

Effect of Class Structure Change on Student Performance and Success

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**ABSTRACT**

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Reading comprehension is an essential element in academic, as well as daily life. If one cannot understand what they have read, then reading has no meaning or relevance. This is of major concern of students who are not successful academically in the classroom or on standardized tests.

This study was done to determine if students who struggle academically may achieve greater success if grouped in homogenous groups. The results were definitive in that students achieved better standardized test results in reading and writing after completing the program in which they were grouped homogeneously over a period of time. The following text details the steps that were taken to organize the groups, successful lesson format and programs for homogenous instruction, and the data produced.

The homogenous group study was performed at Central Heights Middle School on seventh graders in the 2013-2014 school year. The actual study began when students returned from Christmas vacation in January 2014; however, the planning and organizing phase began several weeks before that. Candidates were observed during an eighth period enrichment class that was already built into the schedule. The results generated were conclusive with the original theory that students who were grouped homogeneously would achieve greater success or improvement academically and on standardized tests.

### **Effect of Class Structure Change on Student Performance and Success**

Student performance is at the forefront of every school throughout the nation. As high stakes testing continues to increase in complexity and rigor, some students are struggling to meet the demands and have fallen far behind, thus substantially broadening the achievement gap between students, their peers, and other students across the state and country. Contrary to the goal of No Child Left Behind, students are in fact being left behind. Although standardized testing has been, in the past and is still currently, the primary method for evaluating school and student performance, students are far from “standardized.” Administrators and teachers are faced with the struggle and the challenge of discovering new and creative ways to help the students who are steadily falling further behind in their achievement status at the primary and secondary educational levels. Grouping students in homogenous classes for enrichment can improve their overall capacity to learn and retain the skills needed for success.

One of the constants in the many variables of standardized testing is reading comprehension. With the one “constant,” all of the “variables” to consider, such as economically disadvantaged students, students from non-speaking English homes or ESL (English as a Second Language), students who have learning disabilities or simply unique ways of learning, and the many other factors that are brought into the equation, finding a suitable balance is by far a daunting task.

Teachers are faced with the overwhelming task of differentiating instruction in large classes in a limited amount of time. Even with this being done, there will always be a distinctive group of students who do not have their instruction differentiated in a way that meets their needs specifically.

This problem is increasing, as noted in the data presented for Central Heights Middle School, or CHMS. As a whole, the district has always prided themselves in their exceptional scores on each campus: elementary, middle school, and high school. However, with the changes set forth in the high stakes testing, transitioning from TAKS (the previous high stakes standardized test used in Texas) to STAAR (the most recently implemented and current high stakes standardized test used in Texas), has shown through testing result data, as well as on-campus benchmark data, a decline in achievement among CHMS students.

Central Heights is a rural community outside of Nacogdoches County and in 2014, was classified as a 2A district, in terms of size. Central Heights is one of several smaller schools operating in Nacogdoches County which has taken transfers from throughout the county in the past, due to desire to attend the school because of higher achievement ratings. Central Heights has a mixture of socioeconomically disadvantaged students as well as socioeconomically advantaged students. Additionally, racial demographics are primarily white and Hispanic students with an extremely low percentage of African American, Asian, or other races of students. The primary focus of research was on the entire 7<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2013-2014, populated with approximately 96 students.

## **Background**

In the most recent past, especially with the integration of STAAR standardized testing, as opposed to TAKS, Central Heights ISD, and more specifically, Central Heights Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> grade, has seen a decline in student achievement. There has been much concern from teachers of all disciplines that their students are not understanding the questions, thus, they are not comprehending what they are being asked to evaluate when taking the standardized tests. After analyzing the data, and focusing intently on reading scores, it clearly became evident that

students were struggling with reading comprehension, especially a group of approximately 15% of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders who regressed from mastery or almost mastery on standardized testing, to being unsuccessful.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem was to determine the best way to ensure that all students, but especially this small group of students, were receiving instruction in a way in which they could understand and be successful. During whole class, heterogeneous instruction, it was evident students were receiving differentiated instruction, but there just did not seem to be enough time to focus on all learning styles during the regular class period.

