eddy (1999) similarly found significant positive correlations between the characteristics of an internal positive mindset and academic achievement. Students, including those with learning disabilities, who exhibited confidence, persistence, organization, and getting along with others were found to perform better in their schoolwork and homework than students who did not possess those characteristics (Bernard, 1996; Brooks, 1999; Pruzek, 2000).

Children’s self-perception of their reading ability impacts their overall orientation towards the reading process (Henk & Melnick, 1995). Children who made positive associations with reading tended to read more often, for longer periods of time and with greater intensity leading to superior reading achievement. Children who
felt negatively about reading, either avoided reading or read with little real involvement.

Padron, Waxman, Brown, and Powers (2000) studied improving classroom instruction and student learning for resilient and non-resilient English Language Learners. They found that resilient students were on-task significantly more often than non-resilient students. Resilient students perceived a more positive instructional learning environment, were more satisfied with their curriculum, and had higher reading self-concepts than non-resilient students.

Benard (1991) recognized the impact of resiliency on reading success and further examined the premise that resiliency can be taught. Drawing upon prior human development theory and research, she explained that all students possess an innate biological capacity for resilience and that teachers can help them develop this inner resilience by building social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. Benard stated that these characteristics are critical for reading success and suggested that teachers foster these qualities in their students by developing caring and supportive relationships with them, establishing positive and high expectations, teaching to students’ strengths, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation in the classroom (Benard, 1997). Seligman (1998) suggested that another method of activating a student’s inner resilience, in an effort to build reading success, is to teach an optimistic, motivating style of self-talk, or, an optimistic explanatory style. According to Seligman, a pessimistic explanatory style may significantly affect a student’s motivation to read, his/her cognition, and school performance. Learning an optimistic explanatory style can help students increase resiliency and raise reading performance (Seligman, 1998).

Seligman (1998) developed a construct that he termed learned optimism. Learned optimism, influenced by attribution theory (Weiner, 1990), refers to the causal attributions people make when confronted with failure or setbacks. Optimists tend to
make specific, temporary, external causal attributions while pessimists make global, permanent, internal attributions. He defined explanatory style as the manner in which people habitually explain why events happen to them. Explanatory style can create or inhibit learned helplessness, a learned condition where desired outcomes are considered independent of one’s actions. Future helplessness is generalized to new situations to produce a variety of deficits: motivational, cognitive, and emotional. An optimistic explanatory style inhibits helplessness, whereas a pessimistic explanatory style promotes helplessness. When faced with adversity, a person with a pessimistic explanatory style might respond with “It’s me, it’s going to last forever, it’s going to undermine everything I do,” whereas, an optimist might respond with “It was just circumstances, it’s going to go away quickly anyway, and, besides, there’s much more to life.”

The potential impact of explanatory style on achievement becomes clear when considering Seligman’s belief that the explanations individuals habitually make for their successes and failures lead to expectations that affect their reactions to future successes and failures. These expectations can then create self-fulfilling prophecies that either enhance or undermine performance. Expectations can affect performance through a variety of behaviors. Individuals with an optimistic explanatory style may be more likely, for example, to take initiative, persist under adversity, take risks, be decisive, engage in quality problem-solving strategies, and be more assertive than individuals with a pessimistic style.

Seligman suggests that optimism is a skill that can be taught through explanatory style. According to Seligman, optimists are more motivated, more successful, have higher levels of achievement, and have better physical and mental health. Further, he posits that learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style can improve reading resilience traits such as motivation and persistence, which, in turn, will improve reading performance.
In research specific to explanatory style, resiliency traits, and academic achievement, Dweck (1982) and her associates conducted a series of studies that suggested a link between children’s explanations of failure and subsequent academic performance. They found that children who attributed their academic failure to stable and global factors, such as lack of ability or stupidity, were more likely to give up following failure than children who attributed failure to unstable and specific factors, such as luck or lack of effort. Stable and global explanations for failure correlate with resiliency factors such as lower initiative, decreased persistence, diminished quality of problem-solving strategies, and lower expectations for future success (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Goetz, 1978; Dweck & Licht, 1980; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Dweck & Wortman, 1982). Research by Eccles (1983) and Weiner (1974, 1978, 1979, 1985) also suggested that particular explanations for academic success and failure correlate with subsequent motivation and performance.

Of particular relevance to the current study involving explanatory style and reading resiliency is the work of Dostal (2000) who found statistically significant correlations between 7th grade students’ scores on explanatory style scales and their reading scores on the SAT-9 achievement test. Similarly, Gordon and Mercier (1996), found a predictive relationship between attributional style scores (hopefulness) and writing ability while Yates (1999) found significant relationships between students’ explanatory style and achievement in mathematics as well as between students’ explanatory style and task involvement goals (resiliency traits).

Also relevant to the current study is the five-year longitudinal study of elementary school children in grades four through seven (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgas, & Seligman, 1992) which examined relationships among children’s explanatory style, achievement related behaviors, and school achievement. In addition to having each child complete an explanatory style self-report on the Children’s Attributional Survey Questionnaire (CASQ; Kaslow, Seligman, & Tannenbaum, 1978) every six months,
the children’s teachers also rated each child’s tendency to show learned helplessness deficits (low motivation, giving up easily, saying “I can’t do this”) in frustrating achievement-related settings. Standardized achievement test scores for the children were collected at the end of each year. Moderate, significant relationships were found between concurrent measures of explanatory style and achievement-related helplessness behaviors administered in the fall of the year ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Children with a pessimistic explanatory style exhibited more achievement-related helplessness behaviors than children with an optimistic explanatory style. Six months later, measures of the children’s explanatory style and achievement-related helplessness behaviors taken in the Fall were compared to their performance on a standardized achievement test in the Spring to see if explanatory style might predict academic performance. A weak positive relationship was found between explanatory style and academic achievement. Children exhibiting pessimistic explanatory style were found to be somewhat less successful on standardized achievement tests than those with an optimistic explanatory style (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1995) with significant correlations reported for students in grade four ($r = .11$, $p < .10$) and grade five ($r = .14$, $p < .05$) but not for students in grade six ($r = .01$, ns) and grade seven ($r = .12$, ns). A strong relationship was found between teacher reports of helpless behaviors in academic settings and academic achievement six months later for children in all grades four through seven (grade four: $r = .64$, $p < .01$; grade five: $r = .25$, $p < .01$; grade six: $r = .43$, $p < .01$; grade seven: $r = .53$, $p < .01$). The more helpless the child, according to the teacher, the less well the child did on subsequent achievement tests. These findings suggested that teachers were able to identify children prone to helpless behaviors who may also have problems on standardized achievement tests.

Correlational results between explanatory style and academic performance are consistent with older populations. Peterson and Barrett (1987) reported that students with an optimistic explanatory style for negative events received better grades in their
first year of college than those with a pessimistic style, even when measures of ability and depression were controlled. Further, those with an optimistic style had more specific goals and actively sought out more academic advising. Goal specificity and number of advising visits, in turn, predicted GPA. In three different explanatory style research studies, Schulman (1990) found significant correlations between optimistic explanatory styles and better grades for college students as well as fewer dropouts. Similarly, in 1998, Seligman tested 500 members of the freshman class at the University of Pennsylvania and found that their scores on a test of optimism were a better predictor of actual grades during the freshman year than SAT scores or high school grades.

The potential of programs that teach optimism and resiliency skills is supported by the research of Benard (1996), Bernard (1987), and Seligman (1998). Additionally, a positive correlation was found between an emotional intelligence program intervention and improved academic performance for girls transitioning from fifth to sixth grade (Richardson, 2000).

Currently, the Penn Resiliency Project (PRP), founded by Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania, is conducting a large scale study evaluating the effectiveness of the Penn Optimism Program (POP) and Penn Enhancement Program (PEP) in an effort to analyze the long term effects of teaching optimistic explanatory style on elementary and middle school age students’ adjustment, including academic achievement, optimism, self-worth, depressive symptoms and episodes of depression. Preliminary findings indicate a strong relationship between optimistic explanatory style and student adjustment or resiliency factors.

Bernard’s (1987) You Can Do It! Education (YCDI) program, a research-based curriculum influenced by the work of Bandura (1986), Weiner (1979), Rotter (1966), and Seligman (1975) is currently being taught in classrooms to improve student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. YCDI research studies,
to date, have consistently found that students who possess the 11 Habits of the Mind (self-acceptance, risk taking, independence, optimism, high frustration tolerance, internal locus of control for learning, goal setting, time management, tolerance of others, reflective problem solving, and tolerance of limits) achieve at a higher level than those students who do not (e.g., Bernard, 1998, Brooks, 1999).

Sufficient research exists suggesting strong relationships among optimistic explanatory style, resiliency, and academic achievement with a variety of populations. How these relationships translate into effective instructional interventions warrants a closer look as to how optimistic explanatory style and resiliency relate specifically to reading with elementary grade students experiencing SLD. Although a few studies have looked at optimistic explanatory style, resiliency and reading, no studies, to date, have been conducted studying these variables with elementary students who have SLD. Reading interventions for students experiencing SLD in the elementary grades should be studied because of the potential impact of early reading remediation. Students who learn to read early in their schooling can experience success in reading before bad habits are entrenched, motivation is negatively affected and a track record of failure is established that could impact their future school and career success (PCESE, 2002).

Research also supports combining affective and cognitive characteristics during the reading process in order to improve reading performance (Bandura, 1986; Benard, 1997; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1984; Seligman, 1998). Grounded in prior research, this study investigated the impact of optimistic explanatory style instruction combined with specific reading skills instruction during the process of reading on the explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resilience traits, and reading performance of elementary students with SLD who struggle to read in an effort to find a successful reading intervention for them.
Purpose of the Study

One third of all children in the United States cannot read at grade level. Failing to thrive in the general education setting, many of these students have been labeled as having SLD and are placed in special education programs to receive reading instruction. Various cognitive-based prescriptive reading interventions have been the focus of reading remediation over the years with some emphasis on the affective domain. Currently, a body of evidence exists that links optimistic explanatory style and resiliency with higher levels of academic achievement and success in the workplace (Benard, 2000; Dweck, 1982; Padron, Waxman, Brown, & Powers, 2000; Seligman, 1998). Further, a characteristic of reading resiliency, task persistence, has been linked to reading performance (Bandura, 1986; Entwisle, 1987; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1984). No studies to date, however, have been conducted in the elementary classroom with special education students exhibiting learning disabilities to determine if learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the process of reading, in combination with receiving specific reading skill instruction, can improve their optimistic explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resilience, and reading performance.

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to examine the impact of guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction on the explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resiliency, and reading performance of elementary grade level students with learning disabilities in an effort to discover if teaching an optimistic explanatory style, in combination with guided reading instruction, could be considered a viable intervention for improving reading performance. Reading resilience factors explored in this study were attempt persistence and use of a number of different reading strategies. Reading performance factors explored in this study were decoding accuracy and comprehension skills. Explanatory style factors explored in this study were permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization. Reading self-
efficacy factors explored in this study were effort, verbal/written/active responses regarding reading tasks, and responses to the survey measuring self perception of reading ability.

Theoretical Rationale

Explanatory style emerged from two theoretical predecessors, learned helplessness theory and personal control theory. Learned helplessness theory involves individuals’ responses to uncontrollable events and their expectations of desired outcomes as independent of their actions, thus creating a feeling of future helplessness. Personal control theory concerns itself with individual differences in thoughts and beliefs and how these individual thoughts and beliefs influence motivation and emotion.

Learned helplessness was first recognized in experimental animal research. Psychologists immobilized a dog and subjected it to a series of shocks which it could not avoid or escape. Twenty-four hours later, when placed in a situation in which electric shock could be terminated with a single response, the dog sat passively enduring the shock. Dogs in a control group, however, reacted vigorously to the shock and learned readily how to turn it off (Overmier & Seligman, 1967; Seligman & Maier, 1967). The investigators proposed that the dog had learned to be helpless. When originally exposed to uncontrollable shock, the dog learned that nothing he did mattered. The shocks occurred independently of each and every one of the dog’s behaviors. In the learned helplessness model, this learning of response-outcome independence came to be represented cognitively as an expectation of future helplessness that generalized to new situations to produce a variety of deficits: motivational, cognitive, and emotional.

Psychologists interested in human problems were quick to draw parallels between learned helplessness as produced by uncontrollable events in the laboratory and maladaptive passivity that exists in the real world. Thus, research looking at
learned helplessness in people began. Similar to the dog experiments, when people were exposed to uncontrollable events in a laboratory setting, they also showed a variety of deficits in motivation, cognition, and emotion (Hirotto & Seligman, 1975). In an investigation of the similarity between failures of adaptation and learned helplessness, Seligman (1974), proposed that reactive depression and learned helplessness shared critical features, such as causes, symptoms, consequences, treatments, and preventions.

As this research was pursued, however, it became clear that the learned helplessness model was an oversimplification when applied to people. The model failed to account for the range of reactions that people displayed in response to uncontrollable events. Some people showed pervasive deficits across time and situations whereas others did not. Abramson et al. (1978) reformulated the helplessness model as it applied to people. He explained the contradictory findings by proposing that when people encounter an uncontrollable event, they ask themselves why it happened. The nature of their answer—the causal explanation they entertain—sets the parameter for the helplessness that follows. If their causal attribution is stable, then induced helplessness is long-lasting; if unstable, then it is transient. If their causal attribution is global, then subsequent helplessness is manifest across a variety of situations; if specific, then it is correspondingly circumscribed. Finally, if the causal attribution is internal, the individual’s self-esteem is diminished following uncontrollability; if external, self-esteem is left intact.

This new attributional reformulation of helplessness theory left the original model in place with one change. The nature of the deficits created by uncontrollable events are now said to be influenced by the causal attribution offered by the individual. When a person relies on his or her habitual way of making sense of events that occur and offers similar sorts of explanations for good and bad events, this consistent way of explaining things, or explanatory style, begins to influence helplessness and the failures
of adaptation that involve helplessness.

The second predecessor of explanatory style, personal control theory, looks at individual differences and internal determinants. According to Cronbach (1957), people differ in how they make sense of the world, and these differences channel their behavior in some directions rather than others. In this way, beliefs are accorded motivational and emotional significance. Weiner (1986) later described this concept as attribution theory stating that people’s goals and motives are shaped by their beliefs about the causal aspects of the world, or by their explanatory styles.

Within personal control theory, explanatory style overlaps with several theories of achievement. These theories describe the relevance of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), perception or locus of control (Rotter, 1966), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and explanations of negative events (Dweck, 1980; Eccles, 1983; Wiener, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1985) on performance and achievement motivation.

Vroom (1964) introduced expectancy theory into industrial-organizational psychology. He asserted that performance is a multiplicative function of valence (the perceived value of an outcome), instrumentality (the belief that there exists a given performance that will achieve a desired outcome), and expectancy (the belief that one’s efforts will lead to the necessary performance). The theory predicted that when valence and instrumentality are held constant, expectancy will be positively correlated with performance.

Rotter’s (1966) locus of control theory stated that the extent to which an individual has a generalized expectancy that rewards are contingent on behavior will be a determining factor in performance, skills acquisition, and achievement motivation. Studies by Rotter (1966), Lefcourt (1976), and Phares (1976) demonstrated the validity of this construct. The research of McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953), Atkinson (1958), and Crandall (1963) indicated that individuals who express a high need for achievement also tend to believe that outcomes are a result of their
efforts.

Bandura’s (1982) theory of self-efficacy is also related to performance and achievement motivation. Bandura defined self-efficacy as the assessment of whether one possesses the necessary abilities to achieve a desired outcome. Judgments of self-efficacy, he stated, “determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles or aversive experiences” (p.123).

Both Rotter's locus of control and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy are related to explanatory style in internality dimension and causal implications, yet differ in that they approach personal control in generalized and situational terms rather than through habitual individual explanations for events. Explanatory style accelerated along its own line of research when measures of this individual difference began to be developed. Using the Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ), Seligman, Abramson, Semmel, and von Baeyer (1979) determined that people differed with respect to their habitual explanatory tendencies. Those who favored internal, stable, and global explanations for bad events would be more likely to report symptoms of depression than those who favored external, unstable, and specific explanations.

Seligman’s (1979) studies on habitual explanatory tendencies prompted the pioneering research of Dweck (1980), Eccles (1983), and Weiner (1985a) suggesting a correlation between particular explanations for academic success and subsequent motivation and performance. Children who attributed their academic failure to stable and global factors, such as lack of ability or stupidity, were more likely to give up following failure than children who attributed failure to unstable and specific factors, such as luck or lack of effort. Stable and global explanations for failure correlated with resiliency factors such as lower initiative, persistence, quality of problem-solving strategies, and lower expectations for future success.

The current study drew upon the body of work contributed by learned helplessness theory, involving individuals’ responses to uncontrollable events and their
expectations of desired outcomes, and personal control theory pertaining to individual differences in thoughts and beliefs and how thoughts and beliefs influence motivation and emotion. These theories serve as a foundation for this study in exploring how an optimistic explanatory style instruction can affect explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resiliency, and subsequent reading performance among elementary grade students with specific learning disabilities.

Significance of the Study

This study has implications for advancing knowledge and teaching practice in the field of education in the areas of explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading performance with students who exhibit learning disabilities in reading. This study was conducted for three reasons. First, this study sought to further an awareness of the link between the cognitive and affective domains with regard to learning to read. Through their research, Seligman (1998), Dweck (1982), Benard (2000), and Padron, Waxman, Brown, and Powers (2000) established the importance of including the affective domain as a critical part of performing an academic task successfully. They suggested that linking a cognitive skill such as reading with an affective skill, how one feels about his/her ability to read or to improve reading, can create a powerful reading strategy that improves reading performance.

Second, this study proposed to add to the body of work on optimistic explanatory style and its importance in the process of learning academic skills such as reading, particularly with students who struggle with reading such as students with learning disabilities. This study sought to show that learning an optimistic explanatory style could build individual resiliency within a student creating motivation, resourcefulness, and perseverance that could then be applied to the task of reading so that he or she was successful.

Third, this quasi-experimental, repeated measures study sought to contribute to the fields of literacy and special education by suggesting a viable intervention for
improving reading performance for students with learning disabilities. This study
sought to show a strong connection between optimistic explanatory style instruction
and higher levels of optimistic explanatory style, increased reading self-efficacy,
imcreased reading resilience, and improved reading performance. Generalizing the
results and recommendations of this study to other populations who struggle
academically was proposed as a viable consideration for the future.

Research Questions
1. Does guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style
   instruction have a significant effect on reading performance, with regard to number of
   reading levels passed (at 95 percent accuracy and comprehension level 3) for
   elementary grade students with SLD?
2. Does guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style
   instruction have a significant effect on levels of optimistic explanatory style for
   elementary grade students with SLD?
3. Does guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style
   instruction have a significant effect on reading resiliency, with regard to use of
   different reading strategies, for elementary grade students with SLD?
4. Does guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style
   instruction have a significant effect on reading resiliency, with regard to attempt
   persistence, for elementary grade students with SLD?
5. Does guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style
   instruction have a significant effect on levels of reading self-efficacy for elementary
   grade students with SLD?

Definition of Key Terms

**Attempt Persistence**: In this study, attempt persistence was defined as first attempt
(FA) and repeated attempts (RA) or tries by a student to decode an unknown word.
Specifically, in this study, attempt persistence was measured using the *Developmental*
*Reading Assessment* (Beaver, 1996) running record (See Appendices D-G) to tally the number of times a student initially and repeatedly attempts or tries, without teacher assistance, to decode each unknown word for a 100 word passage during one reading session not to exceed three minutes. Making one or more initial attempts and one or more repeated attempts constituted the standard for attempt persistence. Increased attempt persistence from pre to post treatments was used as a measure to indicate increased reading resilience. The 100 word passage was selected from an instructional reading level text in which the student knew 90-94 percent of the words in the text and could answer 80 percent of comprehension questions about the text. Attempt persistence assessments were completed three times during this study at pre and post treatment intervals for repeated measures.

**Attribution Theory:** In this study, attribution theory was defined as how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior (Weiner, 1974).

**Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking:** In this study, the curriculum “Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking” was used to teach an optimistic explanatory style (See Appendix). This curriculum was modeled on Seligman’s (1995) work and covered the four basic skills of optimistic thinking, namely (1) listening to self-talk; (2) evaluating the accuracy of self-talk; (3) generating alternative attributions; and (4) challenging catastrophic thinking.

**Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ):** In this study, the CASQ was used to measure levels of optimistic explanatory style. The CASQ is a self-report measure consisting of 48 forced-choice items describing, in equal numbers, hypothetical positive and negative events (See Appendix I). For each item, respondents are required to choose between two possible reasons for the cause of the hypothetical event. The resulting positive and negative scales measure the extent to which respondents attribute good and bad events to internal, stable, and global causes. An overall score for attributional style is obtained by subtracting the scores for
negative events from those obtained for positive events. Higher scores are indicative of a more optimistic attributional style. The average score for nine-to-twelve-year-old girls is 7.0, a score that is considered optimistic. Scores less than 4.5 register somewhat pessimistic and scores less than 2, very pessimistic. The average nine-to-twelve-year-old boy has a score of 5.0, which is less optimistic than girls overall. Boys scoring less than 2.5 register as somewhat pessimistic, less than 1, very pessimistic.

(See Appendix for scoring details). Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability is moderate at .62 for the overall composite score (Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995). Test-retest reliability of .61 over a 3-month period for this score has also been found (Nolen-Hoeksema et. al., 1986). Seligman and associates (1984) reported adequate internal consistency (a = .50-.73) and test-retest reliability at an acceptable level (a = .71-.80).

