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## The Impact of Paired-Partner Reading on STAR Reading Scores

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The Impact of Paired-Partner Reading on STAR Reading Scores

A Quantitative Research Methods Proposal

Chapters 1-5

By

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ED 696

Methods of Educational Research Course

Master of Science and Curriculum and Instruction

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine how effective paired-partner reading is when used in the classroom with curriculum. Within a 7th grade language arts classroom, this reading strategy focuses on student collaboration, reading comprehension, and providing the opportunity to read aloud on a regular basis. Researchers Stahl, Heubach, and Cramond (1997) stated, “Partner reading provides an opportunity for students to read connected text within a socially supportive context. This context should both motivate children to read well and provide a supportive environment to aid the development of reading skill” (p. 13). The overall goal of this study was aimed at achieving improved reading fluency and comprehension scores taken via STAR Reading Assessments. Within this exploration, I will work to identify the benefits of this practice through the planning and implementation of this specific reading strategy. Milner, Milner, and Mitchell (2012) believe that, “The only thing that separates ‘good’ readers from ‘struggling’ readers is the way that each group responds when they encounter difficulties as they read. Most struggling readers think ‘good’ readers never grapple with a text or have questions or have to reread” (p. 210). I hypothesize that through my research and practice of this specific reading strategy within the classroom, students will benefit from this experience through several means including, but not limited to, fluency, engagement, and comprehension.

*Keywords: paired-partner reading, collaboration, STAR Reading Scores, fluency*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introduction**

Throughout the career of teaching, there has been a strong desire by teachers to reach each and every one of the students in the classroom. Reaching each individual and trying to make an impact on their learning in a positive way can be challenging when students do not start with the same knowledge. Through the use of paired-partner reading in this study, students were engaged with their peers, had the opportunity to read aloud, and felt obligated to discuss the text through their interactions with their pairs. The basis for this research was chosen to determine how effective paired-partner reading was on students' reading scores and their attitudes towards reading.

Renowned researcher, Kavin Ming, explained, "For readers who struggle due to lack of explicit instruction in [fluency] or who have inborn challenges, these skills may not be fully developed, and, thus, they need to participate in read aloud activities to learn how to read fluently" (2018, p. 17). Keeping students engaged in learning can sometimes take away from the learning process and create a need for constant external encouragement from the teacher. In order to avoid the teacher constantly acting as the means of knowledge, this strategy allowed students to form their own ideas about the text with a partner. Throughout this process, the teacher's role became predominantly the facilitator, instead of the fountain for all knowledge and this shed light on the importance of collaboration. Paired-partner reading provided students with the opportunity to work on their reading fluency which is directly related to their ability to comprehend. Moats and Davidson (2009) stated, "Peer-assisted learning strategies constitute a research-supported, structured way of teaching students to work productively as reading

partners” (p. 47). Student support creates a classroom environment where each of the students have their designated roles in contributing and accepting their peers, no matter what level each student may be at. Oral reading procedures within a Language Arts classroom can be fundamental in reaching struggling readers and exposing them to fluent oral reading from their peers. As a Language Arts teacher, this study was especially meaningful in determining a new means of helping students progress in their reading. For research purposes, the effectiveness of paired-partner reading was measured by informal observations, student surveys, and STAR Reading scores.

### **Brief Literature Review**

There have been several studies completed about the possible correlation between paired-partner reading and the positive impacts that it has on students. Specifically, group-based or partner-based work allows students time to discuss what they are learning or reading with others. Researchers Polat, Sezer, and Atis-Akyol (2022), in *Collaborative Learning with Mind Mapping in the Development of Social Skills in Children*, emphasized that, “It is essential to benefit from the innovative, and influential practices of the modern day, in order to keep up with the changing and developing world” (p. 465). Doubet (2022) supports this by stating, “Community building is a staple of any healthy classroom” (p. 27). Within the changing and developing world that is today, students need to be subject to the skills and abilities that they will need in order to follow their chosen paths. Some of these basic skills that can be seen daily include small skills such as communication, comprehension, and the ability to read. In this modern day, skills such as these can be easily learned through subtle activities and learning experiences within the classroom. Paired-partner learning works to engage several of those attributes for young readers.



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Not only did research suggest that collaborative learning is key in education, but also the fundamental positives that can occur through the shared experiences of partner reading. Stahl, Heubach, and Cramond (1997) stated, “Partner reading provides an opportunity for students to read connected text within a socially supportive context. This context should both motivate children to read well and provide a supportive environment to aid the development of reading skill” (p. 13). Through this opportunity, students are met with a meaningful chance to hone in on their reading skills and adopt reading behaviors of their peers that are seemingly at a higher level. Also noted, Stahl, Heubach, and Cramond (1997) discovered that “The most frequent form of assistance took place when a child could not read a word. The reader would stop, wait for the partner to provide the word, and then continue reading” (p. 43). Several support systems in a classroom can indefinitely help in guiding a student’s success. The support from peers and teachers will solidify the importance of practicing reading aloud.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The research was measuring the correlation between the effectiveness of paired-partner reading and its impacts on student achievement on the STAR Reading Assessment. As educators, it is important to take note of strategies that work and ones that don’t within the classroom. Reading can be a burdening task that seems daunting to young readers that struggle, not to mention adults, at times too. The issue arises when students are asked to read on their own. Students may very well “skim” through the text without comprehending a single word, or students may simply take advantage of the imminent sources for summaries found on the internet. Creating a meaningful reading partnership can push students to work on their fluency and comprehension without making them feel pressured to read in front of the entire class.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students find improvement or success in their own skills and abilities through the use of paired-partner reading in direct relation to their overall STAR Reading Assessment scores. This study was important because it provided insight on the idea that reading aloud allows students to progress in their own reading skills and abilities. Students would also be processing information at a slightly slower rate because of reading each word aloud rather than reading silently in their heads. Giving the students the opportunity to slow down their reading and concentrate on each word would progress their reading in a positive way. Polat, Sezer, and Atis-Akyol noticed how “Children that cooperated with their peers by expressing their own ideas, improved their social skills by taking individual and group responsibilities” (2022, p. 474).