### **Significance of the Study**

Student success is the primary focus of this study. By implementing a plan to help students achieve success, they will not only gain valuable skills to pass standardized tests, but more importantly they will also gain significant confidence due to their comprehension of skills and be able to effectively apply these skills throughout their academic careers, as well as transition into highly functioning and successful citizens in their post graduate endeavors. Additionally, administrators and teachers will gain insight into grouping and teaching strategies available that are successful in reaching all students and helping them achieve improvement and success. Subsequently, teachers will improve in their ability to access and analyze data through multiple uses of technology in order to further their own professional development in the ever changing and advancing realms of education. Administrators will benefit in their ability to appropriately place students in classes that further enhance the student's ability to learn in a cohesive environment by which could possibly alleviate secondary issues such as discipline and

other related problems teachers and administrator face on a daily basis that essentially cuts down on valuable instruction time.

Upon completion of this study and a proven mark of success, this plan can be applied to all grade levels in which scheduling and staffing can be adjusted to accommodate the change. Furthermore, with proof, scheduling changes or initial adaptations and staffing can be justified.

### **Definitions**

*Achievement gap.* In terms of student achievement, the achievement gap is how far a student is away from mastery in relation to other students at their grade level.

*Academic Vocabulary.* These are the terms repeatedly used in educational scenarios as well as assessments that help the students understand what is being asked of them.

*Assessment.* This is the term used to refer to a wide variety of testing strategies used to determine student progress.

*At-risk group.* This is a classification for a group of students who have the potential to be unsuccessful in school and who are likely to become part of a drop-out statistic or other statistics that could hinder their educational and life success.

*Curriculum.* The plan for teaching.

*Desegregated data.* This is the process used to analyze data and bring it together in order to explore student performance in a larger group, and not individually.

*DMAC.* This is a data collection program in which some school districts use to desegregate receive state standardized test results as well as in-district testing and benchmark results. In addition, this program allows teachers and administrators to access the data and organize the data in a way in which they, the teacher or administrator, can benefit from the results in order to use it as a tool to formulate instructional plans.

*English Language Learner.* A student who is considered an English Language Learner, or ELL, is one who does not speak English as their primary language. This student has been identified and generally qualifies for additional help or programs to help them become proficient in English in order to meet the demands set forth in an English speaking curriculum.

*Enrichment.* Additional instruction and activities that add to the teaching, learning, and skills process in which the student has already been exposed.

*Intervention.* This is the turning point where a problem is determined and steps are put in place to change the path of the desired outcome for the student.

*No Child Left Behind.* No Child Left Behind, or NCLB, is an initiative that President Bush signed into law in 2002 to implement standards and guidelines to ensure that every student receives the same benefits and instruction as the other in order to be successful on their annual state mandated testing. NCLB also sets forth requirements for teachers to be highly qualified and the criteria that identifies teachers as such.

*Professional development.* This term is a broad reference to the process by which teachers continue their education in order to gain knowledge and be more successful in the classroom.

*STAAR.* This is the current standardized test used in Texas to assess student achievement.

*Standardized test.* This is the type of test that is given to all students as a result of No Child Left Behind. These tests are all formatted the same for every student and are generally multiple choice based tests. Although the tests are the same, some students who receive special services may have accommodations or modifications in order to help them succeed.

*TAKS.* This is the former standardized test used in Texas and the test in which STAAR replaced.

### **Review of the Literature**

The components in the mastery of reading and all of the modules of reading are essential to the foundation and growth in learning. Once a student begins falling behind academically, much weight can be put on their ability to read fluently and to comprehend, or understand, everything that they read. Simply reading words on a page will not be sufficient over the long term. Students must be able to effectively synthesize the information in order to apply the material to a given task. This is essential across all disciplines and not just reading and language arts. Even though students are faced with “standardized” assessments, they are not forced to receive “standardized” instruction. Even though differentiation is a prominent technique in the classroom, some students do not fall under the typical methods of differentiation. It is up to the educator to identify the students’ needs and adjust instruction to every individual student. Ideally, students are grouped in their regular classrooms in a heterogeneous learning environment. Preferably, standard differentiation would target every student. However, each student is far from a textbook example, so logically this ideal would not work 100% of the time in 100% of the situations. Many studies have been performed so that focus can be directed to programs that will help students meet reading goals in order to attain academic success. The studies have indicated that the problems need to be identified, a program needs to be set in place to accommodate the need, and strategies need constant variation and change in order to meet goals.