Comprehension-Retelling Test: In this study, the comprehension-retelling test used was a component of The Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) that assessed comprehension for a specific guided reading leveled passage (See Appendix H). Specifically, in this study, the comprehension-retelling test was administered orally to individual students to measure levels of comprehension on guided reading leveled passages.

Developmental Reading Assessment: In this study, The Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) was used to measure reading resilience and reading performance variables for guided reading. Reading resilience was measured through a running record process by tallying and coding attempt persistence and number of different strategies used within an instructional level passage. Reading performance was measured by recording decoding accuracy through running records and comprehension scores through story retelling. DRA reading passages and assessments were leveled from 1 to 44 and correlated 1:1 with lettered guided reading levels for K-6 with the exception of level 40 which included two guided reading levels, Q and R.
DRA reading levels included 20 books: A, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 24, 28, 30, 34, 38, 40, and 44. DRA reading exit levels provided benchmarks for expected reading performance. The exit reading level for third grade was level 38, for fourth grade, level 40, and for fifth grade, level 44. A level was considered mastered if the participant scored 94% accuracy or above on the passage and a 3 on the 1-4 comprehension rubric.

Explanatory Style: In this study, explanatory style was defined as the manner in which people habitually explain why events happen to them. Dimensions of permanence involving time (temporary versus permanent), pervasiveness, involving space (specific versus universal) and personalization, involving self (internal versus external blame), influence these explanations and determine if a person has an optimistic or pessimistic explanatory style. Specifically, in this study, explanatory style was measured by the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Kaslow, Seligman, & Tannenbaum, 1978) pre and post explanatory style treatment (See Appendix I). Scores for explanatory style levels ranged from low or pessimistic (1-2) to high or optimistic (10-11)

Guided Reading: In this study, guided reading was defined as a context for teaching reading in which the teacher supports each reader’s development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty. Leveled books ranged from kindergarten to sixth grade. Instruction emphasized specific decoding and word attack skills as well as comprehension skills that helped students make connections to the text. The resource specialist worked with students in small groups of three or four with similar needs. Each 20 minute guided reading lesson followed a three-part sequence: introducing the book, reading the book, and after reading the book. In this study, guided reading was measured by the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) using running records to record reading accuracy and the comprehension-retelling subtest to measure comprehension skills (See
Appendices D-H).

Guided Reading Instruction Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style Instruction: In this study, guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction was defined as an instructional method that blended guided reading skills with optimistic explanatory style skills. The resource specialist coached the students, using a script of suggested prompts (See Appendix M), to apply the optimistic explanatory style skills learned through “Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking” as they learned specific decoding, word attack and comprehension skills in daily guided reading sessions. During guided reading sessions, the teacher reinforced optimistic thinking skills by emphasizing the four basic skills of optimistic thinking, namely (1) listening to self-talk; (2) evaluating the accuracy of self-talk; (3) generating alternative attributions; and (4) challenging catastrophic thinking (See Appendix). The teacher also gave specific feedback to the students as they read that includes: (1) the correct use of a task-specific strategy; (2) the effort and perseverance required for completing the task; and (3) a confirmation to the student that she or he had sufficient ability to successfully manage such tasks (See Appendix M).

Learned Optimism: In this study, learned optimism was defined as the causal attributions people make when confronted with failure or setbacks. Optimists tend to make specific, temporary, external causal attributions while pessimists make global, permanent, internal attributions. In this study, learned optimism (termed optimistic explanatory style) was measured using the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Kaslow, Seligman, & Tannenbaum, 1978) pre and post study (See Appendix I).

Meta-Cognition: In this study, meta-cognition was defined as a student’s ability to analyze his or her own learning during the process of reading. It is characterized by the process of self-talk that a student undertakes during reading in which reading strategies are continually applied and analyzed in order for the child to move through
the text (Schmitt & Hopkins, 1993).

Number of Different Reading Strategies: In this study, use of a number of different reading strategies was defined as the different reading strategies a student uses when trying to decode a word or passage such as (with coding): (1) looking for picture clues on the text page in order to decode a word (PC), (2) sounding out the individual letters in the word (first, last) and then putting them together to form the word (FL, LL); (3) sounding out the word by looking at phonic clusters such as digraphs and diphthongs (CL); (4) looking for word parts or segments such as syllables, prefixes, and suffixes (WP); (5) looking for smaller known words in larger words such as at in mat (SW); (5) thinking of known words that look like the tricky word such as book and look (KW); and (6) using the context of the sentence to see what word would make sense by skipping the word and rereading (RR). Use of a number of different reading strategies was measured in this study using the Developmental Reading Assessment (See Appendices D-F) to record the different strategies used when decoding words within a 100 word passage during one oral reading session not to exceed 3 minutes. The 100 word passage was selected from an instructional reading level text in which the student knew 90-94 percent of the words in the text and could answer 80 percent of comprehension questions about the text. In this study, use of one or more different strategies for each unknown word was used as a standard for successful reading resilience. Increases in the use of a variety of reading strategies indicated whether reading resiliency increased or not for participants. Use of a number of different reading strategies was assessed three times during the study at pre and post treatment intervals for repeated measures.

Optimistic Explanatory Style: In this study, optimistic explanatory style was defined as a person’s use of specific, temporary, and external attributions to explain why events happen to them as opposed to a pessimistic explanatory style where a person makes global, permanent, and internal attributions to explain why events happen to
them. Specifically, in this study, optimistic explanatory style was measured by the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Kaslow, Seligman, & Tannenbaum, 1978) which was administered three times, at baseline and after each of the two treatments (See Appendix I). Optimistic explanatory style levels measured by the CASQ, ranged from low (1-2) to high (10-11).

Reading Disability: In this study, a reading disability was defined as one type of specific learning disability where students possess a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that manifests itself in an imperfect ability to read (OSERS, 2004).

Reading Resilience: In this study, reading resilience was defined as persistence in reading when the text becomes challenging by making a first attempt, repeated multiple attempts as necessary and using a variety of strategies to decode and understand the text. Specifically, in this study, reading resiliency was measured by using the running record of the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) to tally and code student responses (See Appendix D). Specifically, the following variables comprised reading resilience: number of first attempts and repeated attempts combined to form attempt persistence and number of different reading strategies used by the student. In this study, one or more first attempts and repeated attempts made per unknown word and use of one or more differing reading strategies per unknown word constituted the standard for successful reading resilience. Increases in the number of attempts made and different reading strategies used to decode unknown words from pre to post treatment levels indicated increased reading resiliency for the participants. Reading resilience scores for attempt persistence (first and repeated attempts) and use of a variety of reading strategies were recorded by the instructor three times during this study in pre and post treatment intervals for repeated measures. Results were compared within subjects for the two treatment levels

Reading Performance: In this study, reading performance was defined as how a child
performs in reading decoding and comprehension tasks when reading a 100 word passage at an instructional level (90-94 percent accuracy). Specifically, in this study, reading performance was measured by how students scored on the running record and reading comprehension/retelling subtests of the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) that was aligned with the guided reading instructional materials (Fountas & Pinnell, 1986; Simpson & Trevor, 1972) used during reading sessions (See Appendices D-H). Reading performance was assessed three times during this study at baseline and two post treatment intervals for repeated measures.

**Reading Self-efficacy:** In this study, reading self-efficacy was defined as the participants’ personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform reading skills at designated levels. Specifically, in this study, reading self-efficacy was measured by a participant questionnaire (*Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire*) and teacher observation/interview. The four item participant questionnaire was comprised of three forced choice questions indicating levels of reading self-efficacy at pre-study and following each of the two treatments as well as one open-ended question indicating participant perceptions about how the “Bright Ideas” curriculum may have helped the participants reading (See Appendix N). Also, the resource teacher who conducted the study recorded her observations of the participants involving their reading self-efficacy behaviors (e.g. willingness to participate, effort, attempt persistence, optimistic verbal responses) throughout the study to determine differences in how the participants felt about their abilities to read at pre-study and following each of the two reading treatments. Following the study, the researcher collected the anecdotal recordings and interviewed the resource teacher regarding participant reading self-efficacy behaviors as well as her impressions of how the “Bright Ideas” curriculum may have helped the participants’ reading overall (See Appendix N).

**Resiliency:** In this study, resiliency was defined as the ability to develop coping strategies or bounce back despite adverse conditions (Bernard, 1991).
**Running Record:** In this study, a running record was defined as a component of the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (Beaver, 1996) that was used to record, score, and analyze a child’s specific decoding and word attack skills for a leveled passage (See Appendix G). Examples of items scored are: correct words, omissions, repetitions, insertions, substitutions, and asking the examiner to supply the word. In this study, running records were administered orally to individual students in order to measure levels of reading performance in terms of decoding and word attack accuracy.

**Self-efficacy:** In this study, self-efficacy was defined as the participants’ personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform skills at designated levels. Self-efficacy is a key mechanism in social cognitive theory which postulates that achievement depends on interactions between behaviors, personal factors, and environmental conditions. Self-efficacy affects choice of tasks, effort, persistence, and achievement (Locke, Motowidlo, & Bobko, 1986).

**Students With Specific Learning Disabilities:** In this study, students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) was defined as students who possess a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia (OSERS, 2004).

**Teacher Interview:** In this study, the researcher interviewed the resource teacher using a five question protocol to assess student reading behaviors and program effectiveness for the two treatments (See Appendix N).
Summary

An estimated 2.4 million students nation-wide and more than 340,000 students in California, alone, have been placed into special education programs due to difficulty with reading (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, PCESE, 2002; California DOE, 2003). Students with SLD often experience academic challenges when reading that can drain their self-esteem and further exacerbate low reading performance. Believing that they cannot be successful when reading, they often exhibit a lack of task persistence, giving up too quickly when faced with a difficult passage (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999). This need can be addressed by researching viable alternative reading interventions that will help students with SLD improve their reading skills at an early age before their self-esteem and future occupational success are negatively impacted.

Seligman (1998) suggested that one way to build self-efficacy and enhance reading success is to teach an optimistic, motivating style of self-talk, or, an optimistic explanatory style. He explained that explanatory style, based on theories of learned helplessness and personal control theory, is comprised of three dimensions: permanence (permanent versus temporary), pervasiveness (global or specific), and personalization (internal versus external), that affect the way a student thinks about his/her ability to read. A student with a pessimistic explanatory style would exhibit permanent, global, and internal traits, where no condition would be perceived as changeable, whereas, a student with an optimistic explanatory style would exhibit temporary, specific, and external traits where change would be possible. According to Seligman, a pessimistic explanatory style may significantly affect a student’s motivation to read, his/her cognition, and school performance. He suggested that learning an optimistic explanatory style can help students increase resilience and raise reading performance (Seligman, 1998).

Currently, a body of evidence exists that links optimistic explanatory style and
resiliency with higher levels of academic achievement and success in the work place (Benard, 2000; Dweck, 1982; Padron, Waxman, Brown, & Powers, 2000; Seligman, 1998). Further, a trait of reading resilience, task persistence, has been linked to reading performance (Bandura, 1986; Entwisle, 1987; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1984). No studies to date, however, have been conducted in the elementary classroom with special education students exhibiting learning disabilities to determine if learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the process of reading in combination with receiving specific reading skill instruction through guided reading can improve their reading resiliency and reading performance.

This quasi-experimental study examined the impact of learned optimistic explanatory style on the explanatory style, reading self-efficacy, reading resiliency, and reading performance of elementary grade level students with learning disabilities. This study sought to discover if teaching an optimistic explanatory style, infused with guided reading instruction could be considered a viable intervention for improving reading resilience and reading performance.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Approximately eight million students in the United States in grades four through twelve struggle to read, write, and comprehend adequately (NAEP, 2004). More than one fourth of these students have been placed into special education programs because they have been unsuccessful at learning to read in the general education setting (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). In California, the number of students designated as having SLD due to difficulties in learning to read represents one sixth of all identified students with SLD nationwide (California DOE, 2003). Clearly, California is not meeting the literacy needs of its student population. This study sought to explore a solution for this literacy crisis by investigating a viable reading strategy for students with SLD that combined specific affective and cognitive features during the process of daily reading.

Readers who fall significantly behind are at risk for school and workplace failure. The President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (PCESE, 2002) suggested that many students with SLD not only fail to reach the academic achievements of their peers but are also twice as likely to drop out of school. Without a high school diploma, a student’s self-esteem, social development, opportunities for advanced education, and meaningful employment can be negatively impacted over a lifetime (NICHID, 2003).

This study examined optimistic explanatory style instruction as a viable intervention in building reading resiliency and improving reading performance for students with specific learning disabilities. This section reviewed previous research pertaining to explanatory style, resilience, reading resilience traits, and reading performance. The pertinent literature was organized into three broad areas: first, a discussion of optimistic explanatory style and its relationship to self-efficacy, and resiliency traits (e.g. persistence, task involvement, goal attainment); second, resiliency
traits and their relationship to reading performance; and finally, a discussion of research studies involving the impact of explanatory style specifically on reading performance.

Optimistic Explanatory Style, Self-efficacy, and Resiliency Traits

Seligman (1998) defined optimistic explanatory style as the manner in which people routinely explain why events happen to them. Dimensions of permanence (permanent versus temporary), pervasiveness (universal versus specific), and personalization (internal versus external) affect these explanations. A pessimistic explanatory style, (e.g. “I’ll never be able to read this story. I give up.”) exhibits permanent, universal, and internal characteristics that can drain a student’s motivation to read, reduce persistence, and result in reading failure. In contrast, an optimistic explanatory style, (e.g. “This is a hard story. I know I can get this word if I read the rest of the sentence and come back to the word I don’t know.”) exhibits temporary, specific and external characteristics that can motivate a student to persist at the task of reading. Learning an optimistic explanatory style involves a process of cognitive restructuring using a sequence of self-talk steps that when applied to reading can reshape the way a student thinks about his or her ability to read (Seligman, 1998).

An optimistic explanatory style can build a sense of self-efficacy in students or the belief that they are capable of exercising influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1994). Students with assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided (Dweck, 1999). Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. Students set challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure and quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. Efficacious students attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with the assurance that they can exercise control over
them (Dweck, 1999).

Students with learning disabilities often experience poor self-efficacy and show signs of giving up too quickly when faced with a difficult reading passage (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999). Task persistence is a skill that must be acquired by all readers in order to be successful and is especially important when reading expository text such as history and science textbooks, newspapers, and voter pamphlets. By practicing an optimistic explanatory style where students learn to consistently say and eventually believe “I can” instead of “I can’t”, they are more likely to attempt a reading task that is hard and persist at that task using a variety of strategies that they have learned until they can read the word or passage successfully (Bandura & Schunk, 1991; Bernard, 1996).

The following research suggests how learning an optimistic explanatory style and developing a strong sense of self-efficacy can help students build reading resiliency traits needed to read successfully. Reading resiliency traits, also termed coping strategies, discussed in the literature include motivation, initiative, persistence, task involvement, hopefulness, expectancies, problem solving skills, confidence, and organization.

Yates (1999) studied the relationships between primary and lower secondary school students’ optimistic or pessimistic explanatory styles and task involvement from 1993 to 1995. She found significant correlational relationships between students’ optimistic or pessimistic explanatory styles and their task involvement (eighth grade: \( r = .34, p < .01 \); ninth grade: \( r = .27, p < .01 \)). Students with an optimistic explanatory style were found to be more highly interested in, and engaged in, learning tasks than students experiencing a pessimistic explanatory style. Further, task involvement, measured in 1993, was positively correlated to achievement measured in 1995 (\( r = .18, p < .01 \)).

Several school based studies using optimistic explanatory style curriculum to
teach coping skills and self-efficacy are noteworthy. The first, *The Development of Coping Resources in Pre-Adolescence Within the Context of Whole-School Curriculum* by Cunningham, Brandon, and Frydenberg (2000) studied the impact of teaching optimistic thinking skills on the self-efficacy, coping skills and attributional style of fifth and sixth graders. The second, *The Penn Prevention Program, or Penn Resiliency Project* cluster studies originally initiated by Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, & Seligman (1994), studied the effect of an optimistic explanatory style on depression and deficits associated with depression such as lowered academic achievement, lack of coping strategies, poor peer relations, lowered self-esteem and behavioral problems for 10-13 year old children at risk for depression as well as other populations. The third, *You Can Do It! Education (YCDr)* teaching curriculum developed with Weiner’s (1979) attribution theory, Rotter’s (1966) locus of control theory and Seligman’s (1975) explanatory style at its foundation was used in a variety of studies to examine the impact of four basic internal characteristics (confidence, persistence, organization, and getting along) on student’s motivation, engagement and academic achievement.

In 1999, researchers Brandon, Cunningham, & Frydenberg became aware from large scale studies conducted involving depression in children, that approximately one-third of young people could be experiencing difficulties in psychological functioning to such an extent as to interfere with their academic and psychosocial development (Cunningham & Walker, 1999, Compas & Hammen, 1994; Roeser, 1998). In response to this problem, they examined the effectiveness of a universal school-based prevention program, “Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking” (Brandon & Cunningham, 1999) that was designed to increase coping resources in preadolescents through the modeling and teaching of optimistic thinking skills in response to real and hypothetical events. Six classroom teachers implemented the eight week program in their fifth and sixth grade class groups within their regular school curricula. The program material was modeled on Seligman’s (1995) work and covered the four basic
skills of optimistic thinking, namely (1) listening to our self-talk; (2) evaluating the accuracy of our self-talk; (3) generating alternative attributions; and (4) challenging catastrophic thinking (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1999). Pre- and post-program questionnaires on self-efficacy, coping and attributional style were completed by 87 students. After participating in the program, a significant effect was found for time (pre- and post-program) as the repeated-measures factor with the students reporting significant improvements in optimistic thinking and self-efficacy, (Wilks’ ^ = .61, F(4, 79) = 12.41, p < .001, n = 39) as well as a significant reduction in the use of the non-productive coping strategies of worry, wishful thinking, not coping, ignoring the problem, and self-blame (Wilks’ ^ = .70, F(7, 76) = 4.64, p < .001, n = 30). These results supported the feasibility of implementing low-cost, non-intrusive programs in school settings that address the emotional health of students and reduce the number of maladaptive coping strategies. Given that a more optimistic attributional style has been related to improvements in student motivation for learning, classroom behavior, and the acquisition of meta-cognitive skills (Boekaerts, 1996; Dweck & Sorich, 1999), the results of this study may indicate benefits in those areas as well (Brandon, Cunningham, & Frydenberg, 1999).

The Penn Prevention Program (PPP), later termed Penn Resiliency Program (PRP) was formed in 1994 by researchers Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, and Seligman to prevent depressive symptoms among at-risk 10-13 year old children. The PPP/PRP used cognitive-behavioral techniques proactively to teach children coping strategies to use in the face of negative life events and to enhance their sense of mastery and competence across a variety of situations. In addition, the program was designed to combat the deficits associated with depression in children, such as lowered academic achievement, poor peer relations, lowered self-esteem, and behavioral problems. The PPP/PRP sought to equip all children with a validated skill set that would increase their resilience and significantly advance their problem-solving abilities.
The PPP/PRP is broadly composed of two modules: cognitive and social problem-solving. The cognitive component is intra-personal in focus and highlights several theoretical topics germane to cognitive theory as well as the therapeutic skills derived from them. Central to the PPP/PRP is Ellis' ABC self-talk model (A-Adversity, B-Beliefs, C-Consequences); the concept that beliefs about events mediate the impact on emotions and behaviors (Ellis, 1962; Ellis, 1977). Students are taught to monitor their beliefs and evaluate their accuracy in accord with the therapy developed by Beck and his colleagues (Beck 1967; Beck 1976; Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979). Explanatory style is specifically targeted in PPP/PRP. Students are taught the skills for detecting the inaccurate thoughts generated by their explanatory styles, learn how to evaluate the accuracy of those thoughts, and master the skill of reattributing those thoughts to more accurate causal beliefs. The second component is problem-solving. In this component, cognitive skills are explicitly applied to the interpersonal domain. Students learn impulse control, perspective-taking, goal-setting, and decision making.

Empirical trials of the PPP/PRP have been conducted for over 10 years. One of the largest trials and the trial with the longest follow-up period, began in 1990 in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Matched samples were generated in Abington (prevention site) and Wissahickon (control site). Children were screened for risk using three paper and pencil tests of risk factors for depression in children. A single risk score for each child screened was calculated and children were rank-ordered by risk; those 50% most at-risk were offered a place in the study. Approximately 70 children, aged 10-12 years old, were assigned to each of the prevention (receiving the cognitive and problem solving treatment curriculum) and control groups. They met in groups of 10-12 for a period of 12 weeks. Throughout the follow-up period, the children entered a developmental high-risk period for helplessness and depression. Results indicated that the explanatory style of the prevention group children remained more optimistic with a
higher level of coping and problem solving skills across the 24-month follow-up period relative to their control peers.

In 1994, in collaboration with Adaptiv Learning Systems, PPP/PRP launched a research series designed to disseminate the benefits of the PPP/PRP program to as many children as possible. Studies that followed from 1994 to 2000 included a 1994 five-year prospective study with 5th and 6th grade suburban children outside Philadelphia by Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, and Seligman (1994) and team studies conducted with rural youth in Australia (Roberts & Hart, 1998), with Latino children (Cardemil, 1997) and with Chinese children (Yu, 1999). In all studies, findings suggested that depressive symptoms were significantly reduced after the PPP/PRP coping skills intervention with significant differences between prevention and control groups at post and at three- and six-month follow-ups (Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, & Seligman, 1994: F (1,106) = 3.70, p < 0.05; Roberts & Hart, 1998: F (1,94) = 5.48, p < 0.05; Cardemil, 1997: F (1,41) = 10.97, one-tailed p < .001, d = 1.01; Yu, 1999: F(1,99) = 6.49, p < 0.05). Also, in the Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, and Seligman study (1994), students experienced fewer externalizing conduct problems as compared to controls (F (1,60) = 3.02, p < 0.05). Overall, studies involving the PPP/PRP depression prevention and life skills programs showed improvement in children’s explanatory style, problem solving ability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, hope, and physical health.

