

LEVELED READING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM
An Action Research Project
 By Angela Gunkel

THE BIG QUESTION

**DOES LEVELED/DIFFERENTIATED READING INSTRUCTION IMPROVE
 THE PERFORMANCE AND ATTITUDE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS?**

<p>TEST ONE – All Students read “This Side of Paradise” (Lexile 730)</p>	<p>TEST TWO – Differentiated Instruction (USING SCOBRE PRESS BOOKS)</p> <p>All students read one version of Scobre’s “Legit: The Rise of a Cyber Athlete”</p> <p>(Home Run Edition – Lexile 700)</p> <p>(Touchdown Edition – Lexile 900)</p>
<p>All students read the same book.</p>	<p>Scobre Press books are each written at two different Lexile levels. So, all students read the same content, but two different books</p>
<p>Students are divided into two groups based on Lexile scores. Both groups read the same book.</p> <p>GROUP A: At or above grade level (Lexile above 800).</p> <p>GROUP B: Below grade level (Lexile below 800).</p>	<p>All students are in a regular “heterogeneously grouped” classes</p> <p>GROUP A: At or above Grade level (Lexile above 800)</p> <p>Read “Legit” written at a 7th grade level. Books contained approximately 1,000 more words than lower level. Font size, 12 point.</p> <p>GROUP B: Below grade level (Lexile below 800)</p> <p>Read “Legit” written at a 4th grade level. Difficult vocabulary removed from this version. Simpler sentence structure. Font size, 14 point.</p>
<p>Pre reading Surveys given out to each group.</p> <p>Students read and received instruction on the novel. Read the book in a variety of ways: Aloud, Partners, Silently, Small Groups, Being Read to on tape</p>	<p>Pre reading surveys given out to each group.</p> <p>Whole class instruction occurred on various reading strategies using Scobre Press Teacher’s Guide: Making Connections, Marking up Text, Asking Questions.</p> <p>After each day’s whole group instruction, students read their books silently or in small</p>

	<p>groups (of my choosing).</p> <p>Because the content of the books was the same, students were able to answer the exact same questions and participate in the same discussions.</p> <p>The books had the exact same cover, pictures, and content.</p>
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TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

<p>GROUP A: Students were more actively involved in reading discussions.</p> <p>Students preferred working in groups or pairs as opposed to being read to.</p> <p>More time was spent on discussions than on reading</p>	<p>GROUP B: Students were less likely to initiate discussions.</p> <p>Students enjoyed being read to more than reading silently.</p> <p>Reading the text took the majority of the time, with little discussion.</p>	<p>All students, regardless of reading level, were able to read the text, answer the questions and participate in discussions.</p> <p>Struggling readers spoke out more often and did more “out of the box” thinking when they were mixed with more successful peers.</p> <p>Higher readers took the lead in most small group discussions, but did a good job actively listening to all of the readers.</p> <p>All readers seemed interested in the books. In fact, they asked about reading it every day.</p>
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STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

<p>GROUP A: Students enjoyed being able to discuss the books and read in groups.</p> <p>They liked the pace of the class.</p> <p>The commented on how everyone seemed to “like” reading.</p>	<p>GROUP B: Students thought reading took too long.</p> <p>They commented that classmates were “slow” when reading aloud.</p> <p>They thought it was hard to concentrate and stay focused.</p> <p>Several said “Nobody talked!”</p>	<p>Student’s responses on feedback survey were very positive.</p> <p>55/59 students felt the book was written on their reading level.</p> <p>52/59 students felt that reading “Legit” made them feel like a successful reader.</p> <p>56/59 students enjoyed the group discussions.</p> <p>48/59 students thought they had valuable things to say during discussions.</p> <p>4/59 students felt that the questions were too easy, and didn’t like the pictures.</p>
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SCOBRE PRESS TEST RESULTS

(Scobre books all come equipped with assessment essay quizzes to be given during instruction.)

Students at all reading levels found success on the essay quizzes that were given during instruction.

	The average quiz score of Group A (higher Lexiles) was 18/20	The average quiz score of Group B (lower Lexiles) was 17/20
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Students all completed the same “project” and again, the results were very close.

The average project score for Group A was 91/100	The average project score for Group B was 88/100
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CONCLUSIONS

Dividing students based upon reading level seems to benefit students with a higher Lexile	Differentiated Instruction works if it is done properly.
Students with a lower Lexile seem to be better off mixed in with students who have a higher Lexile level. Discussions are more productive and good reading behaviors are modeled.	Lower level students need higher level students in order to see/experience good reading behaviors. Higher level students need lower level students to practice good communication skills and to learn to work with all kinds of people. Students don't like to be labeled; consequently, differentiated instruction works best if students don't know they are involved in it.

LEXILE GROWTH:

**This date shows growth over one school year. Many factors contribute to the data. Differentiated reading instruction was a large part of our reading focus this year.*

- **Average Lexile score before Scobre differentiated instruction: 847**
- **Average Lexile score after Scobre differentiated instruction: 943**
- **Average Lexile growth was 118 points.**