### **Identifying the Need and Ensuring Success**

In an article in Reading Today (International Reading Association, 2007, p. 37), focus is directed to the fact that students are struggling more due to the increased complexity of reading in various content areas. They not only hone in on this area overall, but readily focus on

secondary level students, grades six through twelfth. Discussed in the article are studies by three different secondary schools that analyzed past data in order to determine the need for program development and increased student achievement.

Alternately, in addition to the conclusive data, an article in Education Week (Viadero, 2009, p. 1-15), discusses the identification of problems by listening to teachers voice their concerns regarding their student's abilities, or lack thereof, to understand textbook lessons. The teachers share their concerns because their students do not have a grasp of academic vocabulary (Viadero, 2009). According to Viadero (2009), teachers discuss the fact that students tap into their prior knowledge of what they think the word means and misinterpret the instructions, thus resulting in an incorrect response from students.

In an article by Margaret Beecher and Sheelah Sweeny, (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008, p. 502-530), they discuss the fact that although schools believe they are suppressing the achievement gap, once their data is compared to No Child Left Behind data, the district data concludes an inferior reflection of achievement based on the NCLB "measured achievement" standards of school effectiveness. The text goes on to explain that although some progress has been made over time, there are still major gaps in progress when focusing on specific subgroups, such as ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Beecher & Sweeny, 2008). Beecher and Sweeny (2008) further explain that reading and math are the top two indicators in terms of achievement data that have been analyzed and consistently generate the results of concern.

There is a problem with the student's current ability to read and comprehend tests and the academic vocabulary associated with the test questions, according to the articles in review. The articles essentially conclude that there is a deficiency; and ultimately, it stems from reading and reading comprehension.

### **Program Development & Enrichment**

There are a variety of programs that have been researched in order to implement a possible solution to the identified problem. However, a simple fix is not necessarily the answer. Many factors must be considered in order to develop programs that meet the needs of the struggling students or even groups of students. With that in mind, an appropriate program or even multiple program types can be developed.

In an article by Elizabeth L. Beck (Beck, 1999, p. 107-124), she discusses the benefits of an after school program. Beck researched a multitude of after school programs when conducting her study(1999). Her research focuses on at-risk students as identified by African American students in comparison to Caucasian children and cultural differences associated with these sub-groups. Beck concludes that an after school program is beneficial to at-risk students because it occupies time that these students may use to make negative behavioral choices, such as to use alcohol and drugs, as well as poor group associations with gangs (Beck,1999). Ms. Beck, (1999) reflects upon success with afterschool programs by referencing statistics in the late 1990's that show an increase in academic success with these identified students who attended after school programs. One of the major factors of success Beck (1999) identifies is that the program has explicit rules and is extremely structured.

Enrichment is at the forefront of a study done by researchers at the University of Connecticut (Reis & Renzulli, 2010, p. 43-49). In a journal report by Sally Reis and Joseph Renzulli (2010), the two authors correlate achievement gaps with lack of engaging learning opportunities for students. Thus, they discuss an enrichment plan to be focused on, that affects an entire school (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Their plan integrated enrichment activities into regular classroom instruction. Reis and Renzulli (2010) set forth three goals, “to develop talents in all

children, provide a broad range of advanced-level enrichment experiences for all students, and provide follow-up advanced learning for children based on their interests.” So basically, the study was designed to not only teach the content, but to integrated activities that the children enjoyed doing, thus promoting increased understanding to students of all levels. In order to further enrichment, the planning and development of “enrichment clusters” was done in which students were grouped based on a survey of interests that the students took, as opposed to being grouped by their performance scores (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Additionally, they took the classroom away from the classroom, or took the learning out into the field (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). By altering the teaching environment they were able to pair, “external stimulation with internal curiosity,” to elicit interest and learning in their students (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Reis and Renzulli (2010) also developed Types I-III enrichment group activities. These smaller groups focused on more homogeneous interests in order to enrich their current learning and knowledge (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). This article also discusses the, School-Wide Enrichment Model in Reading, or SEM-R. This enrichment is divided into three phases, which are adjusted in time length as the program advances (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Phase 1 is the initial phase of the program when the teacher introduces literature and teaches brief lessons, in phase two students select and read books above their comfortable reading level while the teacher monitors and supports the students, and in phase three, students select their activities to perform during that allotted time (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). All of the enrichment strategies have been proven successful in whole group and small group scenarios by Reis and Renzulli, (2010).