Bernard’s (1987) You Can Do It! Education (YCDI) program, a research-based curriculum influenced by the work of Bandura (1986), Weiner (1979), Rotter (1966), and Seligman (1975), identified four basic internal characteristics that stand out as being central to students’ motivation, engagement, and academic achievement: confidence, persistence, organization, and getting along with others. These four foundations are supported by 11 attitudes and beliefs labeled habits of the mind (HOMs) which Bernard grouped together and labeled as a Positive Mindset for
Academic Achievement.

Since 1995, YCDI research studies have consistently found that students categorized as achievers were rated by their teachers as higher on all four foundations for achievement than students identified as underachievers (e.g., Brown, 1999; Call, 1999; Pina, 1996). Included in this body of research are studies that suggested that the 11 HOMs are held more strongly by achievers than underachievers (e.g., Bernard, 1996; Brooks, 1999). Of particular significance are the findings of Bernard (1996) who found that regardless of gender, cultural background, academic intelligence or age, students who were rated by their teachers as possessing the 11 HOMs tended to achieve at their level of ability while students who did not possess these HOMs tended to under-perform.

Pruzek’s (2000) research with YCDI found that confidence, persistence, and organization are most closely interdependent and that young people who were rated high in one of the foundations tended to be rated as high in the other two. These three foundations together appeared to be critical to the success of young people performing well in their schoolwork and homework.

Also, in the series of YCDI studies is research by Brooks (1999) and Eddy (1999), four HOMs strongly correlated with academic achievement: high frustration tolerance, internal locus of control for learning, goal setting, and time management. In comparing the HOMs of extreme groups of achievers versus under-achievers, Bernard (1996) found that these groups differed in all 11 HOMs.

Further, YCDI research by Brooks (1999) examined the mindset for achievement in students with learning disabilities classified as either achievers or under-achievers and found significant differences in their four foundations and in 10 of the 11 HOMs. Students rated as achievers demonstrated significantly more positive HOMs than students rated as under-achievers for the following: optimism, internal locus of control, high frustration tolerance, independence, tolerance of others, goal
setting, time management, reflective problem solving, and tolerance of limits.

Carol Dweck’s early research on human motivation focused on helpless and mastery-oriented response patterns in school children (Deiner & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973). Some students, she noted, persisted in the face of failure while others quit as soon as the task got harder. In the 1980s, she began investigating the self-beliefs that lie behind these behaviors and defined two self-beliefs, entity and incremental, that describe students’ implicit beliefs about the nature of intelligence. These beliefs have a significant impact on the way students approach challenging intellectual tasks: students subscribing to an entity belief view their intelligence as an unchangeable internal characteristic and tend to shy away from academic challenges, whereas students who subscribe to an incremental belief think that their intelligence can be increased through effort and persistence and seek them out (Dweck, 1999; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Students who hold an entity belief of intelligence (Dweck, 1999) agree with statements such as “Your intelligence is something about you that you can’t change very much.” Since these students believe their intelligence is fixed, they place a high value on success. Students with an entity belief, worry that failure, or even having to work very hard at something, will be perceived as evidence of their low intelligence. Therefore, academic choices are made that maximize the possibility that they will perform well. For example, a student may decide to take a lower level course because it will be easier to earn an A. In contrast, students who have an incremental belief of intelligence (Dweck, 1999) are not threatened by failure. Because students believe that their intelligence can be increased through effort and persistence, they set mastery goals and seek academic challenges that they believe will help them to grow intellectually. Students’ self-esteem remains stable regardless of how hard they may have to work to succeed at a task (Dweck, 1999).

Dweck also studied the way children answer the question, “When do you feel
smart?" Incrementalists cite times when they put effort into something, don’t understand something and then get it, or figure out something new. In contrast, those with an entity belief of intelligence point to times when a task is easy for them, when not much effort is required, when no mistakes are made, or when they finish first. Insofar as learning involves putting effort into challenging tasks, children with an entity view face a serious problem. What these children do to feel smart (picking easy tasks to guarantee success) and what they must do to learn new things (put forth effort) are at odds (Dweck, 1999).

For the past decade, Dweck and her colleagues have investigated why and how some children face this dilemma. Dweck has identified two distinct coherent patterns in the ways children approach difficult academic tasks. In the maladaptive or helpless pattern, children defined themselves as having failed soon after reaching a difficult problem, usually attributing their difficulties to a lack of ability and predicting poor future performance. In one experiment, the participants even had distorted recall of past successes: more than a third believed that if the earlier problems were administered again they would have trouble with ones that in fact they had successfully solved. Children who manifested a more mastery-oriented, adaptive pattern responded to difficulty by issuing more self-instructions and by planning strategies to overcome failures. In the same experiment, many of these students spontaneously expressed confidence that they would succeed in the future. Twenty-five percent began to use more sophisticated problem-solving strategies than evidenced in earlier, simpler tasks, in all, 80 percent of the mastery-oriented children maintained or improved their strategies as the tasks got more difficult.

In trying to explain these two patterns, Dweck discovered that the two groups focused on different goals, which could lead them to construe and react to events differently. Those students who believed that intelligence was a fixed trait tended to pursue the aim or prove they had it. Setting what Dweck called performance goals,
children with an entity view of intelligence sought positive evaluations of their abilities and tried to avoid negative ones. In one experiment, children who focused on performance goals rejected the chance to learn something new if it involved any risk of error or confusion. They seemed very vulnerable to losing confidence in themselves and thus to falling into the helpless pattern. In contrast, children who focused on mastery and hence set learning goals were likely to persist in the face of difficulty. They saw effort as something that activated ability rather than as an indication of low ability. When facing challenging academic tasks, they viewed these as opportunities to get smarter, a much more adaptive response.

Having studied Seligman’s (1998) work on optimistic explanatory style, Dweck’s (1999) belief is that students can develop incremental intelligence by learning an optimistic explanatory style where challenging tasks are regarded as temporary, specific, and external. By focusing on mastery and setting learning goals, students can learn to persist through setbacks, experience successes, and move toward their full reading potential.

Schunk (2003), Walker (2003), and Chapman & Tunmer (2003) found significant correlations between explanatory style, self-efficacy, and reading resilience skills. Schunk (2003) stated that perceived self-efficacy, or students’ personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels, plays an important role in their motivation and learning. Self-efficacy is a key mechanism in social cognitive theory which postulates that achievement depends on interaction between behaviors, personal factors, and environmental conditions (Schunk, 2003). Self-efficacy affects choice of tasks, effort, persistence, and achievement. Schunk’s research, conducted with primary grade students demonstrated that at the outset of learning activities, students had goals and a sense of self-efficacy for attaining them. He suggested that modeling, goal setting, and self-evaluation should be applied in classrooms to build self-efficacy, motivation, and learning. Walker (2003) agreed with
Schunk’s findings saying that students who were efficacious were more likely to work hard, to persist, and to seek help so that they could complete challenging tasks. He proposed that teachers can better engage students in literacy activities by building motivation and self-efficacy through practices such as giving choice, teaching literacy strategies, creating self-evaluations, and changing the assessment context. When students think of themselves as readers and writers, they actively engage in learning (Walker, 2003).

Optimistic explanatory style has been shown to build a sense of self-efficacy and the resulting coping strategies needed to become a resilient reader. By learning an optimistic explanatory style where challenging tasks are regarded as temporary, specific, and external, students can develop the needed motivation to initiate and persist at a task long enough to experience reading success. This study was conducted to determine if learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the reading process would generate higher levels of optimistic thinking that would increase reading resilience traits, (attempt persistence and use of a variety of reading strategies) and if those increased reading resiliency traits could, in turn, improve reading performance.

Resiliency Traits and Reading Performance

Bandura & Schunk (1991), Bernard (1996), Seligman (1998), Schunk (2003), Walker (2003), and Chapman & Tunmer (2003) have suggested that explanatory style, self-efficacy, and resilience skills (e.g. initiative, persistence, task involvement, and goal attainment) are strongly related and are necessary components of reading. According to these researchers, students practicing an optimistic explanatory style build a strong sense of self-efficacy. This enables them to attempt a reading task that is hard and persist at that task using a variety of strategies that they have learned until they can read the word or passage successfully.

Further, Seligman (1998) has suggested that students’ expectations about their
ability to read are key to successful reading performance. According to his research, explanations students habitually make for their successes and failures lead to expectations that affect their reactions to future successes and failures. These expectations can then create self-fulfilling prophecies that either enhance or undermine reading performance. Expectations can affect performance through a variety of behaviors, for example: taking initiative, persistence under adversity, risk taking, decisiveness, engagement in quality problem-solving strategies, and assertiveness.

The study of expectancies has a rich legacy in the field of psychology. The construct figures prominently in self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997); self-regulation theory (Carver & Scheier, 1981); goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990); attribution theory (Weiner, 1985, 1986); theories of achievement motivation (Atkinson, 1964; Feather, 1982); and Lewin’s work on level of aspiration (Lewin, Dembo, Festinger, & Sears, 1944). In general, this research indicated that high expectancies of success are beneficial. People who expect to succeed perform better than those who are less optimistic. In large part, this is because people with high expectancies of success work harder and longer and adopt more effective problem-solving strategies than do those who are pessimistic about their expectancies of success. These findings fit well with evidence indicating that positive self-relevant beliefs generally have positive consequences (Brown, 1991, 1998; Taylor & Brown, 1988, 1994).

Marshall & Brown (1999) further added to this area of research by conducting an investigation to address the nature of the relationship between expectancies and performance, specifically with regard to a linear relationship and the effects of task difficulty. In this study, college students were asked to predict how many problems they expected to solve on a test involving problem-solving after completing several practice problems of varying difficulty. Half of the subjects were given a set of easy problems to solve; the other half were given a set of difficult problems to solve. To
determine the manner in which expectancies affected performance, the students were divided into three groups: those who expected to solve few of the 10 problems (M = 2.57); those who expected to solve about half of the problems (M = 5.24); and those who expected to solve most of the problems (M = 8.40). Task performance was then analyzed as a function of expectancies of success and problem difficulty. A 3 X 2 (expectancies X problem difficulty) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the data revealed a significant two-way interaction (F (1,132) = 5.52 p < .001). Two effects were particularly noteworthy. First, expectancies had very little effect in the easy problem condition, but a sizable effect in the difficult problem condition. Because an easy task requires little in the way of vigor and persistence, it makes sense to assume that expectancies are not important in that context. Second, in the difficult problem condition, low expectancies were associated with poor performance, but medium and high expectancies were equally beneficial. These data suggested that expectancies do not affect performance at easy tasks, but they did affect performance at difficult tasks. Moreover, when difficult problems were encountered, low expectancies are a liability, but moderate and high expectancies were equally advantageous.

Berg & Lick (2001) studied the relationship between emotional variables that affect reading resiliency and literacy variables in an effort to improve reading performance. In 1998, they began a quantitative survey including 198 Dudelange School Project fourth graders collecting social, education, emotional and cognitive variables. The global data file included more than 270 variables from which they abstracted literacy and emotion variables. Literacy variables included: word recognition, two different measures for reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, and structuring. Emotion variables consisted of: anxiety, test anxiety, school reluctance, stress, stress coping strategies, effort avoiding, zeal, and self-concept. Factor and cluster analysis indicated a strong relationship between literacy and emotion variables. Fifty percent of students with a very low general literacy factor
(cluster of literacy variables) also belonged to a group experiencing helplessness characteristics. None of the optimists belonged to that group. Among 39 students who had top general literacy scores, only two (5.1%) of the group experienced helpless behaviors compared to 15 (38.5%) optimists. Results indicated general literacy factors decreased regularly with increasing values of suffering from school (r = -.55, p < .01).

McClain (1999) conducted another study that examined literacy and reading resiliency factors by exploring the lives of families and successful readers within at-risk environments. This inquiry sought to identify and understand the home and family characteristics that enabled children to rise above their circumstances and become successful readers and literacy users when individuals and institutions suggested that they would fail. In this study, student success in reading was defined as having achieved grade level or better performance on informal reading measures administered by the teacher and economically disadvantaged was defined as having qualified to be a recipient of free and reduced lunch at school. The subjects in the study, six fifth-grade students, came from two low-performing elementary schools in a small Southern city and were classified as both economically disadvantaged and successful readers. A major finding in the study was that all of the families of these students used aspects of a construct called progressive optimism to help their children become successful readers. Progressive optimism was defined as an attitude of hope that changes in circumstances, particularly social status, could and would be made through hard and diligent work. Progressive optimism was described as evoking an expectancy and spirit of achievement and success. Another factor common to all families was their ability to persevere no matter what the obstacles that faced them and focus on literacy as a goal for their children. Because they persevered, their children received the exposure and practice needed to read successfully.

Chapman & Tumner (2003) studied the development of achievement-related
self-system factors in relation to young children’s reading acquisition. They
determined that reading self-concept, academic self-concept, and reading self-efficacy
appear to develop in response to initial experiences in learning to read. They found
that for children who experienced initial and ongoing success or difficulty in reading,
development of relations between reading performance and self-system factors occur
within the first year of schooling. Their studies also suggested that phonological
processing ability and letter-name knowledge at the outset of schooling not only
predicted subsequent reading performance but also academic self-concept and reading
self-efficacy. Children who were deficient in phonological processing or stated a
preference for using text-level cues for identifying unfamiliar words in text rather than
word-level information tended to develop difficulties in reading as well as negative
reading-related self-perceptions. To overcome both skill deficiencies in reading and the
negative reading and achievement related self-beliefs that develop in response to
reading difficulties, Chapman & Tunmer (2003) maintained that appropriate word-
level skills training in combination with attribution retraining methods, such as an
optimistic explanatory style program, be used when teaching children to read.

Similarly, in a research synthesis compiled by Elbaum and Vaughn (1999) of 31
separate studies including students with SLD that focused on self concept and
academic achievement also supported attribution retraining methods to eliminate self-
defeating thoughts and behaviors that are believed to interfere with reading success
(National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999). A meta-analysis was used to
examine the collective findings of this body of research. Results suggested that
reading interventions that were most effective combined a self-enhancement approach
(attribution retraining through cognitive therapy) with a skill development approach
(e.g. teaching decoding and comprehension skills). An effect size of $d = .68$ was
found for this combined reading approach.

It appears from reviewing this body of research that students’ beliefs about
their ability to read and their actual reading skill knowledge affect reading performance. It is necessary to incorporate both affective and cognitive features into the reading process. This study combined attribution retraining (optimistic explanatory style instruction) with decoding and comprehension skill instruction during daily guided reading sessions in order to positively impact reading performance.

Explanatory Style and Reading Performance

Much of the current research conducted involving explanatory style and performance has been correlational or predictive in statistical design and has focused on work achievement with adults (Seligman & Schulman, 1986), on school achievement with college students (Peterson & Barrett, 1987; Schulman, et. al, 1990), on general academic achievement with school aged students (Nolen-Hoeksema & Gird, 1995; Nolen-Hoeksema, Gird & Seligman, 1986; 1992), or on school achievement in subject areas other than reading such as math (Yates, 1998a; 1999a; 1999b; 2000) and writing (Gordon & Mercier, 1996). Most of these studies were also conducted with college students or general education students in middle or high school. All of these studies showed a positive or strong relationship between optimistic explanatory style and work or school achievement. The more optimistic the subjects were, the better they performed at work or in school.

Few studies have been conducted exploring the relationships between explanatory style and reading. The lack of research conducted specifically in relation to explanatory style and reading performance illustrates why this study was undertaken. Further, this literature search has yielded no studies that have been conducted involving the impact of optimistic explanatory style on the reading performance of students with SLD in elementary school. Several studies specifically pertaining to explanatory style and reading will be discussed here that have relevance to the present study.

You Can Do It! (YCDI) educational programs (e.g., Program Achieve
curriculum) developed by Bernard (1996) incorporate the basic principles of attribution theory (Weiner, 1979), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), learned helplessness and optimism (Seligman, 1975), internal motivation (Spaulding, 1993), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986), goal setting (Schunk, 1991), academic procrastination (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), irrational beliefs (Ellis, 1962), and interpersonal cognitive problem solving strategies (Spivack, Platt & Shure, 1976). Incorporating cognitive therapy and optimistic explanatory style (Seligman, 1998), YCDI programs explicitly and directly teach important elements of students’ mindset that help them achieve to the best of their ability as well as eliminate important elements of a negative mindset that interfere with social-emotional development. The teaching curriculum is based on four foundations for achievement: confidence, persistence, organization, and getting along with others which are supported by 11 habits of the mind (HOMs). The following YCDI studies demonstrate the relationships among explanatory style, the four internal foundations for achievement including the 11 HOMs, and reading achievement of elementary and middle school students.

In one YCDI study, Dostal (2000) explored the predictive validity of explanatory style in relationship to reading and language achievement for a sample of 29 7th grade transitioning gifted students. Relationships were examined between reading and language performance and measures of the HOMs. In addition, the concurrent validity was studied between Seligman’s concept of explanatory style and Bernard’s HOM construct, specifically self-acceptance, risk taking, independence, optimism, internal locus of control and high frustration tolerance. The results revealed statistically significant correlations among scores on the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ) Composite with reading total ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), reading vocabulary ($r = .37$, $p < .01$), and language SAT-9 ($r = .35$, $p < .01$) subscales. The strongest correlate of reading and language achievement was the CASQ Positive Events subscale ($r = .52$, $p < .01$). Scores related to the explanatory style construct
and the HOM construct were significantly correlated (r = .43, p< .01).

The Hudson Research Study (1993) explored the effects of the YCDI Program on the reading comprehension of 60 fifth and sixth grade regular education students. Significant differences were found in favor of the YCDI treatment group who received the four foundations and 11 HOMs instruction when comparing pre and post values versus the no-treatment control group on standardized measures of reading achievement (YCDI Group: M = 35.64, 40.50, p<.05; Control Group: M = 37.60, 36.40, p<.05). The results suggested that students who participated in a program designed to teach HOMs associated with explanatory style, achievement, and foundations for learning showed improvements in reading comprehension relative to students who did not receive the HOMs curriculum.

Similarly, in the Campbell Program Evaluation Study (1998), 32 6th grade students who received YCDI instruction demonstrated significant increases in reading and language achievement as measured by standardized test scores relative to baseline predictions (predicted achievement = 21%, actual achievement = 59%). In addition, 96 percent of students demonstrated significant improvements in all four foundations for achievement over the school year (56% of students showed an improvement in levels of confidence, 56% of students showed an improvement in levels of persistence, 32% of students showed an improvement in levels of organization, 32% of students showed an improvement in getting along). This study concluded that YCDI is a value-added element to teacher effectiveness that benefits student motivation, engagement, and achievement.

Two other school-based curricula that show promise for improving reading performance are the Penn Optimism Program (POP) and Penn Enhancement Program (PEP) through the Penn Resiliency Project (PRP), founded by Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania (1994). A large scale study evaluating the effectiveness of the Penn Optimism Program (POP) and Penn Enhancement Program (PEP) is
currently being conducted in an effort to analyze the long term effects of teaching optimistic explanatory style on elementary and middle school age students’ adjustment, including academic achievement, optimism, self-worth, depressive symptoms and episodes of depression. Although empirical results are not finalized to date, preliminary qualitative findings (teacher anecdotal recordings through observations) indicate a positive relationship among optimistic explanatory style, student adjustment, resiliency factors, and reading achievement. Teachers report that students having received the POP or PEP optimistic explanatory style instruction exhibit improved coping strategies, persistence, and reading performance in their classrooms.

This literature search yielded one case study involving explanatory style and reading performance that is noteworthy in that it illustrates that learning an optimistic explanatory style can be instrumental in improving reading performance. Matthews (1978), interested in how a student’s self talk (thoughts about one’s self and own performance while learning or working) could affect cognition and learning strategies, conducted a case study with a college student whose negative self talk interfered with her reading comprehension. The student and teacher were observed in the classroom setting working together during reading one-on-one for eight weeks. Matthews observed that after the teacher heard the student “think aloud,” using negative self talk statements during reading, the teacher helped her student develop more effective learning strategies through a process of self talk retraining, practice using task-relevant self talk, and frequent positive self talk reinforcement. Over the eight weeks, as the student’s self talk became more positive, Matthews observed that she demonstrated increased motivation and persistence and her reading comprehension improved. Matthews suggested that teachers find opportunities to listen carefully to students’ self talk whether one-on-one or in group sessions, to teach students to become aware of what they are doing, and to refocus their thinking and attention in more productive ways.
Although little research have been conducted specifically in regard to the direct relationships between optimistic explanatory style and reading performance, evidence exists linking explanatory style and reading resiliency traits and reading resiliency traits with reading performance to establish a rationale for further research in this area. This study added empirical data to the existing small body of work regarding the impact of optimistic explanatory style instruction on explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading performance. In addition, this study provided research data for an underrepresented population in this area, elementary grade students with specific learning disabilities who struggle with reading.

Summary

In California, the number of students designated as having SLD due to difficulties in learning to read represents one sixth of all identified students with SLD nationwide (California DOE, 2003). Readers who fall significantly behind are at risk for school and workplace failure. The President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (PCESE, 2002) suggests that many students with SLD not only fail to reach the academic achievements of their peers but are also twice as likely to drop out of school. Without a high school diploma, a student’s self-esteem, social development, opportunities for advanced education, and meaningful employment can be negatively impacted over a lifetime (NICHD, 2003).