### **Research Question(s)**

1. How does paired-partner reading impact STAR Reading Assessment scores in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?

### **Definition of Variables**

The variables involved in this study include: the students, STAR Reading scores, reading pairs/partners.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was important for the researcher's school system because it will help in determining if paired-partner reading strategies were effective in improving student reading scores. This study provided the necessary information to understand whether or not reading aloud in a pair is a positive or negative activity that should be used within the classroom. This study would help teachers and student success coordinators to understand the importance of involvement among study participants. Language Arts is a core class that all students are required to take throughout their school careers, and reading is a major part of all classes that find themselves in. This study proved to be insightful regarding the effectiveness of reading aloud.

This strategy could prove beneficial in comparing the results to those of the reading rates and scores overall throughout the district and/or the state of Minnesota. This strategy would be a significant support to both elementary and secondary teachers who are attempting to support students that are more than one grade level behind but don't qualify for IEP's or 504s. However, this type of reading strategy does not exclude students that do have an IEP or 504. It should look to further support that student's needs.

### **Research Ethics**

**Permission and IRB Approval.** In order to conduct this study, the researcher will seek MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Mills & Gay, 2019). Likewise, authorization to conduct this study will be sought from the school district where the research project will take place (See Appendix A and Appendix B).

**Informed Consent.** Protection of human subjects participating in research will be assured. Participant minors will be informed of the purpose of the study via the Method of Assent (See Appendix D) that the researcher will read to participants before the beginning of the study. Participants will be aware that this study is conducted as part of the researcher's Master Degree Program and that it will benefit her teaching practice. Informed consent means that the parents of participants have been fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent is sought and that parents understand and agree, in writing, to their child participating in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Confidentiality will be protected through the use of pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) without the utilization of any identifying information. The choice to participate or withdraw at any time will be outlined both, verbally and in writing.

**Limitations.** One particular limitation that may arise in this study includes the possibility of having a class with an odd number. Since this study solely focuses on the impact of paired-partner reading, there may need to be a group of three or the teacher might need to step in as well. Another area of limitation revolves around the aspect of student absences. When students are placed into their paired groups, and their partner is gone, there needs to be a plan in place for the present student to either join another group, or read aloud with the teacher. There may not be a fair representation of equal ethnicity among participants.

### **Conclusion**

There have always been new strategies evolving surrounding the idea that all students have the ability to learn, grow, and progress at any given stage. Struggling readers fall into that category and can be reached by means of various learning opportunities in the classroom. One strategy, in particular, that pushes those students and provides higher-level readers with extended

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learning would be paired-partner reading. Increasing students' interactions with the text, collaboration of their peers, and oral & auditory stimulation of the text should prove positive in the surveys, observations, and scores. The next chapter presents information from current sources about this topic that support the purpose of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

As strategies for teaching reading have changed over the years, the theory and research behind it has also been affected. Several strategies are important in reaching the struggling reader within the classroom. It can be difficult to reach struggling readers effectively when teaching a wide variety of students with many different reading abilities at the same time and trying to work with the same curriculum. Research cited throughout this Literature Review encompasses a wide variety of findings associated with reading strategies, collaboration techniques, and student behavior while participating in these types of learning environments. Beers and Probst (2012) concluded that, “It is the interaction, the transaction, between the reader and the text that not only creates meaning but creates the reason to read” (p. 3). Most educators are aware of the difficulties in trying to reach each individual student within the classroom with the allotted time that they are given. With several types of reading strategies, it may be hard to decide which strategy works the best. One reading strategy that is rising in prominence is paired-partner reading. Paired-partner reading helps students build their fluency and confidence while reading with a peer that is at a slightly higher reading level. The research question for this action research was how paired-partner reading impacts STAR Reading scores in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?

### **Body of the Review (Paired-Partner Reading)**

First, the strategy of paired-partner reading and the complexities that arise in the classroom regarding diverse student achievement levels must be defined. O’Riordan (2013) stated that “Paired reading, which is a type of choral reading undertaken by two readers, with one more proficient than the other, is a strategy which is an appropriate intervention to tackle the aforementioned literacy difficulties” (p. 7). Paired-partner reading specifically looks at students that are struggling or lower-achieving readers and seeks to connect those students with others who are higher-leveled readers. This type of strategy can reward all parties associated with the learning outcomes.

### **Benefits of Paired-Partner Reading**

Proponents of using a paired-partner reading strategy say that it increases student engagement, provides collaboration opportunities, and is entirely flexible. According to Milner, Milner, and Mitchell (2012) in *Bridging English: Fifth Edition*, addressed the notion that students should be granted the opportunity to practice thinking aloud with a partner in the classroom setting (p. 211). Providing struggling readers with the opportunity to communicate their ideas aloud to another peer can lead to positive conversation along with built confidence from a smaller group discussion rather than a whole class discussion. Another strong aspect of paired-partner reading, indicates and deciphers the deafening difference between a “good” reader and a “struggling” reader. As stated by Milner, Milner, and Mitchell (2012), “The only thing that separates ‘good’ readers from ‘struggling’ readers is the way that each group responds when they encounter difficulties as they read. Most struggling readers think ‘good’ readers never grapple with a text or have questions or have to reread” (p. 210). Through paired-partnered reading, students are met with the chance to engage in reading with another person that is coherently

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stronger in fluency and comprehension, however, these high-fliers are also aware of when they must reread, ask questions, and/or take time to digest what they read. Teachers that consistently show their students how to think aloud while reading seems helpful as it is a model for students to follow, but this paired-partner reading strategy provides students with one-on-one peer interaction that closely shows how students, working with students, maneuver through reading and reasoning.

