

Second Chance Reading Report 2005-2006

Second Chance Reading (SCR) is a program developed by Dr. Beverly Showers for struggling readers at the secondary level. During the 2005-06 academic year Des Moines Public Schools began its fourth year of Second Chance Reading and its third full year of implementation. Thirty-two teachers taught the course this year, five special education teachers and twenty-seven regular education teachers. Of these thirty-two instructors, three taught in alternative high school settings.

Training for both new and returning SCR teachers was provided in August 2005 and continued periodically throughout the 2005-2006 academic year. Local support was provided by a district coordinator, five member SCR Teacher Cadre, and three SCR High School Coaches. External support was provided by Dr. Showers.

One thousand, eleven middle and high school students enrolled in SCR for at least one semester of the academic year. This sample included 82 special education students mainstreamed into regular education SCR classes and 133 special education students in self-contained classes. (see Table 1). The regular education cohort was disaggregated by sub-groups in Table 2. (Note: "Native Americans" and "Other" sub-groups are not included in the tables as membership was less than 5.)

Table 1
Grade Level Distribution of Second Chance Reading Students

	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th – 12 th	Total
Full Year Reg Ed Number	125	187	184	123	64	683
One Semester Reg Ed Number	23	50	52	32	38	195
Full Year Self- Contained	14	20	26	36	18	114
One Semester Self-Contained	0	0	9	6	4	19

Table 2
Disaggregated Regular Education Cohort

Sub-group	Number in a Full Year	Number in a Semester
Regular Education	608	188
Mainstreamed Special Education	75	7
Males	346	106
Females	336	89
Free/Reduced Meals	403	111
English Language Learners	99	30
African-American	141	35
Asian	36	12
Hispanic	84	29
White	418	114

Data Collection

Students were pre and post tested on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT), a standardized measure of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skill. District students also took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in April of 2005 and 2006. The ITBS is a norm referenced achievement test in the reported reading comprehension sub-test. ITBS and SDRT correlated at .762 in reading comprehension.

In addition, teachers recorded the number of books students read independently, as well as new vocabulary words mastered. Formative measures of fluency and comprehension were collected every other week throughout the year. Students scoring 100% on three consecutive fluency measures advanced to an increased difficulty level and demonstrated growth in both fluency and comprehension.

Results

For purposes of reporting results, the regular education sample with mainstreamed special education students is reported separately from the self-contained special education sample where the SCR model was modified to meet learner needs. This regular education group is further divided into two samples, full year and one semester. The number correct on each sub-test was converted to Scaled Scores that are comparable across both test level and form. The Scaled Scores of the vocabulary and reading comprehension sub-tests of the SDRT were averaged and then converted to normal grade equivalents (NGE) using the “Grade Equivalents Corresponding to Scaled Scores” chart provided in the *1995 Multilevel Norms Book*. The NGE scores represent data for grade levels 6 through 12.

Regular education and mainstreamed special education students in SCR for a full year grew over a year on average on the SDRT vocabulary sub-test. Males achieved greater gains than females. However, the three identified sub-groups of English Language Learners, students who qualify for free or reduced meals, and special education students grew half of what their counterparts grew (see Table 3). The mean of the normal grade equivalent (NGE) growth for African-American and Hispanic students was far less than what would be considered “normal” vocabulary growth within an instructional year while Asian students grew at twice the expected rate. (see Table 4).

In reading comprehension, this group of regular education and mainstreamed special education students grew, on average, just over two years in reading comprehension on the SDRT. Similar accelerated growth was achieved for nearly all the identified sub-groups (see Table 3). The ITBS scores show a greater difference among sub-groups. Both males and English Language Learners exhibited greater growth on this measure than other populations. When results are broken down by ethnicity, only Asian students grew less than two year with an average 1.6 Normal Grade Equivalent (NGE) for the year. Interestingly, African-American students outperformed white students by .10 NGE, an unusual outcome given national trends but one on which teachers were specifically focusing (see Table 4).