Previous research pertaining to explanatory style, resilience, reading resilience traits, and reading performance was reviewed in this section. The pertinent literature was organized into three broad areas: first, a discussion of optimistic explanatory style and its relationship to self-efficacy, and resiliency traits (e.g. persistence, task involvement, goal attainment); second, resiliency traits and their relationship to reading performance; and finally, a discussion of research studies involving the impact of explanatory style specifically on reading performance.

This literature search yielded evidence that optimistic explanatory style builds a

The literature reviewed supports the theory that learning an optimistic explanatory style where challenging tasks are regarded as temporary, specific, and external, enables students to develop the needed motivation to initiate and persist at a task long enough to experience reading success (Atkinson, 1964; Bandura & Schunk, 1991; Berg & Lick, 2001; Bernard, 1996; Carver & Scheier, 1981; Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; Marshall & Brown, 1999; McClain, 1999; Seligman, 1998; Walker, 2003; Weiner, 1985). The literature also supports using a method that combines affective (optimistic explanatory style) and cognitive features (decoding, word attack, and comprehension skills) during the process of reading (Bernard, 1996; Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; Elbaum and Vaughn, 1999, Matthews, 1996; Seligman, 1998). Continuing along this line of research, this study examined optimistic explanatory style instruction when infused with guided reading instruction as a viable intervention for building optimistic explanatory style thinking, increasing reading self-efficacy and reading resiliency, and improving reading performance for elementary students with specific learning disabilities.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This quasi-experimental study examined the viability of a reading intervention for elementary grade students with SLD who have reading disabilities that combined both affective and cognitive features during the reading process. The effectiveness of a treatment combining optimistic explanatory style instruction and specific reading skill instruction during guided reading sessions (Fountas & Pinnell, 1986; Simpson & Trevor, 1972) was explored. Using a within subjects, repeated measures design, participants in the treatment group received daily guided reading instruction (GR) for six weeks followed by daily guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) for six weeks including weekly Bright Ideas lessons. Reading performance levels (accuracy and comprehension), levels of optimistic explanatory style, and frequency of reading resiliency traits (attempt persistence and use of a number of different reading strategies), were measured and compared for the participants three times during the study (at pre and post treatment intervals for each repeated measure). In addition, levels of participant reading self-efficacy and participation were measured by participant survey and teacher interview/observation following the study. Treatment comparisons and overall program effectiveness of the “Bright Ideas” curriculum were also measured through teacher interview. This study was conducted to determine if learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during reading instruction could raise levels of reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy for elementary students with SLD who have reading disabilities.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how this research study was conducted and analyzed for meaning. The methodology chapter includes a description of the following: research design, sample, protection of human subjects, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.
Design and Variables

This quasi-experimental study used a within subjects, repeated measures analysis of variance design with one independent variable, a reading instruction treatment, comprised of two levels, guided reading instruction (GR) and guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES). There were four dependent variables, reading performance (accuracy and comprehension), optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience (attempt persistence and number of different reading strategies used), and reading self-efficacy. Over a 12 week period, participants received GR for six weeks followed by GR+OES (including weekly Bright Ideas lessons) for six weeks. Reading performance and reading resilience levels were measured using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA, Beaver, 1996) prior to the first level of treatment and following each of the repeated measures. Levels of optimistic explanatory style were measured pre-study using the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Seligman et al., 1984) and again after each of the two treatment levels to compare differences in levels of optimistic explanatory style. High levels of optimistic explanatory style evident at baseline warranted further analysis of optimistic explanatory style and its relation to the other dependent variables using sub-samples. Reading self-efficacy was measured at the completion of the study using a participant questionnaire and teacher interview. Treatment comparisons and program effectiveness of the “Bright Ideas” curriculum were also assessed through teacher interview following the study.

A reading instruction treatment was the independent variable in this study with two levels: (1) guided reading instruction (GR) and (2) guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES). Participants received specific decoding and comprehension skill instruction through daily, guided reading sessions during the first six weeks with levels of reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience measured at the end of the six weeks. During
the next six weeks, participants received optimistic explanatory style instruction once
weekly using the curriculum, *Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking*, and practiced
the optimistic explanatory style skills learned through *Bright Ideas* in daily, guided
reading sessions that taught specific decoding and comprehension skills. Levels of
reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience were
measured again at the end of the second six weeks of treatment along with measures
of reading self-efficacy. 39 participant observations were recorded for the reading
performance, reading resilience and optimistic explanatory style variables. There were
13 participant observations for the reading self-efficacy measures as these were
administered at the end of the study. Results were compared within subjects for the
two treatment levels.

Table 1 presents the design of this study, the variables, and the measurement
intervals. The variables measured over the course of the study were reading
performance, reading resilience, and optimistic explanatory style. Reading self-
efficacy was measured after the study was completed per questionnaire, but addressed
participant perceptions of reading over the course of the study. The instruments used
in this study were *The Developmental Reading Assessment*, measuring reading
performance, augmented by tally and coding to measure reading resilience (See
Appendices D-H), and the *Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ)* (See
Appendix I), measuring levels of optimistic explanatory style. In addition, a
participant questionnaire was administered to measure reading self-efficacy and a
teacher interview was conducted to assess participant behaviors and program
effectiveness during reading for the two treatment levels (See Appendix N).
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*DRA = Developmental Reading Assessment (Accuracy and Comprehension)
**DRA = Developmental Reading Assessment (Attempt Persistence, Variety of Reading Strategies)
***OES = Optimistic Explanatory Style
****CASQ = Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire

Reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy were the dependent variables measured in this study. Reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience were assessed prior to the study at baseline and following the two treatment levels for repeated measures. Reading self-efficacy was assessed at the end of the study.

Reading performance was defined as how a student scored on decoding and comprehension skills when reading a 100-word passage at an instructional reading level (90-94 percent accuracy). In this study, reading performance was measured using running records (measuring reading accuracy) and comprehension/retelling reading subtests from *The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA, Beaver, 1996)* that were
directly aligned with the leveled guided reading instructional materials used in daily reading sessions. The resource teacher assessed each participant individually. Reading levels passed were compared within subjects for the two levels of treatment. A reading level was considered mastered when participants scored 95 percent accuracy or above and 3 out of 4 on the comprehension retelling rubric for the selected passage.

Reading resilience was defined as a student’s persistence in reading when the text became more difficult (chosen from an instructional level passage – 90-94% accuracy, versus independent level – 95% or above accuracy) by making a first attempt for unknown words, repeated multiple attempts as necessary, and using a number of different strategies to decode and understand the text. Specifically, in this study, reading resilience was measured by the resource teacher who used running records from the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 1996) to observe, tally, and code participant responses for attempt persistence and number of different reading strategies used when the participant read a 100 word passage (See Appendices D-F). Number of first attempts and repeated attempts (for unknown words) comprising attempt persistence, and number of different reading strategies used by the participant were recorded by the instructor in pre-study and post treatment level intervals for repeated measures. Reading resilience scores for attempt persistence and use of a number of different reading strategies were compared within subjects for the two treatment levels.

Optimistic explanatory style was defined as a person’s use of specific, temporary, and external attributions to explain why events happen to them as opposed to pessimistic explanatory style where a person makes global, permanent, and internal attributions when explaining why events happen. Specifically, in this study, optimistic explanatory style was measured by the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Kaslow, Seligman, & Tannenbaum, 1978) which yielded sub scores for the dimensions of permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization and a total score
indicating an overall optimistic or pessimistic explanatory style. An overall score for attributional style was obtained by subtracting the scores for negative events from those obtained for positive events. Scores could range from -24 to +24. Higher scores were indicative of a more optimistic attributional style. The average score for nine-to-twelve-year-old girls was 7.0, a score that is considered optimistic. Scores less than 4.5 registered somewhat pessimistic and scores less than 2, very pessimistic. The average nine-to-twelve-year-old boy had a score of 5.0, which is less optimistic than girls overall. Boys scoring less than 2.5 registered as somewhat pessimistic, less than 1, very pessimistic. (See Appendix I for scoring details).

Reading self-efficacy was defined as how a student perceives his or her ability to read. In this study, reading self-efficacy was measured using a four question interview questionnaire that asked students to reflect on their reading self-efficacy at pre-study and following each of the two treatments. The resource teacher read all questions. Students were asked to respond to three of the four questions with either Good, Okay, or Not So Good. Question four was open-ended where participant responses were varied. This question asked the participants to think about how “Bright Ideas” curriculum had helped them read better. The researcher also interviewed the resource teacher who conducted the study and collected the teacher’s anecdotal records to learn how the students responded to the two treatment levels.

Research Hypotheses

1. Elementary grade students with SLD receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR + OES) will demonstrate increased reading performance with regard to number of reading levels passed (at 95 percent accuracy and comprehension level 3) than after receiving instruction in guided reading (GR) only.

   H1: GR+OES > GR (reading levels passed)

2. Elementary grade students with SLD receiving guided reading instruction infused
with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR + OES) will demonstrate higher levels of optimistic explanatory style than after receiving instruction in guided reading (GR) only.

H2: GR+OES > GR  (optimistic explanatory style)

3. Elementary grade students with SLD receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR + OES) will demonstrate increased reading resilience, with regard to use of different reading strategies, than after receiving instruction in guided reading (GR) only.

H3: GR+OES > GR  (different reading strategies used)

4. Elementary grade students with SLD receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR + OES) will demonstrate increased reading resilience, with regard to an increase in attempt persistence, than after receiving instruction in guided reading (GR) only.

H4: GR + OES > GR  (attempt persistence)

5. Elementary grade students with SLD receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction will demonstrate increased reading self-efficacy than after receiving instruction only in guided reading.

H5: GR+OES > GR  (self-efficacy)

Participants

Thirteen participants with SLD who had reading disabilities were selected for the study. All participants were enrolled in a special education resource program in a suburban elementary school within Northern California. Participants received specialized instructional services in the resource room for a portion of the day, but were mainstreamed in the general education setting for the majority of their instructional day. Participants were selected by the resource specialist from a larger pool of 28 first through fifth grade students with varying specific learning disabilities who were served in the resource room setting for part of their instructional day. The
resource specialist selected the participants for this study based on their difficulty with reading and their age. According to Seligman (1998), students need to be in third grade or above to benefit from cognitive restructuring as presented in the “Bright Ideas” curriculum.

The school was representative of its community, which was ethnically and culturally diverse and of low to middle socio-economic status. The school’s population consisted of approximately 400 students and provided free and reduced lunches to approximately 40% of its students. There were over 50 languages spoken by students. The ethnic backgrounds of students included approximately 30% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Hispanic, 20% African-American, 20% Caucasian and 10% other groups.

Students in the special educational resource program for this school included approximately 28 students that represented a range of 6% to 9% of the school’s total population. The resource program was over-represented by African-American and Hispanic students, at approximately 25% each, and by males, at approximately 60%. The 13 participants in this study included seven males (54%) and six females (46%). There was one third grade student, seven fourth grade students, and five fifth grade students. Nine participants were Hispanic (69%), three were White (23%), and one was Asian (8%).

Protection of Human Subjects

Participants for this quasi-experimental study received the two treatment levels within the special education resource program classroom, the learning setting where they normally receive reading instruction during regular class time. The concepts taught in the two treatment level sessions were from lessons that the participants would have experienced in the normal educational program at their school. The participants were not exposed to a treatment that would harm them or prevent them from experiencing a similar education to what they would receive if they were not in
the study. There was no anticipated discomfort to the participants as a result of the treatments or assessments. All participants were given similar assessments. The purpose of the study was not revealed to the participants until after all data was collected. Participants’ parents or guardians provided informed consent.

The researcher and one resource specialist instructor performed all data collection. All raw data was compiled from The Developmental Reading Assessment (augmented by tally and coding for measures of reading resilience), the CASQ student survey, the Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and the Teacher Interview (See Appendix). All data was transferred to computer files and coded so that no participant’s personal identification information would be attached to those files. The files were kept on removable media and stored in locked files available only to the researcher. No personal identifying information was provided to any person other than the researcher or used in any data analysis or publication related to this study. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of San Francisco.

Instrumentation

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) was given to all participants prior to the study to establish a baseline and at the end of each of the two levels of treatment to measure and compare reading performance (decoding accuracy and comprehension) and reading resilience (attempt persistence and use of a number of different reading strategies). Students were assessed individually using the DRA. In addition, optimistic explanatory style was measured prior to the study using the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ) to establish a baseline and at the end of each of the two levels of treatment to compare differences in students’ levels of optimistic explanatory style. Students were assessed as a group for the CASQ with all questions read aloud and repeated as needed. The CASQ was developed for use with children ages 8-14 and has been used with students who have learning disabilities.
Following the study, reading self-efficacy and treatment effectiveness was measured using a four item participant questionnaire (*Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire*) and a five item teacher interview (*Teacher Interview*). (See Appendix N).

Reading performance was measured using the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) (Beaver, 1996) that assessed specific decoding and word attack skills through running records and comprehension skills through the comprehension/retelling subtest (See Appendices D-H). The DRA was developed in alignment with guided reading instructional materials and reflected what the students had learned from daily reading instruction. DRA reading passages and assessments were leveled from 1 to 44 and correlated with grade levels K-6. DRA text levels corresponded with grade level as follows: K-1 = levels 1-4; 1st grade = levels 6-16; 2nd grade = levels 18-28; 3rd grade = levels 30-38; 4th grade = level 40; 5th grade = level 44. DRA reading exit levels provided benchmarks for expected reading performance. The exit reading level for third grade was level 38, for fourth grade, level 40, and for fifth grade, level 44.

Reading performance was measured three times during this study at pre and post intervals for repeated measures. Reading performance scores were reported in terms of percentages for reading accuracy (decoding and word attack) and rubric scores 1-4 for reading comprehension on each leveled passage. A reading level was mastered at 95 percent decoding accuracy and at a 3 on the 1-4 point comprehension retelling rubric. Gains made in reading for a treatment level were determined by counting the number of reading levels passed by the completion of the treatment level. Treatment level comparisons were then made regarding number of reading levels passed.

For running records, participants orally read a leveled guided reading passage of 100 words in length, as the teacher recorded reading accuracy by marking decoding and word attack errors on a test protocol. Students completed the reading passage
within three minutes or less. Errors included omissions, substitutions, additions, or
asking for the word to be supplied by the teacher. The number of errors was
computed to yield an accuracy score. A score of 95 percent accuracy or above
(maximum of five errors for a 100 word passage) was considered a mastered level of
reading at which a student could read independently.

After the running record was administered and the participant finished reading
the story, the teacher used the prompts given in the reading comprehension-retell
subtest and asked him/her to retell the story in order to assess comprehension. The
teacher was directed to begin the comprehension assessment with this scripted prompt:
“You have just completed reading the book _______. Now you are going to tell me
what the story was about. Be sure to think about the beginning, middle, and end and
include as much as you can about the characters, the setting, and the main events from
the story.” Other prompts followed this script that are designed to help the child
remember and retell as much about the story as possible. A comprehension score was
determined using a four point retelling rubric (one = lowest to four = highest). A
score of 3 was required to meet the mastery standard for that level passage. Students
meeting the required standards for mastery in reading accuracy and comprehension
progressed to the next level passage.

Reading resilience was measured by the instructor through observation, tally,
and coding using the DRA running record protocol yielding attempt persistence and
variety of reading strategies scores. Participants were assessed individually and asked
to read a 100 word passage at an instructional level (90-94 percent accuracy and 80
percent comprehension) so that the instructor could assess resiliency measures for a
challenging text rather than an easy text. While participants read, the instructor tallied
frequencies of first attempts and repeated attempts on a running record protocol for
the passage yielding an attempt persistence score, and used a coding system to record
the number of different strategies used (See Appendices D-G). Reading resiliency
assessments were administered three times during this study, once prior to the study and twice at post treatment level intervals for repeated measures. Each assessment was conducted during one reading session not to exceed three minutes. Reading resilience was reported in terms of frequencies of attempts (an attempt persistence score to include first attempt and repeated attempts) and frequencies of different strategies used.

In this study, first attempt was defined as a participant’s initial attempt or try to decode each unknown word. Using the DRA running record protocol, first attempt was measured by tallying the number of times a participant initially tried, without teacher assistance, to decode unknown words in the passage. Participants who made a first attempt one or more times, when they came to an unknown word in a passage, were considered resilient readers. In this study, increases in the number of first attempts indicated increased reading resilience.

Repeated attempts were defined as number of tries by a participant to decode an unknown word beyond the initial try or attempt. Using the DRA running record protocol, repeated attempts were measured by tallying the number of times a participant attempted or tried, without teacher assistance, to decode each unknown word in the passage after the initial or first attempt. Participants who made one additional attempt or more beyond the first attempt to decode a word that they did not know were considered resilient readers. In this study, increases in the number of repeated attempts indicated increased reading resilience.

Use of a number of different reading strategies was defined as the different reading strategies a participant used when trying to decode a word or passage and was measured in this study by coding the number of different strategies used within a 100-word passage. An instructional level passage and correlated running record protocol was selected from the DRA for these assessments. As a participant read the passage, the instructor recorded the different strategies tried (using teacher generated coding
symbols) on the running record protocol and tallied them to yield a total number of strategies used for that passage.

In this study, the reading strategies measured and teacher generated codes consisted of: (1) looking for picture clues on the text page in order to decode a word (P); (2) sounding out the individual letters in the word (first, last) and then putting them together to form the word (FL, LL); (3) sounding out the word by looking at phonic clusters such as digraphs and diphthongs (CL); (4) looking for word parts or segments such as syllables, prefixes, and suffixes (WP); (5) looking for smaller known words in larger words such as at in mat (SW); (5) thinking of known words that look like the tricky word such as book and look (KW); and (6) using the context of the sentence to see what word would make sense by skipping the word and rereading (RR). Use of a variety of reading strategies was measured in this study by coding the number of different strategies used when decoding words within a passage.

Optimistic explanatory style was measured for each participant at baseline and following each of the two treatments using The Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Seligman et al., 1984). The instructor administered the CASQ in a whole group setting and read all survey items aloud to the participants as they read along. The CASQ is a self-report measure consisting of 48 forced-choice items describing, in equal numbers, hypothetical positive and negative events (See Appendix). For each item, respondents were required to choose between two possible reasons for the cause of the hypothetical event. The resulting positive and negative scales measured the extent to which respondents attributed good and bad events to internal, stable, and global causes. An overall score for attributional style was obtained by subtracting the scores for negative events from those obtained for positive events. Higher scores were indicative of a more optimistic attributional style. The average score for nine-to-twelve-year-old girls is 7.0, a score that is considered optimistic. Scores less than 4.5 register somewhat pessimistic and scores less than 2,
very pessimistic. The average nine-to-twelve-year-old boy has a score of 5.0, which is less optimistic than girls overall. Boys scoring less than 2.5 register as somewhat pessimistic, less than 1, very pessimistic. (See Appendix I for scoring details).

Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency reliability is moderate at .62 for the overall composite score (Gladstone & Kaslow, 1995). Test-retest reliability of .61 over a three-month period for this score has also been found (Nolen-Hoeksema et. al., 1986). Seligman and associates (1984) report adequate internal consistency (a = .50-.73) and test-retest reliability at an acceptable level (a r = .71-.80).

Reading self-efficacy was measured for each participant after the study was completed using a participant questionnaire and a teacher interview. The participant questionnaire, the Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, was a four item questionnaire comprised of three forced choice items and one open-ended question indicating levels of reading self-efficacy at the beginning of the study and following each treatment (See Appendix N). Frequencies of responses to the forced choice items were tallied and means were reported for each item. The open-ended question asked the participants to respond to how the “Bright Ideas” lessons might have helped their reading. The resource teacher read the questions out loud to each participant and the participants marked the questionnaire themselves. In addition, at the end of the study, the researcher interviewed the resource teacher who conducted the study regarding participant self-efficacy behaviors observed (e.g. effort, persistence, positive verbal responses) as well as overall impressions of the “Bright Ideas” optimistic explanatory style lessons and their effect on the participants’ reading self-efficacy, resilience and performance (See Appendix N).

Procedures

In this study, 13 students in grades three, four, and five with SLD who struggled with reading received two levels of a reading treatment for six weeks each, administered consecutively, in their special education resource room during the normal
hours of the school day. The levels of the treatment were administered by their
teacher, the resource specialist, in daily 20 minute guided reading sessions with an
additional 60 minute session once weekly during the second six-week treatment to
teach “Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking.” Students were grouped in small
groups of three and four according to their ages and abilities for the guided reading
instruction sessions. The students participated in the once weekly “Bright Ideas:
Skills for Positive Thinking” sessions as a whole group. Guided reading instruction
(GR) was taught for the first six weeks followed by six weeks of instruction in guided
reading infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) (See
Appendix M). For the second six weeks of treatment, “Bright Ideas: Skills for
Positive Thinking,” an optimistic explanatory style curriculum, was taught once
weekly and reinforced in daily guided reading instruction (See Appendix K). During
the guided reading introduction, the teacher reinforced the four basic concepts for
optimistic thinking taught through the “Bright Ideas” curriculum, and reiterated the
correct use of a task-specific strategy, the effort and perseverance required for
completing the task, and a confirmation to the student that she or he had sufficient
ability to successfully manage such tasks. While reading, when students came to a
word that is difficult for them, the teacher encouraged them to think optimistically,
change negative self-talk to positive self-talk and react constructively by employing
strategies they knew to use. Following reading, the teacher once again reinforced the
four basic concepts of optimistic thinking, and acknowledged the student’s use of a
task-specific strategy, effort and perseverance demonstrated, and the student’s ability
to read successfully.