### **Fluency**

Another key piece that is addressed through paired-partner reading includes fluency and how that can directly relate to their comprehension. Renowned author and teacher, Nancie Atwell (2012), cited information from Just and Carpenter, which stated, “Research shows that fluent readers skip more than 30 percent of the words in a text because they already ‘know’ they’re there” (p. 173). Also mentioned within this text is the fact that inexperienced readers are trying to compile letters and words through a short-term memory into and long-term memory which is slightly behind the experienced reader that is putting chunks of *meaning* into their storage (2012, p. 173). While considering this idea and how it relates to the psycholinguistic model, struggling students would be focused on getting through the text and “finishing” rather than taking the time to comprehend if they needed to be intrinsically motivated and reading alone.

Fluency-oriented reading instruction includes many different working parts that come together to help with student comprehension. In *LETRS: Getting Up to Speed: Developing Fluency*, Louisa C. Moats and Marcia Davidson (2009) affirmed that students that are beginning, learning, and/or struggling to read must master fluency in order to better their ability to comprehend (p. 6). This impacts struggling readers, specifically, because a struggling reader will



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spend more time trying to decipher the words rather than having the time to place meaning with what they have just read. The more a student stumbles over the words or phrases, the more difficulties they will have in specifically determining what they just read. Other reading strategies can place unwanted or unnecessary pressure on a student and this strategy provides a direct aid to the inexperienced reader. Stahl, Heubach, and Cramond (1997) discovered that “The most frequent form of assistance took place when a child could not read a word. The reader would stop, wait for the partner to provide the word, and then continue reading” (p. 43). The interaction between pairs while reading is a direct connection to the idea that struggling readers tend to get stuck on the words and miss the opportunity to begin synthesizing what they have learned, and with the help of a peer, fluency will, in time, improve with support.

Within *Five Oral Reading Fluency Strategies for Supporting Struggling Adolescent Readers*, Kavin Ming (2018) explained, “For readers who struggle due to lack of explicit instruction in [fluency] or who have inborn challenges, these skills may not be fully developed, and, thus, they need to participate in read aloud activities to learn how to read fluently” (p. 17). Throughout the reading process, students need constant opportunities to read aloud so that the teacher has a chance to observe the student’s abilities. These observations become less and less prominent as students transition from grade to grade. Typically, observation of read-alouds occurs in the early years when teachers are testing for phonetic awareness, pronunciation, and letter recognition. Observations would be a pertinent way of determining whether or not the paired-partner reading groups effectively allow the student to receive support and have a positive impact on their reading abilities.

### **Misconceptions**

Sometimes the idea of paired reading can make students weary or nervous because they have preconceived notions of what it's like to read as they get older. Topping (2014), in *Paired Reading and Related Methods for Improving Fluency*, stated, "Some readers regard silent reading as the 'grown-up' way of reading and might be resistant to Reading Together" (p. 61). "Grown-up" reading can be a common misunderstanding with students transitioning from early years into their middle school years as well as high school. This phenomena of independent reading, work, and thinking begins to become the norm for students as they move throughout the grades. Several factors can influence this including how content is taught to older grades versus younger grades, independent work becoming more prominent, and various learning abilities of the students. Topping (2014) also noted, "Paired reading can do a lot of good, but equally important is that it seems to do little harm and be widely ideologically acceptable" (p. 61). While compiling research in regards to the idea of paired reading, the strategy seems to provide mostly positive feedback or little change in reading ability. Harming the students reading ability hinders on other factors that may or may not be directly correlated to students reading aloud with a peer. Authors, Lupo, Strong, and Smith (2019) substantially support Toppings suggestions about students struggling with reading by noting, "As we prepare students for college and careers, we ought to engage them in texts and tasks with which they will struggle but will learn to be successful with support" (p. 552). Not only do Lupo, Strong, and Smith claim that students will strive if granted the opportunity to work with difficult texts as long as there is support in place, but they also constitute the idea that background knowledge is essential when working with students and comprehension. They mention that it can be hard for a student to read a difficult text, but added support such as background knowledge can provide a steady means of

overcoming the language and creating meaning. Lupo, Strong, and Smith (2019) concurred that, “Longer texts or sentences might increase the word-reading burden but decrease the inferential burden by providing more details to help a reader understand a concept or connect ideas” (p. 553). This idea constitutes the fact that harder texts can be grappled and understood by students that have difficulty reading, they in fact simply need support in place.

### **Collaboration Opportunities**

Social opportunities, relationship building, and peer collaboration are an important part of learning in education and can immensely impact student success. Doubet (2022), in *Reviving Collaboration in Classrooms*, placed a collaboration very high on the list of priorities within a classroom in stating, “Community building is a staple of any healthy classroom,” and “Good teachers invest time at the beginning of the year getting to know their students and helping their students get to know one another by using [various] strategies” (p. 27). This statement has been prevalent to most teachers as they get ready for a new group of students every fall. Teacher relationships can positively impact a student’s ability to learn, concentrate, and engage within the classroom. The important aspect of this article specifically follows up on the current situation that the world is facing after a global pandemic: How can teachers create a safe, collaborative space for their students? Doubet specifically looked into this important educational question and began to find the answers she was looking for. The question that she asked to forward her research wound up compelling information that supported her strong views of students being more successful in an environment where they felt safe. Doubet's (2022) argument was strengthened when she noted that the three most important qualities to include in any group dynamics are dependability, meaning (or motivation), and impact (p. 29-30). Paired-partner reading will rely heavily on the idea that the classroom is a safe space for all. This includes the

fact that several students may need to get acquainted with not only the teacher, but their classmates as well.