Understanding the meanings of words is essential to understanding instructions and how to interpret a task. If a word is misinterpreted, then the structure of the task loses its meaning, thus resulting in an inaccurate response. Michael Kieffer and Nonie Lesaux have identified this

problem and have suggested ways to learn and understand the structure of the word to help students with comprehension (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010). They teach a strategy that includes the term, “morphology (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010).” When introducing this concept, the authors discuss the process of “morphology.” They evaluate the benefits of being able to break down the word to its roots, understand the root of the word, thus being able to more easily determine the meaning of a word when it is used in more of a complex or altered form (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010, p. 49).

Not only are administrators and classroom teachers a part of the plan to help students succeed, other departments within the school can play a valuable role in student development and success as well. One such support mechanism is the librarian. In an article by Chris Gustafson (Gustafson, 2007, p. 22-23), it is intently discussed how librarians can work collaboratively with the classroom teachers to meet the needs of the students and increase scores. This article discusses how the librarian coordinated with a classroom teacher and a focus group of students who had failed to pass the high stakes reading test in their state. In the literature, it explains how students were surveyed in order to determine their willingness or reluctance to read in general (Gustafson, 2007). Once the two educators analyzed the surveys, they were better able to identify strategies they needed to implement in order to increase student interest in reading as well as what each individual student needed to help them reach their testing goals (Gustafson, 2007). In order to further interest by members of the group, the language arts teacher and librarian decided to motivate their students by providing food during their meetings so that they could openly discuss needs of the group in a more informal and relaxed setting (Gustafson, 2007). Ultimately, the conclusion of this study found that introduction to content and teaching

the content was important, but the majority of the group's success came from building relationships (Gustafson, 2007).

Program structures can vary greatly. One district found that taking the classroom out of the four-walled classroom promoted student engagement in a different way. They extended their school year into a summer camp of sorts (Wells, 2014). They were able to use the camp to focus on at-risk students who had the potential of declining academically. By focusing on this groups' interests, they were able to help this group of students become better at reading and math (Wells, 2014).

Cooperative learning in homogenous groups has proven to be effective on the college level as well. In an article by John Baer, he notes that primary instructional methods revolve around heterogeneous grouping, and homogenous grouping is overlooked, especially in primary and secondary education (Baer, 2003). In a study on the college level, they found that grouping students in cooperative learning groups with students at similar levels, noted success, primarily in their middle to high achieving student groups (Baer, 2003). However, if this concept was applied to lower achieving students earlier in their academic careers, the same success could possibly be achieved.

Sometimes an achievement gap presents itself due to far more complex issues than with the average student. Students who have special learning needs as well as English Language Learners can fall into this category. With most all students participating in inclusion, some students still struggle to succeed, especially with standardized tested. Within a homogenous setting, it would be advantageous for these students to participate at a level that may be more conducive to their style of learning, giving them an opportunity for success. This theory can be supported in an article by John J. Hoover, Ph.D., who recognizes the need for additional

differentiation among his identified group of learners who are English Language Learners, or have a learning disability (Hoover & Patton, 2005).

### **Meeting Goals**

In order for any program to be considered successful, there has to be some measure of achievement. In the article discussing small homogenous groups by Gustafson, (2007), the measure for success was in the student's opinion of reading through periodic surveys.

For Reis and Renzulli (2010), they measured success a couple of ways. Number one, they had students keep record in a portfolio where they could see their incremental, as well as overall progress (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Number two, in the SEM-R model, students' progress was measured by their graduation from teacher led reading to self-selection based on interest (Reis & Renzulli, 2010).