Guided reading instruction, pioneered in New Zealand in the 1960s, was
developed by Simpson & Trevor and published in the United States by Fountas &
Pinnell in 1996. It was developed to emphasize specific decoding and word attack
skills as well as comprehension skills that help students make connections to the text.
In this study, running records and comprehension-retelling tests were used to assess a student’s reading skills and to match students with the appropriate leveled book for instruction. The resource teacher worked with students in small groups of three or four with similar needs. Each 20 minute guided reading lesson followed a three-part sequence: introducing the book, reading the book, and after reading the book.

Introducing the book: Guiding reading groups of beginning readers began with a book introduction that included a picture walk. The teacher created a scaffold for children to read the book and connected the students’ background knowledge and experiences with the text. A statement was made by the resource teacher as to what strategy was the focus of the lesson. The students did not have the book in hand at that time, but were focusing their attention on the teacher held book.

Reading the book: Goals for reading were set or reviewed (e.g., one-to-one correspondence, using initial sound correspondence). The students then moved into a simultaneous and independent oral reading (not choral reading) of the text. As the students read, the teacher responded to each student’s reading, praising and guiding individuals in the use of concepts of print, and reading skills and strategies. Notes on each reader were gathered at this time that aided in conferencing with the reader, with choosing the next book based on the specific needs of each learner. Many students will have read the book several times during this portion of the lesson.

After reading the book: During the discussion and mini-language lesson that followed, explicit connections between the text and the students’ lives were made and strategy uses were highlighted. The teacher asked, “What were you thinking as you read?” During this time, the teacher focused on a few of the words that troubled the children. Some time spent with “working with words” clarified and reinforced some important skills needed for word identification. It was very important that students were given time to reflect on themselves as readers and how they were meeting the goals they had set for themselves. Each child was asked to answer, “How will what
you learned today help you to read other books?”

“Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking” (Brandon & Cunningham, 1999) consists of six to eight weekly 60 minute sessions, and includes a comprehensive manual for facilitators teaching optimistic thinking skills, together with a student workbook. This curriculum was developed to be used with children ages eight-fourteen and has been used with students with special needs. The sample chosen for this study reflected the population that this curriculum has been developed for and used with. The program material was modeled on Seligman’s (1995) work and covers the four basic skills of optimistic thinking, namely (1) listening to self-talk; (2) evaluating the accuracy of self-talk; (3) generating alternative attributions; and (4) challenging catastrophic thinking (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 1999). Children were taught to dispute negative self-talk in response to real and hypothetical events along internal, stable and global dimensions within the framework of rational-emotive education (Ellis, 1998). Learning was facilitated through the use of stories, cartoons, hypothetical examples, practice, and role-plays. The resource teacher taught the weekly “Bright Ideas” lessons over the course of six weeks and reinforced the concepts taught in daily guided reading sessions. During guided reading sessions, when students came to words that were hard, the teacher reinforced optimistic thinking skills by emphasizing the four basic skills of optimistic thinking taught through “Bright Ideas,” and by giving specific feedback to the students that included the correct use of a task-specific strategy, the effort and perseverance required for completing the task, and a confirmation to the student that she or he had sufficient ability to successfully manage such tasks. The teacher said, for instance, “Great work, Jo! You worked out that the word was ‘park’ because it’s like the word ‘dark’ that you already know! You read well when you use our word tools.” (See Appendix M)

The resource teacher who conducted the treatment sessions for this study was a
veteran teacher and fully trained in guided reading instruction. She has been using the
guided reading method of instruction to teach students with SLD in her resource class
for the last 10 years. She was experienced in using all guided reading assessments and
received three hours of training and pilot follow-up conferencing with this researcher
in order to administer all reading resilience assessments. Reading resilience
assessments (attempt persistence and variety of reading strategies) were audio taped in
order to ensure that all attempts and strategies were accurately recorded. The resource
teacher attended a “Bright Ideas: Skills for Positive Thinking” workshop prior to
program implementation where she was trained in the program principles and provided
with detailed step-by-step facilitator notes and student workbooks. Additionally, she
received a script for infusing optimistic explanatory style strategies into the process of
guided reading. The resource teacher was trained in CASQ test administration and
asked to read all questionnaire items out loud to the students.

Pilot

The resource teacher who conducted this study in the fall of 2006, piloted the
procedures and assessments with a small group of students during the last month of
school in May and June of 2006. All guided reading assessments, including reading
performance variables (accuracy and comprehension) and reading resilience variables
(attempt persistence and variety of reading strategies), were audio taped so that all
student responses could be accurately recorded. Students with SLD who struggled
with reading and who were currently in the resource teacher’s class as fifth graders
were chosen for this pilot. They were not a part of the study in the fall of 2006.
During the pilot, the resource teacher noted any difficulties with the procedures and
assessments administered as well as questions to be clarified so that they could be
addressed before the study commenced in the fall of 2006. No significant changes
were made in instrumentation or procedures. Clarification was given to the resource
teacher regarding the highest level of reading passage to administer and how to infuse
“Bright Ideas” concepts into the language of guided reading sessions.

Data Analysis

A Lindquist I, repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyze the data in this study. Using means, standard deviations, F values, p values, and effect sizes, the results of the pretests for reading resilience, reading performance and explanatory style were compared with posttest results following each of the two levels of treatment, guided reading instruction (GR) and guided reading instruction infused with explanatory style (GR+OES). The researcher examined the differences in pretest scores for prior optimistic explanatory style effect on posttest results. High scores for optimistic explanatory style, new reading strategies and attempt persistence at baseline were evident and following the first level of treatment, therefore, additional sub-sample analyses were conducted and those results were reported. Reading self-efficacy was analyzed using item response percentages and written responses for the participant questionnaire as well as anecdotal responses from the teacher interview.

Summary

This quasi-experimental study sought to determine if learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the process of reading could raise levels of reading performance by increasing optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy for elementary students with SLD who had reading disabilities. The proposed study used a within subjects, repeated measures analysis of variance design with one independent variable, reading instruction, comprised of two levels, guided reading instruction (GR) and guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES). There were four dependent variables, reading performance (levels passed for reading accuracy and comprehension), optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience (attempt persistence and number of different reading strategies) and reading self-efficacy. Over a 12-week period, participants received GR for six weeks followed by GR+OES for six weeks. Reading
performance and reading resilience levels were measured, using The Developmental Reading Assessment, at baseline prior to the first treatment and following each of the repeated measures. Explanatory style was measured prior to the study using the Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Seligman et al., 1984) and again after each of the two levels of treatment to compare the differences in levels of optimistic explanatory style pre and post treatment. Reading self-efficacy was measured at the completion of the study using the Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire and Teacher Interview.

A Lindquist I, repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyze the data in this study. Using means, standard deviations, F values, p-values, and effect sizes, results for reading performance (accuracy and comprehension), explanatory style, and reading resilience (attempt persistence and number of reading strategies) were compared following each of the two levels of treatment. Findings with effect sizes measuring .20-.40 were considered low; .40-.60 were moderate, .60-.80 were strong and .80 + were very strong. Data were examined on the CASQ pretest and it was determined that there was sufficient variance in scores from baseline to GR to warrant further analysis of optimistic explanatory style using sub-samples. Results for sub-samples involving low explanatory style scores after GR were compared with GR+OES reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience scores. Additionally, data for sub-samples involving low attempt persistence and low number of different reading strategies post GR were compared with attempt persistence and number of different reading strategies for those sub-samples after GR+OES. Qualitative measurements were used to measure reading self-efficacy and treatment effectiveness. Reading self-efficacy was measured using a participant questionnaire and teacher interview yielding item response percentages and anecdotal responses. Comparisons of treatment levels and overall program effectiveness of the “Bright Ideas” curriculum were analyzed through teacher interview.
CHAPTER 4

Results

This quasi-experimental repeated measures study compared the effect of two
levels of reading instruction, guided reading (GR) and guided reading infused with
optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES), on the reading performance (accuracy and
comprehension), optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience (attempt persistence
and reading strategies) and reading self-efficacy of elementary grade students with
SLD. During the first six weeks of a 12 week period, participants received daily GR
instruction. This was followed by six weeks of daily GR+OES instruction supported
by weekly lessons using Bright Ideas, an optimistic explanatory style curriculum.

Using a within subjects design, participants served as their own comparison group for
the two treatment levels. Reading resilience and reading performance levels were
measured prior to the first treatment and following each of the repeated measures
using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA, Beaver, 1996). Optimistic
explanatory style was measured prior to the study, using the Children’s Attributional
Style Questionnaire (CASQ; Seligman et al., 1984), and again after each of the two
levels of treatment to examine changes in levels of optimistic explanatory style.

Reading self-efficacy was measured at the completion of the study using a participant
questionnaire and teacher interview. Treatment level comparisons and program
effectiveness of the “Bright Ideas” curriculum were also assessed through teacher
interview following the study.

The participants in this study included 13 third through fifth grade students with
learning disabilities, specifically in the area of reading, who attended a culturally and
economically diverse suburban elementary school in northern California. Participants with identified reading disabilities were selected by the resource specialist conducting the study from a larger pool of third through fifth grade students with varying specific learning disabilities who were served in the resource room setting for part of their instructional day. This repeated measures design yielded 39 participant observations for the reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience dependent variables. In addition, there were sub-sample analyses on all dependent variable measures. All participants received both reading treatment levels. Reading instruction for both treatment levels consisted of 3-4 participants per group. All participants received Bright Ideas lessons together in a whole group setting. The participants’ resource teacher taught both levels of the reading treatment to all participants, administered all assessments, and recorded quantitative and qualitative data for this study.

Results Related to Hypotheses

This study proposed five hypotheses. Results are presented for each hypothesis. For each hypothesis, except Hypothesis 5, additional sub-sample analyses were conducted and the results of those analyses are also reported. To test Hypothesis 1 (reading level) and Hypothesis 2 (optimistic explanatory style), results were compared between the two levels of the reading treatment for the full sample of 13 participants and for a sub-sample of nine participants who scored low in optimistic explanatory style after the first level of treatment, GR. To test Hypothesis 3 (reading strategies) and Hypothesis 4 (attempt persistence), results were compared between the two levels of the reading treatment for the full sample of 13 participants as well as for a sub-
sample of nine who scored low for number of reading strategies used and a sub-sample of four who scored low for attempt persistence. Hypothesis 5 was tested by examining the item responses on the participant reading self-efficacy questionnaire and teacher interview.

*Hypothesis 1*

The researcher predicted that the number of reading levels passed would be higher for participants receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) than after receiving guided reading instruction only (GR). *DRA* reading passages and assessments are leveled from 1 to 44 and correlate with grade levels K-6. A table showing *DRA* text levels corresponding with grade levels and exit levels is presented below.

Table 2.

*Grade Level, DRA Text Level, and DRA Exit Level Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>DRA Text Level</th>
<th>DRA Exit Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>6-16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>30-38</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depending on the severity of the reading disability, students are expected to achieve from one half to one grade level each year in reading (NCLD, 1999).

Hypothesis 1 was supported. The number of reading levels passed at GR+OES
was higher than the number of reading levels passed at GR (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Means, Standard Deviations, F-values, p-values, and Effect Sizes for Reading Levels Passed (RLP) at Baseline and Following Levels of Treatment, GR and GR+OES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>All Participants:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>25.85</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.42</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>30.31</td>
<td>6.77</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>180.21</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
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<td>6.40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low OES Scores:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>25.56</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>.002*</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>28.89</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>196.00</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
<td>33.56</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GR = Guided Reading; GR+OES = Guided Reading Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style; OES = Optimistic Explanatory Style
*p = ≤ .05

Prior to the study, the baseline mean for the number of reading levels passed for the sample of third-fifth graders was 25.85 (SD = 6.56, N = 13), indicating reading mastery at a high second grade reading level. After the first level of the treatment (GR), the mean was 30.31 (SD = 6.78), indicating reading mastery at a beginning third grade level. After the second level of the treatment (GR+OES), the mean was 34.77 (SD = 6.41) indicating reading mastery at a mid-third grade level. These findings represent a reading growth of one third of a grade level after GR as compared to a reading growth of one half of a grade level following GR+OES (see Table 2). Results
of the ANOVA were statistically significant with a greater number of reading levels passed after GR+OES (F = 180.21; p ≤ .001) with an effect size of .68 than for reading levels passed after GR alone (F = 27.42; p ≤ .001) with an effect size of .67.

A sub-sample of nine participants with the lowest optimistic explanatory style scores was examined to determine the impact of GR+OES on the number of reading levels passed. For these nine participants, the baseline mean was 25.56 (SD = 7.40), indicating reading mastery at a high second grade reading level. The posttest mean for the number of reading levels passed after GR instruction alone, was 28.89 (SD = 7.43), indicating reading mastery at an exit level for second grade. After the GR+OES treatment, the mean was 33.56 (SD = 7.33), indicating reading mastery at a mid-third grade reading level. These findings represent a reading growth of one quarter of a grade level after GR as compared to a reading growth of one half of a grade level following GR+OES (see Table 2). Results of the ANOVA were statistically significant for both treatment levels with a greater number of reading levels passed after GR+OES (F = 196.00; p ≤ .001) with an effect size of .63 than for number of reading levels passed after GR alone (F = 28.89; p ≤ .05) with an effect size of .45 (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 2

The researcher predicted that levels of optimistic explanatory style would be higher for participants receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) than after receiving guided reading instruction only (GR). Optimistic explanatory style was measured using the CASQ (Seligman, 1994). The average score for 9-12-year-old girls is 7.0, a score that is considered
optimistic. Scores lower than 4.5 register somewhat pessimistic and scores less than 2, very pessimistic. The average 9-12-year-old boy has a score of 5.0, which is less optimistic than girls overall. Boys scoring lower than 2.5 register as somewhat pessimistic, less than 1, very pessimistic. Results were analyzed for the full participant sample and for a sub-sample of participants who scored lowest on OES as well as for gender differences for both samples.

Hypothesis 2 was not supported for the participant sample of 13. Although not significant, the mean score for optimistic explanatory style (OES) increased following the second level of treatment (GR+OES) except for boys in the original sample of 13 (boys = 6). Further, there was a drop in optimistic explanatory style scores from the baseline to the measure taken after the first level of the treatment (GR) which warranted a sub-sample analysis.

For the participant sample of 13, the baseline mean for OES was 4.46 (SD = 3.78). Posttest means for optimistic explanatory style after the GR treatment level were 2.69 (SD = 5.27) and 2.92 (SD = 2.63) after the GR+OES treatment level. Neither the results of the ANOVA nor the effect size were significant (see Table 4).

For girls in this sample, the baseline mean for OES measured 6.00 (SD = 2.94). Following the GR level of treatment, there was a significant decrease in OES with the mean measuring at .86 (SD = 4.63). Following the GR+OES level of treatment, there was an increase in OES measuring at a mean of 1.57 (SD = 2.07). There was a significant decrease in OES from baseline to GR (F = 9.19; p ≤ .02). Although there was no hypothesis about gender effects, the significant decrease was in the opposite direction to what was expected. After GR+OES, OES scores for girls increased
slightly, but were not significant. OES at baseline for boys measured at a mean of 2.67 (SD = 4.08), increased to a mean of 4.83 (SD = 5.53) following GR, and slightly decreased with a mean of 4.50 (SD = 2.43) following GR+OES. The ANOVA results were not significant for boys following GR or GR+OES (see Table 4).

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, F-values, p-values, and Effect Sizes for Optimistic

Explanatory Style (OES) at Baseline and Following GR and GR+OES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Participants:</td>
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<td>Baseline</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR</td>
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<td>5.27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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<td>GR+OES</td>
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<td>2.07</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GR = Guided Reading; GR+OES = Guided Reading Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style
*p = ≤ .05

The sub-sample of nine participants with the lowest optimistic explanatory style scores had a baseline mean of 3.89 (SD = 3.76). Following the GR level of treatment,
the OES mean measured -.44 (SD = 2.07) with a significant drop in OES from the baseline measurement (F = 9.94; p = ≤ .01) and an effect size of .75, the opposite of the hypothesized direction. Following the second level of treatment (GR+OES), there was an increase in optimistic explanatory style (F = 8.00; p = ≤ .02) with means measuring at 2.22 (SD = 2.23) and an effect size of 1.24. OES mean scores after both levels of the treatment were lower than the baseline mean score (see Table 5).

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, F-values, p-values, and Effect Sizes for Subgroup

Analysis on Optimistic Explanatory Style at Baseline and After GR and GR+OES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low OES Scores:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
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<td>GR+OES</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.62</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>-.67</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR+OES</td>
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<td>2.08</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: GR = Guided Reading; GR+OES = Guided Reading Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style

*p = ≤ .05
When gender was analyzed for the sub-sample, girls scored a baseline mean of 5.37 (SD = 3.08) for OES. Following GR, the mean for OES decreased to -.67 (SD = 2.5), then increased to a mean of 1.67 (SD = 2.25) following GR+OES. ANOVA results were not significant following GR+OES. For boys, the mean for OES at baseline was .33 (SD = 2.08). Following the first level of treatment, GR, the mean for OES decreased to .00 (SD = 1.00). Following the second level of treatment, GR+OES, the mean for OES increased to 3.33 (SD = 2.08) with a very strong effect size of 2.16. The ANOVA results measuring OES were not significant for boys following GR+OES (see Table 5).

Hypothesis 3

The researcher predicted that the number of new reading strategies (NRS) used by participants would be higher after receiving instruction in guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) than after receiving instruction in guided reading only (GR). Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Total number of reading strategies used was measured at baseline and following each of the two levels of treatment in order to calculate the number of new reading strategies (NRS) used from one measure to the next. NRS scores were calculated by comparing the total number of reading strategies taken at each measurement and counting the new strategies that had not been used in the previous measurement. Following the two levels of treatment, means reflected a gain in number of new strategies used when comparing baseline to GR and GR to GR+OES.

The mean for the number of new reading strategies used for the 13 participants when comparing number of total reading strategies for baseline with the number of
total reading strategies for GR was 1.08 (SD = .76). When comparing number of total reading strategies for GR with number of total reading strategies for GR+OES, the mean for the number of new reading strategies used was 1.38 (SD = .77) with a moderate effect size of .39. ANOVA results (F = 1.00; ns) were not significant for this sample (see Table 6).

Table 6.

**Means, Standard Deviations, F-values, p-values, and Effect Sizes for New Reading Strategies (NRS) Following GR and GR+OES Levels of Treatment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Level</th>
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<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRS at GR</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>.39</td>
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<td>NRS at GR+OES</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRS at GR</td>
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<td>.50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>.04*</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRS at GR+OES</td>
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<td>.88</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.77</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Note:** NRS = New Reading Strategies; GR = Guided Reading; GR+OES = Guided Reading Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style
p = ≤ .05

New reading strategies scores were further analyzed for a sub-sample of nine participants who scored the lowest in number of new reading strategies following GR. Means for this sub-sample were .67 (SD = .50) following GR and 1.44 (SD = .88) following GR+OES with a high effect size of 1.16. ANOVA test results were significant (F= 5.77; p = ≤ .04) for this sub-sample.
Hypothesis 4

The researcher predicted that attempt persistence would be higher for participants receiving GR+OES instruction than for participants receiving GR only. Hypothesis 4 was not supported for attempt persistence. Attempt persistence decreased, instead of increasing as predicted, for most participants, with the exception of four participants who scored the lowest on attempt persistence following the first level of treatment, GR only. The scores for this sub-sample of four participants were analyzed as well (see Table 7).

Table 7.

Means, Standard Deviations, F-values, p-values, and Effect Sizes for Attempt

Persistence at Baseline and Following GR and GR+OES Levels of Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Level</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
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<td>.24</td>
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<td>.17</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: GR = Guided Reading; GR+OES = Guided Reading Infused With Optimistic Explanatory Style; AP = Attempt Persistence
p = ≤ .05

Attempt persistence means for the sample of 13 were 11.92 (SD = 5.58) at baseline, 12.77 (SD = 4.55) after GR with an effect size of .17 and 10.77 (SD = 6.48)
after GR+OES with an effect size of .36. ANOVA results were not significant between baseline and GR (F = .24; ns) nor between GR and GR+OES (F = 1.08; ns). A low moderate effect size of .36 was evident for the decrease of attempt persistence from GR to GR+OES (see Table 7).

Means for a sub-sample of four participants who scored the lowest on attempt persistence following GR measured 7.25 (SD = 1.50) and 9.25 (SD = 1.26) following GR+OES, with a very strong effect size of 1.45. The ANOVA for attempt persistence for this sub-sample of four was not significant (F = 4.80; ns) (see Table 7).

Hypothesis 5

The researcher predicted that participants would demonstrate a higher level of self-efficacy after receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) than after receiving guided reading only (GR). Qualitative data were collected using a four item participant self-report questionnaire and five item teacher interview as well as the teacher's anecdotal records in order to measure participant self-efficacy (See Appendix N). On the self-report questionnaire, 11 out of the 13 participants (85%) responded that they felt “Good” about their reading after the “Bright Ideas” lessons. Only 6 of the 13 participants (46%) responded that they felt “Good” about their reading prior to the “Bright Ideas” lessons. When asked how the “Bright Ideas” lessons helped them with their reading, responses included:

“It helps me feel good.”

“It helps me know how to read.”

“I feel good when I read.”
“I know more things to try.”

“They (the lessons) were fun.”

“It makes me happy.”