Collaborative learning can prove to be incredibly effective when students are comfortable with the content and the classroom setting. Stahl, Heubach, and Cramond (1997) referenced, “Partner reading provides an opportunity for students to read connected text within a socially supportive context. This context should both motivate children to read well and provide a supportive environment to aid the development of reading skill” (p. 13). This brings to light the social relationships that students would be able to experience with their peers while reading in a small, paired setting. Social skills are a major part of the learning and engagement that are necessary in determining a student’s success with group work. Polat, Sezer, and Atis-Akyol (2022), in *Collaborative Learning with Mind Mapping in the Development of Social Skills in Children*, emphasized that, “It is essential to benefit from the innovative, and influential practices of the modern day, in order to keep up with the changing and developing world” (p. 465). Social skills are one of the most important tools that students can learn to master as the world becomes more and more reliant on communication and connections through various types of interactions. Polat, Sezer, and Atis-Akyol noticed how “Children that cooperated with their peers by expressing their own ideas, improved their social skills by taking individual and group responsibilities” (2022, p. 474). Acknowledging the fact that students’ social skills deepen when they are placed into groups and roles that test their ability to communicate, listen, and interact is essential for this new world of learning that they are a part of. Paired-partner reading enables students to participate in a closed, small group setting that derives collaboration with their peers.

### **STAR Reading Assessment**

First, it is essential to define what the STAR Reading Assessment is and how it is used.

According to the Renaissance website where the test is accessible:

This computer-adaptive test chooses each question from a large pool of test items, making subsequent questions more or less difficult than the prior question depending on whether the student answered the prior question correctly. The pool of test items is large, and the software tracks which questions a student has already seen, so a specific question will not be repeated for a student within a 120-day window. (Renaissance Learning, 2022)

This test is easily taken by students within the 45-minute class period at a rural middle school in Minnesota. The site computes a students' reading score by assessing the student's percentage of correct answers in the diagnostic report: This report provides the most information about an individual student. It offers information such as the student's grade equivalent, percentile rank, estimated oral reading fluency, scaled score, instructional reading level, and zone of proximal development. It also provides tips to maximize that individual's reading growth. Along with this report, teachers also have access to a student's growth, screening in relation to the state's benchmarks (above or below), and an overall summary (Renaissance Learning, 2022). All of this information can be effortlessly accessed by the teacher via login. This site will provide knowledge of where students are at academically in terms of their reading abilities. Rosters of the teacher's classes are uploaded by the district at the beginning of the year.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theory that strongly correlates with paired-partner reading and collaborative experiences between students can be connected to that of Lev Vygotsky. Lev Vygotsky is well-known for his

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sociocultural theory which addresses the idea that social interactions play a key role in children's learning. He stated, "the whole composition of the instrumental act can, without exception, be reduced to a system of stimulus-response connections (2000, p. 188). Through connections and interactions derived from paired-partner reading with their peers in a novel study, students gained more from their learning experience.

Several variables contributed to the success of this study. Students' STAR Reading scores were the main deciding factor in pairing the students together for the novel study. Informal observations with student reading groups guided the overall practice. Studying the relationships, engagement levels, discussions, and their fluency while reading prompted change or sustainability with the study. Theoretically, students should have had positive experiences working with their peers through reading aloud and found it beneficial to their STAR Reading score.

### **Research Question(s)**

1. How does paired-partner reading impact STAR Reading Assessment scores in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?

### **Conclusions**

This research ties together the impact of collaboration on student learning, the key contributors to student success in reading aloud, and how the STAR Reading Assessment takes components of a student's abilities in reading comprehension. Each of these factors proved to strengthen a student's relationship with reading whether that be progress or for high achieving students extended learning through assisting their peers. Through completing this study, the plan was to determine whether or not student STAR Reading scores improved based on their read aloud experience with peers at a higher level for a single given novel. The advancements that

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were determined were whether or not students found success with increased reading scores in response to their paired-partner reading. Using this knowledge, it can be found as to whether or not this experience had a positive learning outcome for students that tend to struggle with reading. This study helped to understand the benefits of paired-partner reading in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom and decide if the benefits merited continuing this practice throughout the school year with other texts.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### **Introduction**

Reaching each individual and trying to make an impact on their learning in a positive way can be challenging when students do not start with the same knowledge. Through the use of paired-partner reading in this study, students are engaged with their peers, have had the opportunity to read aloud, and felt obligated to discuss the text through their interactions with their peers. The basis for this research was chosen to determine how effective paired-partner reading was on students' reading scores and attitude towards reading. Considering the vast majority of literature that is out there, the results of this study should be impactful to students and their reading abilities. The importance of this case study was to determine the underlying benefits and effectiveness of paired-partner reading. The idea that students need to have opportunities to practice reading aloud with peers would cause positive results in correlation to their STAR Reading Scores. The methodology primarily used for this research resembles that of the quasi-experimental strategy. Several means of data collection were used to configure the effectiveness of the study.

#### **Research Question(s)**

1. How does paired-partner reading impact STAR Reading Assessment scores in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?



### **Research Design**

The researcher will use quantitative data collection techniques throughout the first eight weeks of trimester one at a rural middle school. Quantitative data collection techniques were chosen to systematically investigate the area of focus. The single variable of partner reading will show an influence on student scores. This study called for a group of students that provide the baseline for independent reading in comparison to those who will be participating in pair-partner reading for the duration of the first novel, *Memory Boy* by Will Weaver. Thus, the quasi-experimental method was considered and used for this research. UNICEF Office of Research Methodological Briefs (2014) defines quasi-experimental methods as:

Quasi-experimental designs identify a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of baseline (pre-intervention) characteristics. The comparison group captures what would have been the outcomes if the programme/policy had not been implemented (i.e., the counterfactual). Hence, the programme or policy can be said to have caused any difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. (White & Sabarwal, p.1)

Specifically, the researcher will focus on how paired-partner reading impacts 7th grade students' STAR Reading scores. One STAR Reading score will be taken within the first week, and then following the reading of the first 7th grade novel through partner reading, there will be a final STAR Reading test taken. This should show progress with the implementation of the strategy.