### **Summary**

In order to meet the ever diverse needs of students, there are many strategies that must be evaluated and implemented in order to do so effectively. Until the specific problem is identified, it would be impossible to move forward. To identify the need, definitive data must be extensively analyzed and cross referenced with other data and one must listen to the concerns of the teachers, who work day in and day out with these students. Next, a suitable program has to be selected to meet the needs of the students at the given time. According to Reis and Renzulli, (2010), they emphasize the need for an enrichment plan that addresses the needs of the whole school, rather than a select group. However, in contrary to Reis and Renzulli (2010), they also advocate smaller group learning and focus on homogeneous groups developed within the broader setting (2010). The information shared regarding the librarian and her ultimate collaboration with another teacher to focus on a small select group of students was phenomenal in that the goal

was to not only work with a small group of students who had not yet passed a state assessment, but to further build relationships and increase the student's own desire to read (Gustafson, 2007). Research supports the process for focusing on the wider problem of reading comprehension, but furthermore has conclusive evidence to show the impact of instruction of smaller homogeneous groups.

### **Action Research Design**

#### **Subjects**

The focus of this study was to target seventh grade students at Central Heights Middle School who either did not pass their STAAR reading test in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade (previous year) or who were on the borderline of failing. The students were identified by the quintile, or group, they fell under based upon the previous year's STAAR results. Not only were approximately 25% of the seventh graders who did not achieve well on the STAAR grouped together, but the remainder of the population was grouped according to their achievement in the previous year as well.

#### **Procedures**

Research began in the fall of 2013 at which time Reading data was analyzed for the current seventh grade students. The data was then reorganized into four quintiles, grouping students based upon their STAAR performance in the spring of 2013 in the Reading area. Students were grouped from low to high of approximately 24 students per group. After the baseline data was collected, the idea for reorganization was discussed with the campus administrator and plans were made to reorganize the eight period schedules based on the quintile groups, with the lowest group being assigned to me, and the remainder of the students assigned to the other three teachers in the eighth period rotation.

After meeting with my campus principal, I presented the idea to the other seventh grade teachers who would be affected, along with the data and my plan. Everyone was on board. Subsequently, after hearing the plan, the sixth and eighth grade teachers decided to implement a similar plan within their grade level.

After Christmas break, the students were informed of their new eighth period classes and immediately began their new schedule. Starting this in the middle of the year was a bit of a challenge, but for the most part it worked well since the students had been out of school for two weeks and were more susceptible to the change.

Even though the classes were larger due to staffing, the focus still remained on relatively homogenous groups. With the class still being larger than ideal, I was able to focus on a whole group activity of reading a novel. All students were engaged and participated in discussions, utilizing their reading skills. The novel was above their reading level and the assistance from me was essential to its success. We were able to focus on reading comprehension strategies and implement those skills as a whole. I was able to witness the class evolve into students who were eager to participate and who were anticipating outcomes as opposed to the nonparticipating, unengaged students I began with.

In addition to four homogeneous classes, with the encouragement of the principal, I was able to take my research a step further. Of my students, I was asked to identify 10-11 students who would benefit from additional instruction in an after school program labeled, "Extended Day." Of the students that I identified and who were invited, seven students and their parents accepted the invitation. With this group, we worked on in-depth analysis of academic vocabulary, identifying and understanding the meaning, as well as application. We dissected a released STAAR test into small sections and worked on individual components to help further

solidify the student’s understanding. It was a very hands on approach and instruction was adjusted according to the need the moment it was identified. This extended program was approximately 10 weeks in length, two days per week, beginning in February and ending the week before the STAAR Reading Test. Upon completion of the programs and compilation of the data with the returning results from the state, the results were compiled to analyze and gauge success.

### **Data Collection**

The initial data was collected through DMAC (DMAC Solutions, 2013), where it was sorted and grouped in a format to which we could determine which students were struggling and which were not. We were then able to use the same system to group students into their appropriate homogeneous groups determined by the four distinct quintiles, produced within the DMAC system. Subsequent data used to evaluate the success of the program was retrieved from reports sent by the Texas Education Agency to the school to disclose individual STAAR test results.

### **Findings**

The findings from this process were conclusive from the data. However, there was some differentiation in the comparison analysis from 2013 to 2014 due to the “Satisfactory” Assessment score fluctuation. Although, it was minimal as reflected in the table below and had little to no bearing on the overall end results (Texas Education Agency website, 2007-2015).

	2013	2013	2014	2014
SATISFACTORY	Raw Score	Scale Score	Raw Score	Scale Score
Reading	27	1556	26	1556
Writing	40	3500	39	3500

Data generated from the standardized test results from 2014 indicated optimal results, as detailed in the chart below.