“Always think positive.”

“I feel good.”

The teacher was interviewed about the self-efficacy behaviors demonstrated by her students after the completion of the study. She noted more positive statements and behaviors during reading sessions as the study progressed. Examples of positive behaviors she noted included smiling, laughing, raising hands to answer questions, asking to read aloud, volunteering to role play in the Bright Ideas lessons, and a willingness to try a harder text. The resource teacher also reported fewer negative behaviors such as putting head on desk, not raising hand to volunteer, making negative statements, use of avoidance behaviors such as asking to go to the bathroom, and refusing to read.

Additional Findings

When interviewed, the resource teacher responded that her students really liked the Bright Ideas curriculum and “really got it.” She was impressed with how much her students had learned in reading over the 12 weeks. Further, she reported that her students were “reading smarter,” using new strategies that they had learned to help them read better. She was not surprised that their attempt persistence decreased as the study progressed. She felt that as the students became better readers, they began to use more effective strategies and did not need to make as many attempts. She felt there was a direct connection between how her students felt about reading, what their
self-talk was like during reading, and their reading performance. She also said that she
would definitely use the Bright Ideas curriculum and optimistic explanatory style
strategies of positive self-talk with future classes of special education students in order
to boost self-efficacy and reading performance.

Summary

The results related to the hypotheses were mixed. Hypothesis 1, which predicted
that the number of reading levels passed would be higher for participants after
receiving guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style than after receiving
instruction in guided reading only, was supported with statistical significance for all
groups analyzed. Hypothesis 2, which predicted that levels of optimistic explanatory
style would be higher for participants after receiving guided reading infused with
optimistic explanatory style than after receiving instruction in guided reading only, was
not supported. Hypothesis 3, which predicted that the number of new reading
strategies used would be higher for participants after receiving guided reading infused
with optimistic explanatory style than after receiving instruction in guided reading
only, was not supported. Hypothesis 4, which predicted that attempt persistence
would be higher for participants after receiving guided reading infused with optimistic
explanatory style than after receiving instruction in guided reading only, was not
supported. Hypothesis 5, which predicted reading self-efficacy would be higher for
participants after receiving instruction in guided reading infused with optimistic
explanatory style than after receiving instruction in guided reading only, was supported
through qualitative data from a participant self-report questionnaire, teacher interview,
and teacher anecdotal records. Additional sub-sample analyses for Hypotheses 1, 2,
and 3 were supported. All results are discussed in Chapter 5, including sub-sample analyses.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction would have a significant effect on the reading performance of elementary students with SLD by improving their optimistic explanatory style, reading self-efficacy and reading resilience. Elementary students with SLD are held accountable for meeting the rigorous academic requirements of NCLB (2002) along with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom. Although teachers are attempting to meet their diverse needs by differentiating instruction, students with SLD still struggle to read and continue to fall further and further behind their peers. Not only do students with SLD experience academic challenges with reading, they also struggle emotionally. Students with SLD often do not have a strong sense of self-efficacy about reading. Feeling that they cannot read, they often experience a lack of task persistence. When faced with a difficult passage to read, students with SLD often give up too quickly which further impedes their reading progress (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999).

During reading instruction, teachers often include affective features in the form of positive reinforcement to motivate students to read or to reward good effort. Rarely, however, are affective features formally included during the process of learning to read with an emphasis on shaping the way a student thinks about reading and his or her ability to read. Benard (2000), Dweck (1982), Padron, et al., (2000), Seligman (1998), and others have suggested that strategies within the affective domain that
foster feelings of self-efficacy must be linked with the academic (prescriptive reading skills) and meta-cognitive (thinking through the text using internal dialogue) processes of reading, especially for students who struggle to read. This study investigated the use of guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction for elementary students with SLD in an effort to find a successful reading intervention for them.

Discussion of Findings

Five hypotheses were tested and analyzed. The first four were analyzed using comparisons of means and standard deviations, with effect sizes and ANOVA tests at α = .05 calculated to determine levels of significance. The fifth hypothesis was analyzed using qualitative data comprised of responses to a participant questionnaire, teacher interview, and teacher anecdotal records.

The first hypothesis predicted that participants would pass a higher number of reading levels after receiving instruction in guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) than after guided reading instruction (GR) only. Hypothesis 1 was supported with a greater number of reading levels passed after GR+OES than after GR alone. Grade level growth measured after GR+OES (approximately one half of a grade level) was higher than grade level growth measured after GR (approximately one third of a grade level) (See Table 2).

The results for Hypothesis 1 suggest that participants experienced greater gains in reading levels passed after receiving guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style than after receiving guided reading only. An increase of one half of a grade level in reading for participants receiving GR+OES instruction was impressive
given the brevity of the treatment period (six weeks) and that all participants had learning disabilities in the area of reading. Typically, students with learning disabilities in the area of reading are expected to increase their reading by one half grade level to one grade level per year of school (NCLD, 1999). In this case, students receiving GR+OES increased their reading by one half grade level in six weeks time, or in other words, in one fourth of the academic year. At this rate of reading growth, students with learning disabilities could far exceed the reading expectations previously held for them and could approach reading at grade level with their non-disabled peers.

A sub-sample of nine participants with the lowest optimistic explanatory style scores (ranging from -5 to +2) was also examined to determine the impact of GR+OES on the number of reading levels passed. Drawing upon the research of Benard (2000), Dweck (1982), and Seligman (1998), the researcher was interested in how students with low optimistic explanatory style would respond to the GR+OES treatment. If participants could reshape their thinking about their ability to read, would they read better? Grade level growth measured after the second treatment level, GR+OES, was almost twice as much as the grade level growth measured after the first treatment level, GR. Results of the ANOVA were statistically significant for both treatment levels with higher F-values and effect sizes following GR+OES than after GR alone (see Table 3). The results for this sub-sample add support for GR+OES instruction for students with SLD who experience low optimistic explanatory style.

These results further support the research of Benard (2000), Berg and Lick (2001), Dweck (1982), Padron, et. al (2000), Seligman (1998) and others who have suggested that learning to read must incorporate important social and emotional
factors, linking individual feelings of efficacy or competency with academic information processing. Research studies specific to explanatory style and reading performance conducted by Bernard (1996), Chapman and Tunmer (2003), Elbaum and Vaughn (1999), Matthews (1996), and Seligman (1998) have demonstrated the effectiveness of using a reading method that combines affective and cognitive features.

During the GR+OES treatment, participants were taught how to improve their optimistic explanatory style through practicing Seligman’s (1998) sequence of self-talk steps that addressed the dimensions of permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization. In weekly Bright Ideas lessons, participants learned how to regard challenging tasks when reading as temporary, specific, and external by learning the four basic skills of optimistic thinking: (1) listening to self-talk; (2) evaluating the accuracy of self-talk; (3) generating alternative attributions, and (4) challenging catastrophic thinking. By thinking about challenging words or passages that they encountered as temporary, specific, and external, it was hoped that participants could see their current reading challenge as changeable and become empowered to try again using new strategies (Seligman, 1998). As the participants persisted in their reading and experienced success, reading self-efficacy improved (Benard, 2000; Dweck, 1982; Padron, et. al., 2000; Seligman, 1998). As reading self-efficacy improved, so did reading performance (Bandura, 1986; Henk & Melnick, 1995; Schunk, 1984). The results of this study suggest that by practicing the Bright Ideas concepts learned in daily GR lessons for six weeks, participants began to reshape the way they thought about themselves as readers and their reading improved.

The findings for Hypothesis 1 may be further supported by the sub-sample
analyses for Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and Hypothesis 5 where levels of optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy increased at a greater rate for GR+OES instruction than for GR instruction only. As levels of optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy improved, the data for these sub-samples suggested that reading performance may have also improved for these participants.

The second hypothesis predicted that levels of optimistic explanatory style would be higher for participants receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) than after receiving guided reading instruction only (GR). Hypothesis 2 was not supported for optimistic explanatory style (OES).

Prior to the study, participants’ levels of OES, as a group, measured at an average of 4.46, indicating a somewhat optimistic score. After the first level of treatment (GR), OES scores decreased significantly to an average of 2.69, which indicated a pessimistic to somewhat pessimistic explanatory style. Following the second level of treatment (GR+OES), OES scores increased to an average of 2.92, indicating a somewhat pessimistic to somewhat optimistic explanatory style. Although the OES means increased from GR to GR+OES, the ANOVA results were not significant. When this participant sample was disaggregated for gender, OES for girls followed a similar pattern with a high OES score at baseline (M = 6.00), a significant decrease following GR (M = .86) indicating a less optimistic explanatory style and then an increase following GR+OES (M = 1.57) with OES also registering in the less optimistic range. OES for boys differed from girls in that OES measured lower at
baseline (M= 2.67), indicating a somewhat lower OES. Following both levels of treatment, OES measured in the optimistic range (GR, M = 4.83; GR+OES, M = 4.50). Although there were gains in means for OES following GR+OES for girls and following GR and GR+OES for boys, none of the ANOVA results for OES by gender were significant. Low to moderate reliability and validity for the CASQ may account for the fluctuation in mean scores among measures for these samples.

These findings do not support the earlier research studies conducted by Brandon, Cunningham, and Frydenberg (1999), Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, and Seligman (1994), and Seligman (1998) which found significant increases in OES following OES instruction. A possible explanation for the lack of significant increase in OES scores following GR+OES could be due to the short treatment period. Although the Bright Ideas OES curriculum has been taught over short periods from six to eight weeks, most of the previous studies presented the OES concepts over a longer period of time, ranging from 12 weeks to five years, with the greatest increases in OES reported after five years (Brandon, Cunningham, & Frydenberg, 1999; Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, & Seligman, 1994, 1998). The research has suggested that OES increases over time for participants who received OES instruction. Data from the current study demonstrate this finding as well as OES in most samples increased as the study progressed. The length of the treatment period was a limitation to this study.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant increase in OES scores following GR+OES could be due to the four participants who had high OES scores throughout the study and the numeric impact of those high scores on the overall calculated mean. In order to examine this possibility, a sub-sample of participants who
scored the lowest on OES was analyzed to investigate whether GR+OES would have a greater impact on their OES scores than GR alone. Evidence to support Hypothesis 2 was found when analyzing this sub-sample of participants. A similar progression of scores for OES was evident for participants with a higher level of OES at baseline, a significant decrease after GR, and an increase after GR+OES. For this sub-sample, the increase in OES after GR+OES was much greater than for the full sample and measured at a significant level (p = ≤ .02). Additionally, when results were disaggregated for gender, a similar pattern was seen for both girls and boys with higher OES scores at baseline followed by a decrease in OES after GR and an increase in OES following GR+OES. These results support previous research that advocated the use of OES curriculum such as Bright Ideas to increase OES (Brandon, Cunningham, & Frydenberg, 1999; Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, & Selgiman, 1994; Seligman, 1998) and were particularly noteworthy given the short six week treatment period for OES instruction.

A possible explanation for higher OES scores at baseline than after either level of the treatment for all samples analyzed (except for boys in the full sample) could be that participants were more optimistic about themselves as readers at the beginning of the school year before they began the hard work of reading. Following the first level of treatment, OES scores decreased dramatically. This could indicate that the participants were struggling with reading and not feeling very successful as readers. Likewise, the increase in OES scores following GR+OES, could indicate that the participants were beginning to read better and feel better about themselves as readers. The qualitative results gathered to analyze Hypothesis 5 offered some support for this
observation and will be further discussed.

OES for boys differed from all other sub-sample analyses with OES measuring lower, rather than higher at baseline, then increasing to an optimistic range following GR with a slight decrease following GR+OES, although still within the same optimistic range. The six male participants included three who had a higher level of OES at the beginning of the study which could account for the elevated baseline scores compared with the sub-sample of three boys with the lowest OES scores.

When comparing girls and boys on OES, overall, girls were more optimistic than boys at baseline and less optimistic than boys following each of the two levels of treatment. Seligman’s research corroborates these findings. In his work using the CASQ, he identified boys as having lower OES than girls in general before OES instruction due to a lack of self-efficacy resulting, in part, from a slower developmental rate and a track record of failure (Seligman, 1998). For the participant sample of 13, girls experienced the greatest gain in OES following GR+OES, whereas, for the sub-sample of participants with the lowest OES scores, boys experienced the greatest OES gain following GR+OES. For both samples analyzed, OES for boys following GR+OES measured in the optimistic range, whereas, OES for girls following GR+OES measured within a lower optimistic range. This study suggested that the second level of treatment, GR+OES, was most effective for boys with the lowest OES scores at baseline (see Tables 4-5).

The third hypothesis predicted that the number of new reading strategies (NRS) used by participants would be higher after receiving instruction in guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) than after receiving instruction in
guided reading only (GR). Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Although there was an increase in means for NRS used following GR+OES with a moderate effect size of .39, ANOVA results (F = 1.00; ns) were not significant for this sample (see Table 6).

These results do not support the research findings of Bandura and Schunk (1991), Bernard (1996), Cunningham, Brandon, and Frydenberg (2000), Dweck, (1999), and Yates (1999) which suggested that students with an optimistic explanatory style were more likely to attempt a reading task that is hard and persist at that task using a variety of strategies that they have learned until they can read the word or passage successfully. The lack of significant gain following GR+OES in use of new reading strategies may be explained by the four participants in the sample who used a large number of new reading strategies over the course of the study raising the mean score for the group as a whole. A typical participant with SLD would be expected to use zero to one new reading strategy per six weeks (Fountas & Pinnell, 1986). One to two new reading strategies were recorded for these four participants following each treatment level. Sub-sample results were analyzed further in order to determine if there were significant gains in new reading strategies for participants not scoring at or above an expected level over the course of the study.

New reading strategies scores were analyzed for a sub-sample of nine participants who scored the lowest in number of new reading strategies following GR. Means for this sub-sample more than doubled for NRS used with an effect size of 1.16 and significant ANOVA results. These findings suggested that for participants with the lowest number of NRS used, GR+OES was a more effective treatment level than GR alone for increasing the number of new reading strategies. These results are consistent
with the research findings from the previous literature (Bandura & Schunk, 1991; Bernard, 1996; Cunningham, Brandon, & Frydenberg, 2000; Dweck, 1999; Seligman, 1998; and Yates, 1999). By learning OES concepts and practicing them within the context of reading lessons, students learn how to change their optimistic explanatory style or self-talk from “I can’t” to “I can” and their feelings of reading self-efficacy increase. Feeling more efficacious, they are more likely to take risks and try new strategies to decode a reading passage (Bandura & Schunk, 1991). Results further support the findings for Hypotheses 1 for reading performance and Hypothesis 5 for reading self-efficacy as well as the sub-sample analyses for Hypothesis 2 for OES and Hypothesis 4 for attempt persistence. As students learn OES, they begin to develop a stronger sense of reading self-efficacy. This increased sense of reading self-efficacy gives students the confidence to take risks and attempt unknown words using new strategies learned. When students make attempts, using reading strategies learned, reading performance begins to improve (Bandura & Schunk, 1991; Bernard, 1996).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that attempt persistence would be higher for participants receiving GR+OES instruction than for participants receiving GR only. Hypothesis 4 was not supported for attempt persistence. In fact, attempt persistence decreased for most participants, with the exception of the four participants who scored the lowest on attempt persistence following the GR treatment (see Table 7).

In their research, Bandura and Schunk (1991), Bernard (1996), Cunningham, Brandon, and Frydenberg (2000), Dweck, (1999), and Yates (1999) suggested that students with an optimistic explanatory style would be more willing to take a risk and attempt an unknown word or words when reading. Bandura (1986) explained that the
process of learning to read requires persevering efforts on the part of the reader and that those who believe in their ability will persist at the task and practice the various reading skills that are necessary for successful reading development.

In the current study, it was predicted that students receiving GR+OES would increase their attempt persistence. The results for the full sample did not show a significant increase in attempt persistence following GR+OES. These results may be explained by comparing the expected level of attempts for a participant with SLD with the attempt persistence means for baseline and each level of treatment. An expected number of attempts for a participant with SLD when reading a 100 word passage, at an instructional level (90-94% accuracy), is approximately 10 attempts. The means at baseline and following each of the levels of treatment were higher than the expected number of attempts, therefore, the data suggested that the participants were already scoring at a high level of attempt persistence and maintained these levels over the course of the study. The number of attempts decreased slightly following GR+OES, yet the number of reading levels mastered increased as evidenced by the support for Hypothesis 1. This decrease in number of attempts may be expected as students become better readers (Beaver, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 1986). As students begin to recognize a greater number of sight words, apply new word attack strategies, and chunk text, fewer attempts were needed to read a passage successfully.

Upon further examination, the range of scores for attempt persistence measured from 3-20. Given this large range, it was determined that further analysis was needed to study the effect of GR+OES on four participants who scored below the number of expected attempts for the passage following GR. Attempt persistence increased
following GR+OES for this sub-sample. Means for GR and GR+OES reflected a gain of two attempts following GR+OES for this sub-sample over the treatment period of six weeks. A very strong effect size for attempt persistence was evident. These results supported Hypothesis 4 and the prior research of Bandura and Schunk (1991), Bernard (1996), Cunningham, Brandon, and Frydenberg (2000), Dweck, (1999), and Yates (1999), however, the ANOVA analysis for attempt persistence for this sub-sample of four was not significant (see Table 7).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that participants would demonstrate a higher level of reading self-efficacy after receiving guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) than after receiving guided reading only (GR). Qualitative data were collected using a four item participant self-report questionnaire and five item teacher interview as well as the teacher’s anecdotal records in order to measure participant self-efficacy (See Appendix N). Hypothesis 5 was supported for reading self-efficacy. Data collected from the participant questionnaire, teacher interview, and teacher anecdotal records suggested that participants felt better about reading and more capable as readers after having received instruction in GR+OES. Responses on the participant Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire indicated that the majority of students felt good about their reading following Bright Ideas. Their responses to the open-ended question that asked how Bright Ideas had helped them indicated that they felt they knew more strategies to try when reading, felt happier about reading, and felt more capable as readers.

The resource teacher who conducted the study reported that the participants enjoyed the Bright Ideas curriculum and understood the concepts taught. She also
reported that her students began making more positive statements during reading, were using fewer avoidance behaviors and were beginning to use new reading strategies learned. The teacher responded that she saw the value of the *Bright Ideas* curriculum and recognized the strong connection it had to the students’ reading. She further volunteered that she would definitely use the *Bright Ideas* curriculum in her future resource classrooms for students with SLD to improve reading self-efficacy and reading performance.

These qualitative results suggested that infusing OES into daily GR sessions could improve reading self-efficacy, reading resilience, optimistic explanatory style, and reading performance. The results were strengthened by the optimal teaching qualities of the resource teacher conducting the study including her optimistic and encouraging style of teaching, her knowledge of working with students with SLD, her expertise in reading instruction, and her meticulous attention to data collection and record keeping. Results were also strengthened by the engaging quality of the *Bright Ideas* curriculum developed from sound research, the clear and practical teaching materials, and easy application within the guided reading sessions.

Further, there is some evidence to suggest a combined effect for Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Findings from full samples for Hypotheses 1 and 5 and sub-samples for Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 tended to corroborate and support each other in suggesting that guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style may improve reading performance by increasing optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading self-efficacy. With limitations acknowledged, sample and sub-sample findings suggested that participants receiving GR+OES instruction may experience an increase
in number of reading levels passed, OES, number of new strategies used, attempt persistence, and reading self-efficacy.

Conclusions

1. Guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) was found to be a viable reading intervention for third-fifth grade students with SLD. It was shown to significantly improve reading accuracy and comprehension over a six week period as evidenced by the number of reading levels mastered. If students demonstrated significant progress in six weeks, there is the reasonable expectation that they would demonstrate greater progress if the time frame were extended to a full school year. Also, if this reading method is effective for students with specific learning disabilities in reading, it would be reasonable to expect that it could help students who are not disabled read as well and that their reading growth might be even greater.

2. Reading self-efficacy improved for elementary grade participants with SLD who received GR+OES as evidenced by qualitative data collected including a participant questionnaire, a teacher interview, and teacher anecdotal records. Students responded positively to the OES curriculum (Bright Ideas) indicating on the questionnaire that they felt better about reading and themselves as readers after completing the Bright Ideas lessons. The teacher reported that she observed more positive behaviors during GR+OES and fewer avoidance behaviors. She also reported that all of her students improved dramatically in reading following GR+OES. Students were beginning to take risks when reading and use new strategies learned. These results suggest that GR+OES may also be helpful to students in the general education setting who lack
reading self-efficacy.

3. Optimistic explanatory style (OES) did not increase following GR+OES for the full sample, however, OES did increase following GR+OES for the sub-sample who scored the lowest on OES following GR. Additionally, there is some evidence to show that boys with low OES may have benefited from GR+OES the most. There is sufficient evidence to warrant future research on the effect of GR+OES with elementary grade boys with SLD in reading.

4. Reading resilience variables, use of new reading strategies (NRS) and attempt persistence (AP), did not increase following GR+OES for the full sample, however, NRS did increase following GR+OES for a sub-sample who scored the lowest in NRS and AP increased following GR+OES for an even smaller sample who scored lowest in AP. These results suggest that GR+OES could be a successful reading intervention for elementary grade students with SLD who do not readily use new reading strategies and who do not attempt to read words or passages that are challenging. Further, GR+OES may be a successful reading intervention for students who are non-disabled in the general education setting who have difficulty making attempts or using a variety of reading strategies to decode a reading passage.

Limitations

The researcher has identified seven limitations to the proposed study. First, the small sample size (N = 13) substantially limited the statistical power of the results which impacted whether findings could be generalized to all elementary students with SLD who have reading disabilities.