**Quantitative data collection.** Quantitative research includes data that can be reduced to numbers. Quantitative data collection was the main means of data collection in order to see how effective paired-partner reading impacted their scores. Pre and post STAR Reading assessments

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were utilized to measure data provided by the students after participating in paired-partner reading. This component was used in favor of this study because it works to provide a solid base level for where students are at when entering the classroom at the beginning of the year. To determine the effectiveness of this study, this means of data collection will also provide an endpoint in data after the implementation of the reading strategy has taken place.

### **Setting**

This study took place in a rural Minnesota middle school with approximate enrollment of 2,800 students, grades Pre-K through 12. The student/teacher ratio of this district was 13.39, thus, there are 13 students per every one teacher. This city has a standing population of 9,229 taken from the 2020 census. The area is widely known for being a summer town, where people come to visit from all over the state of Minnesota. This causes the unofficial population during the summer months to be much higher than during the typical school year, September through May. The lakes are a major attraction for this community and surrounding areas, which create a heavy tourist spot from June through August. The school district's minority enrollment was 30% while the student enrollment that qualifies for free/reduced lunch stood at 24.5%.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were enrolled in the school district as 7th grade students for the 2022-2023 school year beginning in September. These students were between the ages of 11-14 years old, considering that some students may be older than others and some younger for their grade level. Within the school district, 49% of students identify as female and 51% of students identify as male. The population of students enrolled include: 74.6% White, 20.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.7% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% Two or more races, 1.2% Black or African

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American, 0.7% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

**Sampling.** The students that were selected for this study were a convenience sample as they were assigned to the researcher as being their teacher. The researcher is considered their 7th grade Language Arts teacher for the 2022-2023 school year. The researcher has three sections of 7th grade Language Arts and chose a specific class period to implement paired-partner reading. The selection of the class was made by determining the class with the lowest average STAR Reading scores.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher will be utilizing one specific means of data to speculate the effectiveness of the paired-partner reading strategy within the class period; this includes STAR Reading Assessment and informal teacher observations. The primary source of quantitative data will be taken from Renaissance STAR Reading Assessment. It takes approximately 20-30 minutes to complete with an average of 30 questions. This tool specifically looks at the following:

This computer-adaptive test chooses each question from a large pool of test items, making subsequent questions more or less difficult than the prior question depending on whether the student answered the prior question correctly. The pool of test items is large, and the software tracks which questions a student has already seen, so a specific question will not be repeated for a student within a 120-day window. (Renaissance Learning, 2022)

This assessment software tracks students throughout the time they are taking the test. Each student receives questions that best fit their skills and reading levels to best determine their

## IMPACT OF PAIRED-PARTNER READING

scores. Each student may receive different questions depending on the results of their answers throughout the assessment. There is no specific set of questions for the STAR Reading Test. For sample questions please see Appendix E. These questions are chosen at random and are quick to adapt to the student's correct and incorrect answers.

The final means of data collection was informal observations made by the researcher throughout the class period, including check-ins with each pair, asking questions, and listening for fluency as pairs read aloud. This information is not included in the determination as to the effect paired-partner reading had on STAR scores.

**Data Collection.** Data collection was generated through the results page on Renaissance Place on the district website. The researcher had full access to scores of the students enrolled in their classroom.

**Data Analysis.** In summarizing the data, a table was used to map out progress and/or regression of the students' STAR Reading Scores. In another table, correlated to those students' scores (Student 1, Student 2, etc) are compared to the students in the other controlled group of 7th graders that did not partake in the paired-partner reading.

**Research Question(s) and System Alignment.** The table below (i.e., Table 3.1.) provides a description of the alignment between the study Research Questions and the methods used in this study to ensure that all variables of study have been accounted for adequately.

**Table 3.1.**

**Research Questions Alignment**

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Design</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Validity &amp; Reliability</i>	<i>Technique (e.g., interview)</i>	<i>Source</i>
RQ1: How does paired-partner reading impact STAR Reading Assessment scores in a 7 <sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?	IV: Paired-Partner Reading Strategy  DV: Student improvement in STAR Reading Scores	Correlational Design	Renaissance STAR Reading Assessment	Care was taken to design the research to be as valid and reliable as possible. STAR Reading Assessment is used across the state regarding students' reading skills/abilities.	This will consist of a 20-30 minute reading assessment with approximately 30 questions.	Students participating in the study and the students' STAR Test Scores.

**Procedures**

This study took place over a six to eight-week period, with the goal being at least four forms of assessment during this time period. The assessments include a “pre-test” STAR Reading score at the beginning of the action research and a “post-test” STAR Reading score at the end of the six-eight week period. Throughout this time frame, students that are participating in the research, will be reading the first class novel of the year in their selected paired-partner reading groups. Their paired-partner reading groups are chosen after their initial STAR Reading Scores.