**Extended  
Day**

	<b>2014 Reading Pass</b>	<b>2014 Writing Pass</b>
Student 1	Y	Y
Student 2	N	N
Student 3	Y	Y
Student 4	N	N
Student 5	N	N
Student 6	Y	Y
Student 7	Y	N

**Enrichment 8th Period**

Student 8	Y	N
Student 9	Y	N
Student 10	Y	Y
Student 11	N	N
Student 12	Y	Y
Student 13	N	Y
Student 14	N	N
Student 15	Y	Y
Student 16	Y	N
Student 17	N	N
Student 18	Y	Y
Student 19	N	N
Student 20	Y	Y
Student 21	Y	Y
Student 22	Y	N
Student 23	Y	Y
Student 24	N	N
Student 25	Y	N
Student 26	Y	N
Student 27	Y	Y
Student 28	N	N
Student 29	Y	Y
Student 30	N	N
Student 30	Y	N

(DMAC-Solutions website, n.d.)

Of the students in the focus group, 60% passed the reading, and 47% passed the writing. Out of the 15 students, 40% of the group passed both assessments in 2014. Additionally, only 27% failed both Reading and Writing assessments in 2014. The larger focus group, Enrichment 8<sup>th</sup> Period, showed the greatest results within their group with 71% passing one or both assessments as opposed the smaller group, which indicated 57% passing one or both assessments.

### **Summary**

Upon review of the data collected, it was in alignment with my original hypothesis that students who are struggling in reading can show improvement, as well as success, if grouped in smaller, homogenous groups. However, my original expectations did not factor in all variables including ongoing discipline issues and other related matters, which may have contributed to some students not meeting their anticipated goals within the small groups. The results of this study aligned with the research done in this area, which was reflected in many of the review articles. As stated in the article by Beecher and Sweeny (2008), if these identified students are included in substantial programs, the achievement gap will close over time. Elizabeth Beck (1999) discusses success in after-school enrichment programs, and attained positive results due to at-risk students having something to occupy their time. This conclusion was definitive as reflected by results of the “Extended Day” group in the study.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

As a result of this study, it is my determination that grouping struggling students in smaller and/or homogenous groups does help in their performance and reading comprehension. However, this is not to say that students need to be removed from their heterogeneous

environment. Smaller, homogenous groups are simply supplemental and should be used in addition to programs in which these students are already in, along with their peers. Grouping students in smaller groups is generally always helpful because it allows students to receive valuable one-to-one instruction and time. Subsequently, smaller, homogenous groups would serve to have an added benefit. Finally, students participated more during the group time because they felt that the playing field was level and there was less pressure on them to respond correctly.

### **Reflection**

This process brought valuable insight as to how to give additional help and support to struggling, or at-risk students who have been unsuccessful or are borderline passing on standardized tests. Although the process was started in the middle of the year and the reorganization of students was a challenge, it still proved to work. I was able to determine that when students were grouped in smaller, homogenous groups, they performed better on their standardized tests after receiving instruction while in these groups. The data collected after this program was initiated, through standardized test results, was proof that this enrichment model is effective and will help students to become more successful.

### **Recommendations**

It is my recommendation that this enrichment model be implemented at the beginning of each school year. Enrichment classes should be organized based on scores from the previous year's standardized testing results and homogenous grouping. In addition to the grouping, classes could rotate among grade levels or grade teams to allow for additional instruction for the homogenous groups. From the data that was collected from this study, it is apparent that since homogenous group instruction was effective as a reading intervention, it could possibly be equally or more effective with other disciplines. Due to growing class sizes, it may become

difficult to break the groups down to an optimal size. However, students can still be grouped homogenously for enrichment and then broken down into smaller, sub-groups within the classroom.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Overall, it is a well-known fact that small classes or groups are more beneficial and far more effective for the learner than larger class sizes. However, many schools are operating at capacity in terms of class size. If an enrichment period could be incorporated into the daily schedule, focused attention could be directed at the higher risk students. Even if class sizes cannot be adjusted to accommodate smaller groups, it is possible for classes to be group homogenously and then broken down into smaller, more focused homogenous groups within the classroom. High stakes testing is perpetually changing, but reading comprehension is the constant in the equation. Although students need to have heterogeneous interaction, differentiation in a supplemental homogenous environment could substantially increase their chances for success.

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