Second, length of time for the study was a limitation for two reasons. Since this
study was administered over a 12 week time period, a cumulative reading knowledge effect may have influenced posttest results for reading performance. Also, the length of time for this study was not adequate for participants to develop a significant change in optimistic explanatory style or show significant gains in reading resilience variables.

Third, depending upon the severity of their disability, students with learning disabilities may have difficulty fully understanding and implementing the cognitive restructuring strategies required in order to benefit from an optimistic explanatory style curriculum such as ‘Bright Ideas.’ Students who are successful in reshaping their self-talk must be able to analyze how they think about negative events that happen to them and change their self-talk from negative to positive. This requires higher order cognitive skills as well as patience to practice the skills learned, skills that may be deficient in students with learning disabilities.

Fourth, demands placed on the teacher who taught GR+OES were high. The teacher needed to learn and teach the Bright Ideas curriculum as well as infuse the OES concepts learned into daily guided reading sessions for six weeks. She also was expected to administer all assessments, collect all data, keep anecdotal records, and tape reading sessions. In this case, the resource teacher quickly learned the Bright Ideas curriculum and expertly infused the Bright Ideas concepts into daily guided reading sessions. She administered all assessments, gathered all data and kept meticulous records.

Fifth, the CASQ used to measure OES in the current study has low to moderate levels of validity and reliability. This may explain the fluctuations in participant scores and make findings difficult to interpret. Alternative assessments such as Content
Analysis for Verbatim Expressions - CAVE (Seligman, 1989) may be needed to measure OES in future studies.

Sixth, students may have performed less well in one treatment as compared with the other treatment due to the time of year. The first treatment occurred in September when students were less acclimated to school than they were for the second treatment. The second treatment occurred during Halloween and Thanksgiving which may also have had an impact on results for that treatment period.

Seventh, absences were considered as a possible limitation that could have interfered with participation in this study and data collection. In this study, absences were minimal with missed guided reading, “Bright Ideas,” and treatment sessions promptly made up by the resource teacher conducting this study. The resource teacher and school staff were flexible so that make-ups could be given when students returned to school.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The current study examined two levels of reading instruction, guided reading instruction (GR) and guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) in order to determine if GR+OES could be a viable intervention for increasing reading performance, reading resilience, reading self-efficacy, and optimistic explanatory style among elementary grade participants with SLD.

Because of the small number of participants, the short treatment period, possible cognitive limitations of students with SLD, the instructional demands placed on the teacher, and the unique nature of the study which combined affective and cognitive
features, the study should be replicated, with modifications, to confirm the results. Planning and procedures should be established that allow for the study to occur over the course of an entire school year instead of over a 12 week period. A multi-year longitudinal study would be important to conduct in order to see if the effects of GR+OES persist over time.

The study should include a larger sample of students with SLD in reading. In order to increase generalizability to a larger population, the study could also include students with varying disabilities and ethnic backgrounds as well as non-disabled students in the general education setting. Further research should be conducted with males as the current study demonstrated possible additional positive benefits for boys. The impact of GR+OES instruction might also be explored with younger students in kindergarten, first, and second grades although the *Bright Ideas* curriculum would need to be modified for them. The importance of early intervention in the area of reading is well established in the literature (Beaver, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 1986).

Future studies should select samples to examine that demonstrate low optimistic explanatory style features as well as low reading achievement in order to determine if learning an optimistic explanatory style can make a difference in reading performance. Conducting a single case study with those particular features may also yield important research data to address individual reading needs.

Teachers should receive thorough training in *Bright Ideas* curriculum and methods for infusing the *Bright Ideas* concepts into daily guided reading sessions as well as CASQ administration and scoring. The CASQ, used to measure OES in the current study, has low to moderate validity and reliability. Other alternative
assessments such as CAVE (Seligman, 1989) should be explored in order to
strengthen the findings for future studies. In addition, teachers should partner with
each other to conduct the DRA reading assessments in order to systematically record
reading accuracy, comprehension, attempt persistence and use of a number of different
reading strategies.

In general, the results of this study supported the use of GR+OES with students
with SLD in the elementary classroom. The benefit of using GR+OES as a reading
intervention was not evident for OES or reading resilience variables until sub-sample
analyses were conducted. Participants were selected for the current study because of
their specific learning disabilities in reading and their age. In future studies examining
the impact of GR+OES on students’ reading performance, reading resilience, reading
self-efficacy and optimistic explanatory style, it is suggested that the sample be
comprised of participants who score low on these variables at baseline so that the
impact of GR+OES can be analyzed without a large variance factor.

The study could also be expanded to other areas of the curriculum. The effect of
OES instruction infused into mathematics, social studies, and science lessons could be
studied in the future. Elementary, middle, and high school students could possibly
benefit from OES instruction in these subject areas.

Recommendations for Practical Applications in Education

Elementary grade students with SLD continue to struggle with reading. They are
held accountable for learning the challenging standards-based curriculum along with
their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom. Teacher attempts to
differentiate reading instruction are not meeting the needs of students with SLD and
they continue to fall further and further behind their peers. Not only do students with SLD experience academic challenges with reading, they also struggle emotionally. Believing that they cannot be successful when reading, students with SLD often exhibit a lack of task persistence, giving up too quickly when faced with a difficult passage (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1999). Many students with SLD not only fail to reach the academic achievements of their peers but are also twice as likely to drop out of school (PCESE, 2002).

Guided reading instruction infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction (GR+OES) may provide an alternative to reading failure for students with SLD and other student populations. The results of the current study suggest that students with SLD who received GR+OES significantly improved their reading performance. Bright Ideas lessons are instrumental in teaching students with SLD to learn how to use positive self-talk to improve their feelings of reading self-efficacy. Feeling that they could be successful in reading, students with SLD began to “read smarter” using new reading strategies learned and persisting at the task of reading. “Reading smarter” translated into improved reading performance.

Feeling more capable or efficacious in reading may also transfer to feeling more efficacious as a student in general across the subject areas. Success then builds upon success and the student begins to achieve in all academic areas. GR+OES may also transfer to other areas of the curriculum not only because students are feeling more optimistic about learning but also because reading is an essential skill required for learning all other subject matter. Students must be able to read at grade level in order to master the concepts covered in mathematics, social studies, and science textbooks.
The use of GR+OES is not without its limitations. Because OES instruction requires additional expertise, focus and patience to implement, teachers may struggle to incorporate it within the context of guided reading. Extensive training is required in order to successfully implement the *Bright Ideas* curriculum and infuse it within daily guided reading lessons. Also, the *Bright Ideas* curriculum, although not expensive, is not yet available for purchase in the United States. It must be ordered from Australia which can be problematic. Another factor to consider when using GR+OES is that students experiencing SLD at a more severe level may have difficulty understanding and using the five-step process of analyzing and changing their self-talk. Additionally, assessments administered measuring reading performance and reading resiliency may be difficult for most teachers to do by themselves. Teachers may need to give each assessment by itself and/or partner with another teacher to administer them. Since the CASQ as an instrument to measure OES has low to moderate validity and reliability, another assessment instrument may need to be useful in future studies.

The current study offers some support to the belief that GR+OES may be an appropriate reading intervention for elementary students with SLD as well as other student populations. There is also some support to the belief that students who begin to feel efficacious in reading may also begin to feel efficacious in other subject areas. Feeling efficacious, in combination with being able to read in other content areas, may impact overall academic achievement across the curriculum.

**Summary**

This quasi-experimental study used a repeated measures design to compare the impact of two levels of reading instruction, guided reading (GR) and guided reading
infused with optimistic explanatory style (GR+OES) on the reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience and reading self-efficacy of third-fifth grade elementary students with SLD in reading. The study was conducted in one resource classroom for students with SLD at an ethnically and culturally diverse suburban elementary school in northern California. Participants with reading disabilities were selected by the resource specialist conducting the study from a larger pool of third through fifth grade students with varying specific learning disabilities who were served in the resource room setting for part of their instructional day. Using a repeated measures design, there were 39 participant observations for the reading performance, optimistic explanatory style, and reading resilience dependent variables. In addition, there were sub-sample analyses on all dependent variable measures.

Data collection took place over a total period of 15 weeks during the fall semester of the school year. Participants were pre-tested on optimistic explanatory style, reading performance and reading resiliency variables. Then participants received daily GR instruction for six weeks. This was followed by six weeks of daily GR+OES instruction supported by weekly lessons using Bright Ideas, an optimistic explanatory style curriculum. Using a within subjects design, participants served as their own comparison group for the two treatment levels. Optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience and reading performance levels were measured following each of the repeated measures. Reading self-efficacy was measured at the completion of the study using a participant questionnaire and teacher interview. Treatment level comparisons and program effectiveness of the “Bright Ideas” curriculum were also assessed through teacher interview following the study.
Posttest data were examined and compared to determine which level of reading instruction was the most effective in increasing reading performance (reading levels passed), optimistic explanatory style, reading resiliency (new reading strategies and attempt persistence), and reading self-efficacy.

Results were mixed with a number of limitations making interpretation of the results less powerful or generalizable. Sample and sub-sample sizes were small and limited in diversity. The treatment period was short which impacted the degree to which changes in optimistic explanatory style could occur. Also, the repeated measures design may have had an effect on cumulative reading results that impacted reading performance scores following the second level of treatment. The demands on the resource teacher to infuse Bright Ideas concepts into daily guided reading lessons and conduct the assessments necessary to determine program effectiveness were high. Additionally, due to the low to moderate validity and reliability of the CASQ, fluctuations in scores for optimistic explanatory style occurred making results hard to interpret.

Even with these limitations, there were some significant findings. First, scores were significantly higher for reading performance (number of reading levels passed) for participants in all samples analyzed following GR+OES than following GR alone indicating that GR infused with OES does improve reading performance for elementary students with reading disabilities. Second, qualitative results collected suggested a greater increase in reading self-efficacy for elementary students with reading disabilities following GR+OES than following GR alone. Additionally, data from sub-samples analyzed for optimistic explanatory, use of new reading strategies,
and attempt persistence showed a greater increase in means and effect sizes following GR+OES than following GR alone. This study provided evidence that suggests teaching an OES curriculum such as *Bright Ideas* and infusing OES into the daily process of guided reading can be an effective reading intervention for students with SLD which may improve their reading performance and reading self-efficacy. Findings were less strong for improving OES and reading resilience variables for students with SLD. There is also some evidence that suggests that the impact of such an intervention on reading performance for elementary boys with SLD, in particular, should be further explored.

The design and methods used in this study appear to be applicable to future research, which should involve replication of this study with modifications that control for some of the limitations. Application with students in different educational settings, with different demographics or disabilities, or in different subject matter areas would be areas to consider for future studies. Other studies might involve retesting of the current study participants to determine retention and generalization as well as studies to determine the optimum length and depth of instruction needed to produce reasonable results.

Implications for educational practice include use of GR+OES as a reading intervention for elementary students with SLD in reading. Also, teachers may want to infuse OES instruction into other areas of the content for students with SLD as a strong sense of self-efficacy and reading mastery are required in order for students to be successful in all subjects. Students in the general education setting may also benefit from GR+OES instruction and OES infused into other content areas. Teachers need to
be aware that teaching OES curriculum and infusing OES concepts into daily lessons requires adequate time for students to benefit from OES instruction, additional training, pedagogical skills, skills in assessment administration, procurement of OES materials, and support from all stakeholders.
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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Purpose and Background

Mrs. Melba Rhodes-Stanford, a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is conducting a study examining the impact of learned optimistic explanatory style on reading resilience and reading performance of students with specific reading learning disabilities. An estimated 2.4 million students nation-wide have been placed into special education programs due to difficulty with reading. Without the ability to read, these students will have limited opportunities for academic and occupational success. The researchers are interested in finding a viable reading intervention for students with specific reading learning disabilities that will help them become successful readers. This study will seek to learn if elementary students with specific learning disabilities can improve their reading resilience and overall reading performance by learning and practicing an optimistic explanatory style during the process of guided reading in combination with learning and practicing specific reading skills.

My child is being asked to participate because he/she is a student with specific learning disabilities who struggles with reading.

Procedures

If I agree to allow my child to be in this study, the following will happen:

1. He/she will receive instruction in guided reading for six weeks followed by guided reading infused with optimistic explanatory style instruction the next six weeks.
2. He/she will be assessed three times over the course of the study for reading performance and reading resilience using the Developmental Reading Assessment and two times over the course of the study for optimistic explanatory style using the Children’s Attributional Style Survey (CASQ).

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. My child may become uncomfortable or upset during the reading sessions or optimistic explanatory style lessons. If this happens, the researchers will make every attempt to comfort my child. If my child continues to be upset, the researchers will return my child to the general education classroom. I will be contacted as soon as possible if this occurs.
2. Participation in this research study may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have
access to the files.

Benefits
The anticipated benefit to my child will be higher levels of optimistic explanatory style, reading resilience, and reading performance.

Costs/Financial Considerations
There will be no costs to me or to my child as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement
Neither I nor my child will be reimbursed for participation in this study.

Questions
I have talked to Mrs. Melba Rhodes-Stanford or Mrs. Kalmanash about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call them at (408)-423-1800.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researchers. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by FAX at (415) 422-5528, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Consent
I have been given a copy of the “Research Subject’s Bill of Rights,” and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to have my child be in this study, or to withdraw my child from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to have my child participate in this study will have no influence on my child’s present or future status as a student in the Santa Clara Unified School District’s elementary schools.

My signature below indicates that I agree to allow my child to participate in this study.

__________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Subject’s Parent/Guardian Date of Signature

__________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date of Signature
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUBJECT’S BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study.

As a research subject, I have the following rights:

(1) To be told what the study is trying to find out;

(2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;

(3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;

(4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;

(5) To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;

(6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;

(7) To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;

(8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;

(9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and

(10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.
If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415)422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Department of Counseling Psychology, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

IRBPHS 2001 MANUAL
APPENDIX C

Permission Letter From Institutional Management

Santa Clara Unified School District
1889 Lawrence Road, PO Box 397
Santa Clara, California 95052-0397

April 24, 2006

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Santa Clara Unified School District, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Mrs. Melba Rhodes-Stanford, a student at USF. We are aware that Mrs. Rhodes-Stanford intends to conduct her research by using two different reading treatment methods with students experiencing specific reading learning disabilities in one of our school’s resource classes. We also understand that Mrs. Rhodes-Stanford will use the Developmental Reading Assessment to measure reading accuracy and comprehension augmented by tally recording for reading resilience pre and post treatment and the Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire to measure optimistic explanatory style pre and post study.

As superintendent of the Santa Clara Unified School District, I am responsible for all personnel. I give Mrs. Rhodes-Stanford permission to conduct her research in schools within our school district.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at (408) 423-2005.

Sincerely,

Rod Adams, Superintendent
Santa Clara Unified School District
APPENDIX D

DEVELOPMENTAL READING ASSESSMENT RECORDING FORM
Running Record and Comprehension-Retelling Protocol For Measuring
Reading Resilience (Attempt Persistence and Use of a Variety of Strategies)
Reading Performance (Decoding Accuracy and Comprehension)

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ______________
STORY PASSAGE: ___________________________
LEVEL: ___________________________

READING RESILIENCE MEASURES: Use With DRA Running Record
1. Attempt Persistence:
   _____Number of First Attempts For Unknown Words
   _____Number of Repeated Attempts For Unknown Words
   _____Total Number of Attempts Made

2. Use of a Variety of reading Strategies: Use With DRA Running Record
   Number of:
   _____Picture Clues (PC)
   _____Letters – First, Last (FL, LL)
   _____Phonic Clusters (CL)
   _____Word Parts (WP)
   _____Small words Within Larger Words (SW)
   _____Known Words That Look Like Unknown Word (KW)
   _____Rereading (RR)
   _____Total Number of Different Strategies Used

READING PERFORMANCE MEASURES: Use With DRA Running Record and
Comprehension-Retelling Test

1. Decoding Accuracy: Use DRA Running Record Attached
   _____Miscues (Substitutions, Omissions, Insertions, Told, Appeal/Told)
   _____Accuracy Rate (Percentage Correct for 100 Word Passage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>99</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>97</th>
<th>96</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>94</th>
<th>93</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>91</th>
<th>90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miscues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Comprehension: Use DRA Comprehension-Retelling Test Attached
   _____Retelling Score (1 to 4)
   4 = Complete Understanding (See Appendix H For Descriptions)
   3 = Adequate Understanding
   2 = Partial Understanding
   1 = Limited Understanding
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE DRA STUDENT READING TEXT

Story Text – “Danger in the Deep”
(100 Word Assessment)

Written by Charles Coombs
Celebration Press, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc.

Directions: The student individually reads the following 100 word passage aloud to the teacher.

Stan Holmes was tugging the straps of his rubber swim fins over his heels when he saw Doug Sanders coming down the bluff that overlooked Rocky Cove. There was no mistaking Doug’s familiar light-blue trunks or his old gray sweat shirt with the big hole in the left elbow. Doug carried a fish spear over one shoulder. Dangling from it were his swim fins and a diving mask. In the other hand he carried an inflated inner tube with a gunny sack tied to it.

“Hi,” said Doug as he dumped his diving gear on the sand beside Stan.

(Story continues, but this is the end of the 100 word passage to be assessed)
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE TEXT FOR ADMINISTERING A RUNNING RECORD

Story Text – “Danger in the Deep”
(100 Word Assessment)
Written by Charles Coombs
Celebration Press, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc.

Directions: As the student reads the following passage aloud, the teacher marks
the text using running record procedures and conventions (see Appendix G) and
later records them on the DRA Recording Form (see Appendix D).

Stan Holmes was tugging the straps of his rubber swim fins
over his heels when he saw Doug Sanders coming down the
bluff that overlooked Rocky Cove. There was no mistaking
Doug’s familiar light-blue trunks or his old gray sweat shirt
with the big hole in the left elbow. Doug carried a fish
spear over one shoulder. Dangling from it were his swim
fins and a diving mask. In the other hand he carried an
inflated inner tube with a gunny sack tied to it.

“Hi,” said Doug as he dumped his diving gear on the sand
beside Stan.
APPENDIX G

RUNNING RECORD PROCEDURES

A running record of oral text reading is one of the tasks Marie Clay (1973) describes in her book, An Observational Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. It can be awkward to choose the right text level at which to start testing a child. Often it helps to ask the child which text they can read. They usually have a pretty good idea about how they read. Start with where the child suggests and go harder or easier depending on the results of the first book. The goal is to find the highest-level text that the child can read at a 90% accuracy level and comprehend at a level 3 and read at a fluency level of 3 based on the included rubrics.

Be sure to read the book introduction to the child and then let the child look at all the pages in the story before the child begins to read. You can read the book introduction twice (once before looking at the pictures and once after) if you like. It seems to help focus the child before looking at the pictures and before reading.

For each text, the number of allowable errors is noted. Therefore, when you are testing a child on a text that is hard and the child makes one more than the allowable number of errors, STOP the child from reading the rest of the text.

It is NOT AN ERROR when the child:
   ..Rereads or repeats a word, sentence, or phrase
   ..Self-correction a mistake without help from the tester
   ..Appeals for help on a word, but then solves it on his/her own
   ..Teacher encourages child to try to solve the word by him/herself
   ..Child pauses

Record as AN ERROR when the child:
   ..Substitutes a word for the correct word (-1)
   ..Omits a word (except a proper name which is in italics) (-1)
   ..Omits a word ending (-1)
   ..Omits a line (-1 for each word on the line)
   ..Omits a page (-1)
   ..Adds a word or phrase (-1 for each added word, but number cannot be more than the number of words on the page)
   ..Asks/looks up for help twice for one word and the teacher gives a told (T) (-1)
   ..Substitutes a proper name (subsequent substitutions do not count as errors)

Administering the Task: See the top of each Running Record Form (Appendix F).

Scoring: Use the DRA Recording Form (Appendix D).
RUNNING RECORD CONVENTIONS

**Accurate Behaviors:**

- Accurate reading of each word
- Repetition of word or words (R)
- Self-correction (SC)
- Appeal (A)- (Child appeals, teacher encourages to try, child reads word)

**Teacher Marks:**

- Check mark over each correct word
- Check mark over word with R next to it
- Line drawn back to word(s) repeated
- Write child’s response over correct word
- Write A over unknown word and then a check mark if child reads word correctly

**Each of the following count as one error:**

- Substitution (-1)
- Omission (-1)
- Insertion (-1)
- Told (T) (-1)
- Appeal/Told (-1)
- Try that again (TTA) (-1)

- Write child’s response over word in book
- Write a – over word in book left out
- Write the word child added over space in text where inserted, write – under it.
- Write T over unknown word
- Write A over word when child appeals, then T when teacher supplies the word
- Write TTA over words when child jumbles a group of words and tries again.
APPENDIX H

READING COMPREHENSION/RETELLING

Directions:
Once the teacher has done the running record and the student finishes reading the rest of the book independently, the teacher says, “You have just finished reading the book (give the book title). Now you’re going to tell me what the story was about. Be sure to think about the beginning, middle and end and include as much as you can remember about the characters, the setting and the main events from the story.”

Retelling Prompts:
The teacher may use any of the following:
  - What else can you tell me?
  - Who else was in the story?
  - What else happened in the story?”
  - What happened after such-and-such?
  - Where/when did the story take place?
  - What comes next?
  - When did the story happen?
  - Then what happened?
  - What was the author trying to say when he/she wrote the story?

Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine if the student comprehended the story based on the following rubric:

Retelling Rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rubric Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Complete Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Gives an accurate retelling that summarizes the story using notable details. Identifies an important idea(s). Makes text connections, inferences, reflections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Adequate Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Uses some/most story elements (character, setting, conflict, sequences of events, resolution). Gives relatively accurate retelling (beginning, middle, end). Gives the gist of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Partial Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Beginning awareness of event sequence. Includes some details of the story elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Limited Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Random response. May be related to story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring: A score of 3 is required to meet the standard. (Record on Running Record Form)
APPENDIX I

CHILDREN’S ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE
(CASQ)

1. You get an A on a test.  
   A. I am smart.  
   B. I am good in the subject that the test was in.  
   PvG  
   1  
   0

2. You play a game with some friends and you win.  
   A. The people that I played with did not play the game well.  
   B. I play that game well.  
   PsG  
   0  
   1

3. You spend a night at a friend’s house and you have a good time.  
   A. My friend was in a friendly mood that night.  
   B. Everyone in my friend’s family was in a friendly mood that night.  
   PvG  
   0  
   1

4. You go on a vacation with a group of people and you have fun.  
   A. I was in a good mood.  
   B. The people I was with were in good moods.  
   PsG  
   1  
   0

5. All of your friends catch a cold except you.  
   A. I have been healthy lately.  
   B. I am a healthy person.  
   PmG  
   0  
   1

6. Your pet gets run over by a car.  
   A. I don’t take good care of my pets.  
   B. Drivers are not cautious enough.  
   PsB  
   1  
   0

7. Some kids you know say that they don’t like you.  
   A. Once in a while people are mean to me.  
   B. Once in a while I am mean to other people.  
   PsB  
   0  
   1

8. You get very good grades.  
   A. Schoolwork is simple.  
   B. I am a hard worker.  
   PsG  
   0  
   1

9. You meet a friend and your friend tells you that you look nice.  
   A. My friend felt like praising the way people looked that day.  
   B. Usually my friend praises the way people look.  
   PmG  
   0  
   1

10. A good friend tells you that he hates you.  
    A. My friend was in a bad mood that day.  
    B. I wasn’t nice to my friend that day.  
    PsB  
    0  
    1

140
11. You tell a joke and no one laughs.
   A. I don’t tell jokes well.  
      PsB 1
   B. The joke is so well known that it is no longer funny. 
      0

12. Your teacher gives a lesson and you don’t understand it.
   A. I didn’t pay attention to anything that day. 
      PvB 1
   B. I didn’t pay attention when my teacher was talking. 
      0

   A. My teacher makes hard tests. 
      PmB 1
   B. The past few weeks, my teacher has made hard tests. 
      0

14. You gain a lot of weight and start to look fat.
   A. The food I have to eat is fattening. 
      PsB 0
   B. I like fattening foods. 
      1

15. A person steals money from you.
   A. That person is dishonest. 
      PvB 0
   B. People are dishonest. 
      1

16. Your parents praise something you make.
   A. I am good at making some things. 
      PsG 1
   B. My parents like some things I make. 
      0

17. You play a game and you win money.
   A. I am a lucky person. 
      PvG 1
   B. I am lucky when I play games. 
      0

18. You almost drown when swimming in a river.
   A. I am not a very cautious person. 
      PmB 1
   B. Some days I am not a cautious person. 
      0

19. You are invited to a lot of parties.
   A. A lot of people have been acting friendly toward me lately. 
      PsG 0
   B. I have been acting friendly toward a lot of people lately. 
      1

20. A grown-up yells at you.
   A. That person yelled at the first person he saw. 
      PvB 0
   B. That person yelled at a lot of people he saw that day. 
      1

21. You do a project with a group of kids and it turns out badly.
   A. I don’t work well with the people in the group. 
      PvB 0
   B. I never work well with a group. 
      1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. You make a new friend.</th>
<th>PsG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I am a nice person.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The people that I meet are nice.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>23. You have been getting along well with your family.</th>
<th>PmG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I am easy to get along with when I am with my family.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Once in a while I am easy to get along with when I am with my family.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24. You try to sell candy, but no one will buy any.</th>
<th>PmB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Lately, a lot of children are selling things, so people don’t want to buy anything else from children.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. People don’t like to buy things from children.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25. You play a game and you win.</th>
<th>PvG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Sometimes I try as hard as I can at games.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Sometimes I try as hard as I can.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26. You get a bad grade in school.</th>
<th>PsB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I am stupid.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Teachers are unfair graders.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27. You walk into a door and you get a bloody nose.</th>
<th>PvB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I wasn’t looking where I was going.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. I have been careless lately.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>28. You miss the ball and your team loses the game.</th>
<th>PmB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. I didn’t try hard while playing ball that day.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. I have been careless lately.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>29. You twist your ankle in gym class.</th>
<th>PsB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The past few weeks, the sports we played in gym class have been dangerous.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The past few weeks, I have been clumsy in gym class.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30. Your parents take you to the beach and you have a good time.</th>
<th>PvG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Everything at the beach was nice that day.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The weather at the beach was nice that day.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>31. You take a train which arrives so late that you miss a movie.</th>
<th>PmB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The past few days there have been problems with the train being on time.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The trains are almost never on time.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32. Your mother makes your favorite dinner for you.          PvG
   A. There are a few things that my mother does to please me.  0
   B. My mother likes to please me.                            1

33. A team that you are on loses a game.          PmB
   A. The team members don’t play well together.        1
   B. That day the team members didn’t play well together.  0

34. You finish your homework quickly.          PvG
   A. Lately I have been doing everything quickly.     1
   B. Lately I have been doing schoolwork quickly.     0

35. Your teacher asks you a question and you give the wrong answer. PmB
   A. I get nervous when I have to answer questions.  1
   B. That day I got nervous when I had to answer questions.  0

36. You get on the wrong bus and you get lost. PmB
   A. That day I wasn’t paying attention to what was going on.  0
   B. I usually don’t pay attention to what’s going on.        1

37. You go to an amusement park and you have a good time. PvG
   A. I usually enjoy myself at amusement parks.         0
   B. I usually enjoy myself.                            1

38. An older kid slaps you in the face.          PsB
   A. I teased his younger brother.                      1
   B. His younger brother told him I had teased him.     0

39. You get all the toys you want on your birthday. PmG
   A. People always guess what toys to buy me for my birthday.  1
   B. This birthday, people guessed right as to what toys I wanted.  0

40. You take a vacation in the country and you have a wonderful time. PmG
   A. The country is a beautiful place to be.            1
   B. The time of the year that we went was beautiful.   0

41. Your neighbors ask you over for dinner. PmG
    A. Sometimes people are in kind moods.               0
    B. People are kind.                                 1

42. You have a substitute teacher and she likes you. PmG
    A. I was well behaved during class that day.        0
    B. I am almost always well behaved during class.    1
43. You make your friends happy.  
   A. I am a fun person to be with.  
   B. Sometimes I am a fun person to be with.  
   PsG  

44. You get a free ice-cream cone.  
   A. I was friendly to the ice-cream man that day.  
   B. The ice-cream man was feeling friendly that day.  
   PsG  

45. At your friend’s party, the magician asks you to help him out.  
   A. It was just luck that I got picked.  
   B. I looked really interested in what was going on.  
   PsG  

46. You try to convince a kid to go to the movies with you, but he won’t go.  
   A. That day, he did not feel like doing anything.  
   B. That day, he did not feel like going to the movies.  
   PsG  

47. Your parents get a divorce.  
   A. It is hard for people to get along well when they are married.  
   B. It is hard for my parents to get along well when they are married.  
   PsG  

48. You have been trying to get into a club and you don’t get in.  
   A. I don’t get along well with other people.  
   B. I don’t get along well with the people in the club.  
   PsG  

SCORING KEY  

PmB________  PmG________  
PvB________  PvG________  
HoB________  
PsB________  PsG________  
Total B________  Total G________  
G-B________  

SCORING  

You can score the test now. You can share the child’s scores with him/her,  
if you like. If you do tell him/her what his/her scores are, also explain what they
mean.

Start with the PmB (Permanent Bad) score. Total the numbers in the right-hand margin that follow the answers your child chose to questions 13, 18, 24, 28, 31, 33, 35, and 36. Enter that total in the scoring key above next to “PmB.”

Then, add the PmG scores—questions 5, 9, 23, 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43—and enter the total in the scoring key.

Then, do the pervasiveness scores and note them in the key. The PvB questions are 12, 15, 20, 23, 27, 46, 47, and 48. The PvG questions are 1, 3, 17, 25, 30, 32, 34, and 37.

Total the PmB and PvB scores to get the hopelessness (HoB) score. Record it.

Now score personalization. The PsB questions are 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 26, 29, and 38.

The PsG questions are 2, 4, 8, 16, 19, 22, 44, and 45.
Compute the total scores for bad events (PmB + PvB + PsB) and record the Total B; then total the scores for good events (PmG + PvG + PsG) and record it.

Finally, compute the overall scale score, G-B, by subtracting the Total B from the Total G. Write it on the bottom line of the key.

Here’s what the child’s scores mean and how this child compares to the thousands of children who have taken this test.

First, girls and boys score differently. Girls, at least up to puberty, are noticeably more optimistic than boys. The average nine-to-twelve-year-old girl has a G-B score of 7.0. The average nine-to-twelve-year-old boy has a score of 5.0. If a girl scores less than 4.5, she is somewhat pessimistic. If she scores less than 2, she is very pessimistic and at risk for depression. If a boy scores less than 2.5, he is somewhat pessimistic; less than 1, he is very pessimistic and at risk for depression.

As for Total B score, the average nine-to-twelve-year-old girl's is 7.0, and the average boy’s is 8.5. Scores of three points higher than the average are very pessimistic.

The average Total G score for nine-to-twelve-year-old girls and boys is 13.5. Scores three points lower are very pessimistic. The individual good dimensions (PmG, PsG, and PvG) each average about 4.5, with scores of 3 or below being very pessimistic. The individual bad dimensions (PmB, PvB, PsB) average about 2.5 for girls and 2.8 for boys, with scores of 4 or higher being risk markers for depression.
**APPENDIX J**

Data Collection Chart  
For  
DRA: Reading Resilience and Reading Performance  
CASQ: Optimistic Explanatory Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ___________________________</th>
<th>Grade: ________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment Level I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment Level II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Resilience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading Resilience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading Resilience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts: _____</td>
<td>Attempts: _____</td>
<td>Attempts: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies: _____</td>
<td>Strategies: _____</td>
<td>Strategies: _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
<td><strong>DRA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading Performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading Performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy: _____</td>
<td>Accuracy: _____</td>
<td>Accuracy: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension: _____</td>
<td>Comprehension: _____</td>
<td>Comprehension: _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
<th>Date: ________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASQ</strong>: G-B = _____</td>
<td><strong>CASQ</strong>: G-B = _____</td>
<td><strong>CASQ</strong>: G-B = _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments:</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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APPENDIX K
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Bright Ideas: Developing Optimistic Thinking Skills

The teaching of optimistic thinking skills to students in elementary and middle school provides them with essential coping skills with which to effectively deal with difficult and challenging situations in their lives.

A key factor that differentiates people who cope effectively from those who may not is their explanatory style. Explanatory style refers to the way people think about events and challenges in their lives. When faced with negative events, individuals who exhibit a pessimistic or negative explanatory style perceive the event as permanent in time and extending to many other areas of their life. Furthermore, they frequently believe they are personally at fault. In contrast, a positive or optimistic explanatory style is characterized by explaining bad events as temporary and limited to the specific event, and with many possible causes other than themselves. Pessimists interpret positive events as temporary, specific, and caused by good luck, while optimists believe positive events are permanent, pervasive, and caused by themselves (Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1986). Seligman (1995) suggested that the way children think about stressful events is habitual by the time the child is about nine or ten years old, unless such a style of thinking is challenged.

The idea of teaching young people the skills of optimistic thinking is based on research that reflects the potential benefits of developing a more positive explanatory style. From about eight years of age, the literature consistently reports positive associations between depression and a negative explanatory style across all age groups. Young people who think pessimistically find it more difficult to cope effectively with negative or challenging situations. They are more prone to school failure, low motivation, illness and depression, and frequently exhibit more problem behaviours (Compas & Hammen, 1994). In addition, negative thinking has been found to predict depression in young people over and above negative life events (Matheny, Aycock, & McCarty, 1993).

In adolescence, estimates of the prevalence of mild to severe depressive symptoms typically range in the order of 20 to 35 percent (Petersen et al., 1993). Given the high presence of depressive symptoms and its associations with negative school performance and social functioning, it is critical to address the associated and predisposing factors of these states. In his book “The Optimistic Child,” Seligman (1995) suggested that reversing the escalating prevalence of depression required inoculating all children with positive thinking skills through using the same techniques from cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) that have been successful in working with depressed children and adults. The program, Bright Ideas, is based on Seligman’s work, and uses stories, cartoons, hypothetical examples, practice, and role playing to
facilitate the learning of optimistic thinking skills in and outside of the classroom.

Four basic skills of optimistic thinking that are taught in the Bright Ideas curriculum are:

1. Listening to our self-talk
   When negative events happen, an internal dialogue occurs in which many thoughts about these events are constantly occurring in our minds. These thoughts are our self-talk. The first step in learning to think more optimistically is to listen to, and become aware of, the negative thoughts we say to ourselves about the situation or challenges that we are facing. It is recognizing that changing our self-talk can lead to changing the way we feel about events and how we might respond to these events that is a critical skill in learning to think more optimistically.

2. Evaluating thoughts
   This skill involves evaluating the accuracy of our self-talk through gathering evidence to support or challenge our negative and habitual self-talk. Seligman's three explanatory dimensions of permanence (permanent or temporary), pervasiveness (global or specific), and personalization (self- or other- blame) provide a framework for evaluating self-talk.

3. Generating alternatives
   When negative events happen, more accurate explanations for these events are frequently possible. Learning to challenge or dispute the immediate chain of negative thoughts by generating more positive, alternative, and realistic explanations for such events improves the way one feels about the event, and how one subsequently copes.

4. Decatastrophizing
   Some individuals always think the worst, or make a catastrophe of any negative events that happen in their lives. Decatastrophizing involves learning skills of putting things into perspective by not thinking the worst, as the worst is mostly unlikely to occur.

The Bright Ideas program includes complete and comprehensive notes for facilitators for each of the eight weekly sessions, together with a student workbook. Additional suggestions for ways in which program skills may be reinforced post-program are also included. As the program is directly based on the Seligman's (1995) approach to building optimism in young people through using the principles of CBT, it is essential to follow the sequencing of the program. In particular, the program incorporates the fundamental skills of optimistic thinking of namely, listening to one's self-talk, connecting thoughts to feelings, evaluating the accuracy of thoughts, generating more accurate explanations, and challenging catastrophic thinking. Specifically, children are taught to dispute their negative self-talk along Seligman's (1995) dimensions of permanence, pervasiveness, and personalization.
APPENDIX L

Bright Ideas: Skills For Positive Thinking
Sample Lesson

Session I: The Connection Between Thoughts and Feelings

Materials:  Story/CD: Part I
            Student Workbooks
            Texts, pencils
            Photocopy page 3 and cut up before session

Duration:  45-60+ minutes

Introduction:  (5 minutes)

Today we are starting a program called Bright Ideas. The aim of the program is:
1) to help us understand our thoughts and feelings in order to help us deal with tough times better
2) to have a lot of fun

Be clear and specific about expectations, participation and behaviour required, such as taking turns to talk and listening to contributions made by other members. As some personal or sensitive experiences may be shared by some students in the context of the program, it is essential that students know such information should remain confidential and not be discussed outside sessions.

Provide each child with a program Workbook.

1. Awareness Exercise  (15 minutes)

Procedure
Note that the purpose of the following activity is to encourage children to express feelings through colors and/or images in an abstract way in order to explore beyond the conventional ‘happy or sad face, etc.’ If children choose to use a facial expression to express a feeling, it should not be discouraged. This exercise also provides exploration and awareness of the vocabulary of feelings so that children are more able to verbally express how they feel.

Ask the participants to take approximately 5 minutes to draw a feeling on page 2 of their Workbook. These may be expressed in any shape or color. A list of feelings may be provided to encourage the students to think about the range of feelings that there are. Some ideas or examples may be appropriate here, including some metaphors (e.g. knots in stomach, clouds over me, etc.). After five-ten minutes, provide students with the opportunity to talk about their picture.
2. Introduction of Self-talk  (15 minutes)

Procedure
When things happen in our lives, like getting into trouble or losing something valuable, we all have thoughts about what has happened. We are sort of “talking to ourselves” about how we feel and sometimes we think of reasons as to why things have happened. This type of thinking is sometimes called ‘self-talk’. We will call the things that have happened the ‘events’. In these sessions, we will be looking at the things that we think and learning new ways to look at situations and think about them.

Awareness activity

Your mother tells you that your neighbor, Mrs. W., will pick you up after school as she cannot make it. After school you are waiting at the school gates for ages. Almost everyone has left. It is raining and you are starting to get very worried. You feel some relief as you see Mrs. W’s car approaching, however, she just looks at you and drives right past. You wait a minute and she does not return.

Write down the self-talk that immediately comes into your mind.

There are 3 versions of “what happened” in this situation. Copy the Awareness Activity page, cut up and hand out different versions to the student so there will be varying responses. The activity may be done in small groups.
After a few minutes, ask for some responses. How had the students’ self-talk changed with more or different information? Highlight the fact that from the same event there can be many different ways to view a situation (different perspectives).

3. Thoughts and Feelings  (5 minutes)

Procedure

Our feelings are controlled by our thoughts (our self-talk). It is not things that happen (events) that make us feel happy, sad, angry, hurt or guilty. It is what we think about the event that will make us feel happy, sad, angry, etc.
Write the following example on the board and then explain verbally, emphasizing how the thought determines the feeling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>THOUGHT</th>
<th>FEELING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother is annoyed with you for no reason at all.</td>
<td>Mom is in a bad mood. She might have had a bad day at work.</td>
<td>OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She always picks on me. She doesn't like me.</td>
<td>SAD/ANGRY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Identifying the Connection Between Thoughts & Feelings

Procedure

Read Story/Play CD: Newman the Alien, Part I.

“Newman the Alien” has just been forced to take on a mission by the evil Alvin. He has just arrived on earth (the event). What might be some of the things that he is thinking? (some of his self-talk)

Ask the class to turn to Worksheet 1 (page 3 of Workbook), and ask each of them to write 2 things that Newman might be thinking. Ask for some responses. After each response, ask what type of feeling the thought would provoke. Suggest that students use a voice appropriate to the response (e.g. scared, angry) – they may even use an alien voice if they wish. Cover aspects such as fear, anger, and self-doubt, if not suggested by students.

5. Summary of Session

Direct class to Session 1 Summary on page 4 in Workbooks.

Today we looked at self-talk – the things we say to ourselves when something happens. We also looked at feelings and learned that situations and events do not cause us to feel in a particular way. It is what we choose to think that causes the feelings. This means that if we are in control of our thinking, we are in control of our feelings.
APPENDIX M
Sample Script for Guided Reading Infused
With Optimistic Explanatory Style Instruction
Using the ABCDE Model for Optimisti Self-Talk
By Martin Seligman, Ph.D.

1. A = Adversity – The problem (what is happening)
   Teacher: “What’s going on?”
   Student: “I’m stuck on a word. I can’t read this story!”

2. B = Belief – What the student believes or is thinking
   Teacher: “Why do you say that?”
   Student: “I can’t read! I’m stupid. I can’t do anything!”

3. C = Consequence – How the student feels
   Teacher: “You seem upset. How are you feeling?
   Student: “I feel bad. I give up! I hate reading!”

4. D = Disputation – The BIG picture – what else could be true
   Teacher: “What else is true? When have you been able to get a
   word right? What strategies helped you?
   Student: “I got a work right yesterday when I tried to sound it out.
   That felt pretty good.”
   Teacher: “Could you use that strategy or another strategy to help
   you with this word right now?”
   Student: “I can try to sound it out or read the rest of the sentence
   and come back to it.”

5. E = Energization – How the student’s attitude is changed to optimistic
   Teacher: “Excellent! You used the meaning of the sentence to read
   the word. How do you feel now?”
   Student: “I feel a lot better. I know ways to figure out words. I
   want to read on to the next page.”

Note: As the student reads, teachers should make reference to: 1) the correct use
of a task-specific strategy; 2) the effort and perseverance required for completing
the task; and 3) a confirmation to the student that she or he has sufficient ability
to successfully manage such tasks. Example: “Great work, Jo! You worked out
that the word was ‘park’ because it’s like the word ‘dark’ that you already
know! You read well when you use our word tools.”
APPENDIX N

PARTICIPANT READING SELF-EFFICACY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Think back to the beginning of the school year. How did you feel about yourself as a reader when school started in September?

   ________ Good  ________ Okay  ________ Not So Good

2. How did you feel about yourself as a reader after you had been reading in the group for awhile, but before “Bright Ideas” lessons?

   ________ Good  ________ Okay  ________ Not So Good

3. How do you feel about yourself as a reader now after participating in the “Bright Ideas” lessons?

   ________ Good  ________ Okay  ________ Not So Good

4. How did “Bright Ideas” lessons help you with reading?

   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________

TEACHER INTERVIEW

1. How did your students respond to the two levels of treatment, GR and GR+OES? What differences in student behaviors did you see between the two levels of treatment?

2. How did students respond to the “Bright Ideas” curriculum?

3. Do you think the “Bright Ideas” lessons helped your students? How?

4. Do you think infusing “Bright Ideas” concepts into reading sessions helped students with reading? How?

5. Would you use “Bright Ideas” curriculum with your students in the future to improve reading performance? If so, why?