## IMPACT OF PAIRED-PARTNER READING

Each pair of students will be reading the selected course novel together by reading aloud chapter by chapter, page by page, or paragraph by paragraph. This may be left up to the pairs to decide what works best for their reading group. After the novel, students will take the “post-test” STAR Reading. Names will be kept anonymous for the written research portion of data collection in the next chapters. The hope is to see improvement for all, however, this research is conducted to determine the effectiveness. Throughout the six to eight week period the researcher will continuously check-in with the paired reading groups and take informal notes of how the pairs are participating in the strategy; these notes are not included in the research analysis, but are merely for the researcher’s use in the school setting.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There will be little to no risk among student participants as all data and results will remain confidential and anonymous. The study will only include students whose parents signed the consent form. Some ethical issues that may arise during this study may be due to student behaviors while participating in the paired-partner reading strategy that will be handled by the researcher enforcing that the classroom is a safe and secure environment for students to practice their reading skills.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter discussed how the researcher will be collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data for this study. There are specific data collections that will be used to determine the effectiveness of the strategy in order to achieve a larger, more encompassing data sample. The next chapter will discuss the overall results and findings from the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This study aimed to determine if students that used the reading strategy of paired-partner reading had beneficial outcomes to their STAR Reading Assessment scores. Students typically seem to struggle when it comes to reading, so determining whether or not paired-partner reading can be a successful tool to use in the classroom would be helpful. Alongside that, many districts are looking to constantly improve MCA scores in comparison to the state's average. Thus, the STAR Reading Assessment aims to provide essential information that gives educators an inference as to how their students will do on the MCAs. Therefore, utilizing this testing tool and reading strategy and then, understanding whether it is hindering or helping is vital to student success.

#### **Data Collection**

The students took a “pre-test” STAR Reading Assessment at the beginning of the action research. This is primarily taken during the first four weeks of school. This is to determine a baseline of knowledge for the student at the beginning of the year and track progress. After the pre-test has been completed, students that are participating in the research, will be reading the first class novel of the year in their selected paired-partner reading groups. At the end of the class novel, a “post-test” STAR Reading Assessment will be taken to determine any growth or regression in the student's overall reading abilities in the six-eight week period.

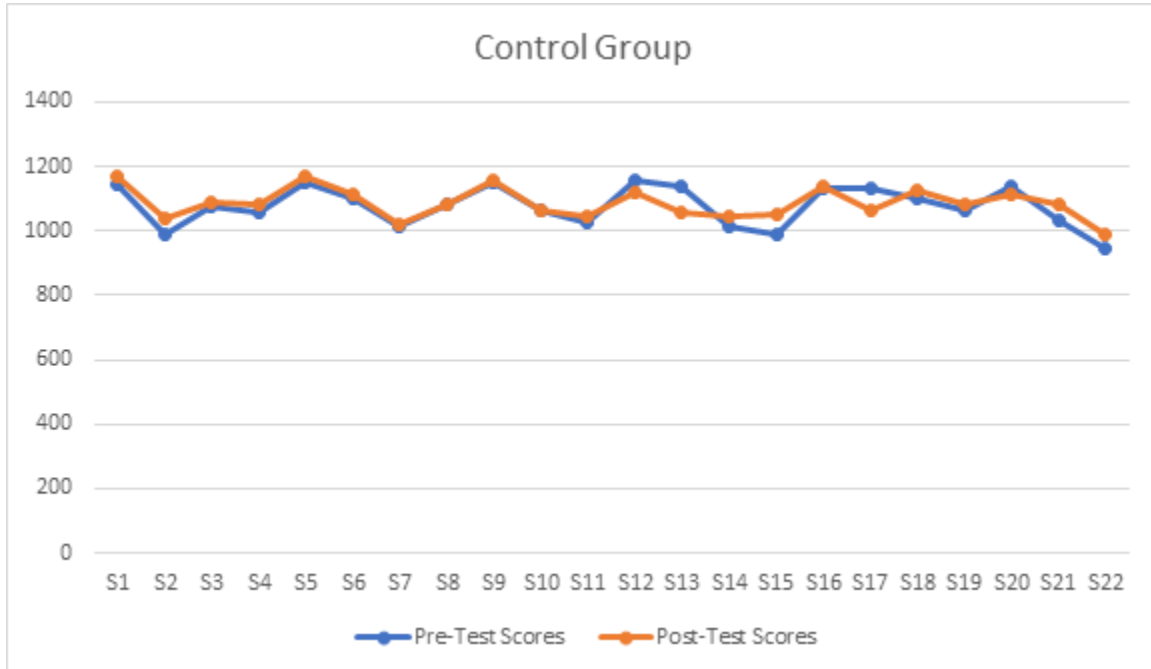
**Results**

***RQ 1: How does paired-partner reading impact STAR Reading Assessment scores in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts classroom?***

The scores on the STAR Reading Assessment were determined by the Renaissance Learning online testing tool. The results of the control group (no paired-partner reading) are shown below in Figure 1. Both results of the Pre-test and Post-test are recorded for each student to assess growth or regression. Table 4.1 below provides the exact scores that the students received.

**Figure 1**

*Control Group A (no paired-partner reading)*



*Note: This figure represents a line graph comparing each student’s pre and post test scores.*



**Table 4.1**

*Control Group A (Exact Scores)*

Student	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores	Student	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
S1	1145	1169	S12	1156	1120
S2	989	1041	S13	1141	1057
S3	1079	1087	S14	1015	1045
S4	1059	1085	S15	987	1053
S5	1153	1168	S16	1131	1139
S6	1101	1112	S17	1130	1064
S7	1012	1021	S18	1103	1128
S8	1081	1085	S19	1062	1085
S9	1148	1160	S20	1139	1111
S10	1062	1066	S21	1033	1085
S11	1028	1044	S22	947	987

Apart from the overall scores, the mean, median, and growth percentage were calculated. One area of the results that was looked at in more detail to better determine whether the strategy was effective was the focus on average student growth percentile. The best means to determine if reading aloud with a partner was beneficial was to figure out whether the growth percentage of the experimental group was higher or lower than the control group. Calculations for the control group are shown below in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2**

*STAR Reading Scores (Controlled Group)*

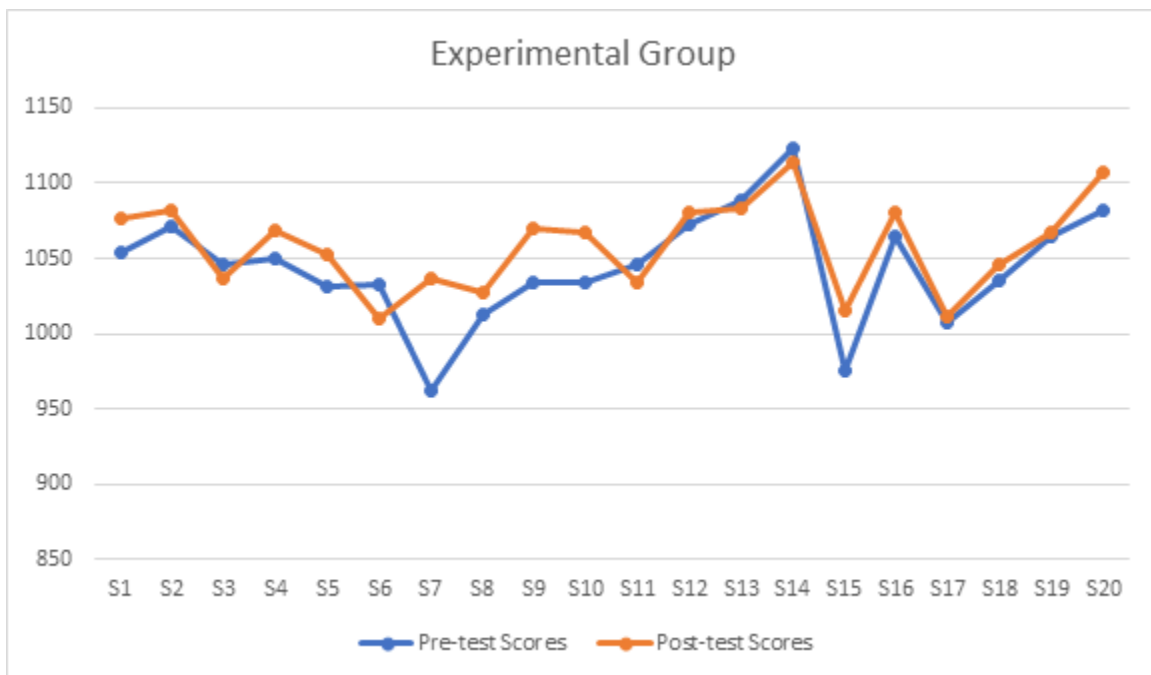
	Pre-test	Post-Test
Mean	1128.62	1136.7
Median	1081	1085
Average Growth Percentage	1.066% Growth	

The same data collection method was used for the experimental group (paired-partner reading).

The results of the experimental group are shown below in Figure 2. Both results of the Pre-test and Post-test are recorded for each student to assess growth or regression. Table 4.3 below provides the exact scores that the students received.

**Figure 2**

*Experimental Group B (paired-partner reading)*



## IMPACT OF PAIRED-PARTNER READING

*Note: This figure represents a line graph comparing each student's pre and post test scores.*

**Table 4.3**

*Experimental Group B (Exact Scores)*

Student	Pre-Test Scores	Post-Test Scores		Student	Pre-Test Scores	Post-Test Scores
S1	1054	1076		S11	1046	1034
S2	1071	1082		S12	1072	1081
S3	1046	1036		S13	1088	1083
S4	1050	1068		S14	1123	1114
S5	1031	1053		S15	975	1015
S6	1033	1010		S16	1064	1080
S7	962	1037		S17	1007	1012
S8	1013	1027		S18	1035	1046
S9	1034	1070		S19	1065	1067
S10	1034	1067		S20	1082	1107

The mean, median, and growth percentage was recorded for each student in the same way as the control group results. These results are shown below in Table 4.4

**Table 4.4**

*STAR Reading Scores (Experimental Group)*

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	1043.73	1055.68
Median	1046	1067
Average Growth Percentage	1.266% Growth	

**Data Analysis**

Looking at the data, the experimental group that participated in the paired-partner reading seemed to have more overall growth as a class compared to the control group. The average growth was figured in regards to the class as a whole. The experimental group saw 0.2% more growth than the control group that did not participate in paired-partner reading.

Another data point collected was the average STAR Reading score obtained by the class. The class that did not participate in paired-partner reading had an average score of 1128 for the Pre-Test and 1136 for the Post-Test. These scores were noticeably higher than the experimental group’s average scores of 1043 for the Pre-Test and 1055 for the Post-Test. The mean scores for each of the STAR Reading tests (post and pre) for each class seemed to be very influential on the total growth seen in each class. The control group began the experiment with a much higher average reading score than the experimental group.

Along with mean and growth percentage, median was also collected to determine where the student with the middle score fell in comparison to the mean of the class overall. For the most part, this student was not far off from the average of the class.

## **Conclusion**

The tools used to determine the effectiveness of paired-partner reading were accurate and showed various insightful information in regards to students' success in reading comprehension and skills based on the Renaissance STAR Reading Assessment. This data showed that students who partook in the paired-partner reading strategy proved to increase student success on the STAR Reading Assessment. Although the growth percentage difference between the two classes was only .2%, there are still benefits to using paired reading within the classroom.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study aimed to determine whether or not students would benefit from paired partner reading within the classroom. After analyzing the data, it was found that the experimental group, the students that partook in paired-partner reading, outperformed the control group, the students that read independently. Alongside this information, it also specifically showcased how each student contributed to the overall success of the strategy used. The strategy proved to be effective, but in a very minimal way.

#### **Action Plan**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, even though the data shows a very small difference in beneficial prospects for students, it still has useful information for the next steps in my teaching practices. On the other hand, it is difficult to make the claim and say that this would be the best and most appropriate strategy to use in any class or any setting. This sample size was limited to only two classes, one school district, and one grade level. If there were more students involved in the study then it would have a much more serious efficacy associated with it. Having said that, as an educator who does work in a setting that produced positive results, it is difficult to not consider using this strategy consistently in my classroom.

This study provided me with an opportunity to test a theory about the importance of reading aloud in a classroom setting with peers. For future consideration, I plan on continuing to utilize this strategy in my classroom while also incorporating an even amount of independent

## IMPACT OF PAIRED-PARTNER READING

reading as well. Students benefit from having social interactions with their peers and practicing their fluency with words in order to help with comprehension.

### **Plan for Sharing**

Overall the entire study has been an extremely eye-opening experience. I was surprised to see that the success of the data was not at a larger quantity. I expected to see the growth percentage to be a lot higher for the experimental group than .2%. Other considerations that I would be sure to consider in the future would be the initial STAR Reading Scores of the students. The controlled group was clearly one of my highest achieving classes. So my thoughts are: What if I would have compared my experimental group to another one of my classes that I have throughout the day? Would the results have been different? Worse or better? Incorporating paired-partner reading within my classroom will remain and continue to be a key strategy to work with students that struggle with fluency.

In moving forward, I will start with a small group to share my results with, starting with my PLC at my school. My department would appreciate the insightful information that I collected from performing this study. We have gone back and forth on the idea of using more reading aloud in our classrooms and I feel as though this will provide necessary understanding of the strategy. Overall, to keep students engaged, we need to challenge their thinking skills and be flexible about using different strategies within the educational environment.

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APPENDIX A

**Institutional Review Board**



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DATE: October 20, 2022

TO: Kathy Enger, Principal Investigator

FROM: Dr. Robert Nava, Chair  
Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB

**ACTION: APPROVED**

PROJECT TITLE: [1964528-1] Action Research: The Impacts of Paired-Partner Reading on STAR Reading Scores

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

APPROVAL DATE: October 20, 2022

EXPIRATION DATE:

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB.

This project has been determined to be a project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

## IMPACT OF PAIRED-PARTNER READING

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the [Minnesota State University Moorhead IRB](#). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

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This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University Moorhead's records.

APPENDIX B



# Detroit Lakes Middle School

500 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue – Detroit Lakes, MN 56501  
218-847-9228 FAX: 218-847-0057

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September 9, 2022

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant Brianna Byer permission to conduct an action research study at Detroit Lakes Middle School during the 2022-2023 academic year. I understand that this study poses no risk to those persons involved or to the Detroit Lakes Public School District. I also understand that all information received will be kept confidential and will only be used for purposes of this study.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Suckert".

Michael Suckert  
Principal, Detroit Lakes Middle School

*The mission of the Detroit Lakes Public Schools is to nurture and develop the full potential of all learners in an environment where lifelong learning is valued, educational excellence is expected, and improvement is continuous.*

APPENDIX C



Completion Date 09-Jun-2022  
Expiration Date 08-Jun-2025  
Record ID 49473026

This is to certify that:

**Brianna Byer**


Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher**  
(Curriculum Group)  
**Social & Behavioral Research**  
(Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Minnesota State University Moorhead**

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.



Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8485a151-fe99-47fc-9417-d583d2a3161e-49473026](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8485a151-fe99-47fc-9417-d583d2a3161e-49473026)

**APPENDIX D**

July 24, 2022

500 11th Ave  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in a study to see if paired-partner reading will help with comprehension in their reading.

Your child was selected because he/she is in my regular education classroom. If you decide to participate, please understand that your child will be asked to do the following, and these are typical classroom activities that involve no risk to your child.

1. Your child will be paired with another student during our Language Arts class period from (time undecided yet) for reading. The novel that we will focus on is *Memory Boy* by Will Weaver.
2. Students will be given a pre and post-test to see how their STAR Reading score was impacted with the paired-partner read alouds. These tests will not affect their grades.
3. Students will also take a short survey to reflect on their thoughts and opinions regarding the reading strategy and its success. This will not affect students' grades.

Although Principal Mike Suckert has granted me permission to conduct this study, since this information is being used to help me complete my master's degree at Minnesota State University Moorhead, I need to have parental consent to use this information. I would be conducting this same type of research in my normal everyday lessons and I would not need signatures. If you sign this form, you are giving me consent to use the information that I gather. All information that is used will be confidential, no names will be used. Please also note, that your child can choose not to participate at any time without any consequences.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have regarding this study. You may contact me here at school (218)-847-ext. 3125 or [bbyer@detlakes.k12.mn.us](mailto:bbyer@detlakes.k12.mn.us). You may also contact my adviser, Michael Coquyt at 218-477-2019 or [michael.coquyt@mnstate.edu](mailto:michael.coquyt@mnstate.edu).

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date


APPENDIX E

13/34 Allegra Cooke Stop Test

Mariela grew worried as she listened to the fierce wind whipping against her bedroom window. She had waited until the very last day to apply online to the college she hoped to attend. Now she only had one hour left before the deadline at 6 p.m. She was close to completing her personal essay but needed to add some finishing touches. As Mariela typed her concluding sentence, the electricity went out. She lost her connection to the Internet.

How does the setting affect the story?

- 1 The storm outside contrasts with the interior of Mariela's bedroom to symbolize her reluctance to leave home.
- 2 The fierce wind makes it difficult for Mariela to concentrate on completing her essay.
- 3 The lateness of the hour increases the tension and suspense when the electricity goes out.

1/34  Stop Test

The sailboat is large and needs a \_\_\_\_\_ of four people.

- 1 folk
- 2 crew
- 3 mast
- 4 kingdom