Table 3

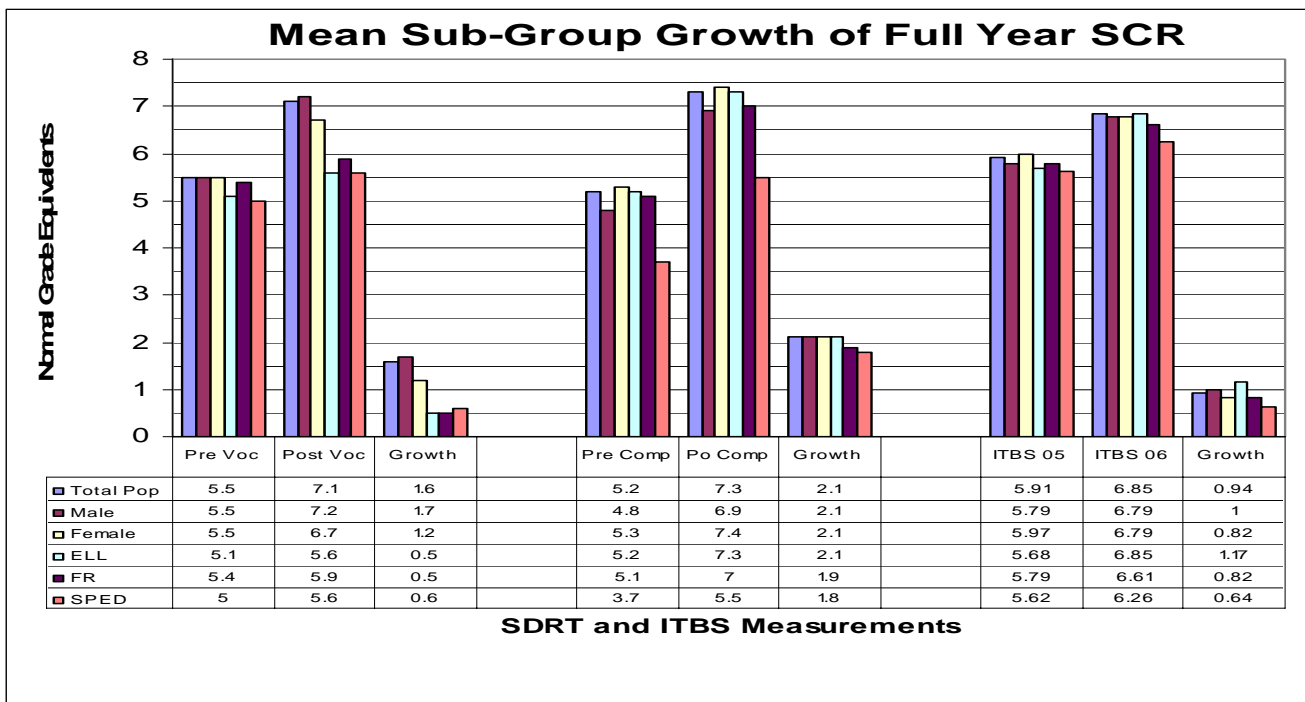
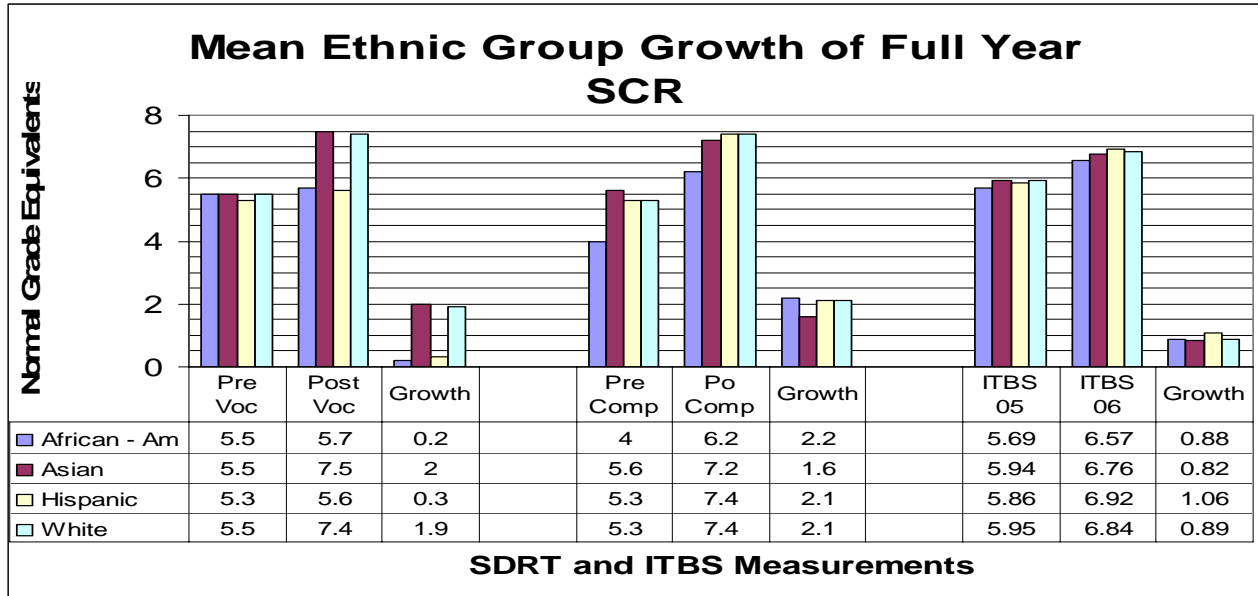


Table 4



Students assigned to only one semester of SCR generally entered the program with an SDRT reading comprehension score slightly ahead of their counterparts in the full year program but exhibited slightly lower scores in vocabulary. The single semester group is comprised of only 195 students, 488 fewer than the full year. A majority of this group represents those who were able to achieve a reading comprehension score at grade level on the SDRT and exited the program at the semester. As a result, many of the comprehension gains were greater than students who were in Second Chance Reading for a full year with a mean growth of 1.08 NGE and actually surpassed full-year growth in vocabulary. The seven mainstreamed special education students however would have benefited from the full-year SCR program as they began the program reading at a much lower level than their peers and actually scored lower on the ITBS reading comprehension sub-test in 2006 (see Table 5). The growth of the English Language Learners, as well as students who qualify for free or reduced meals, are especially noteworthy as are Asian students (see Table 6).

Table 5

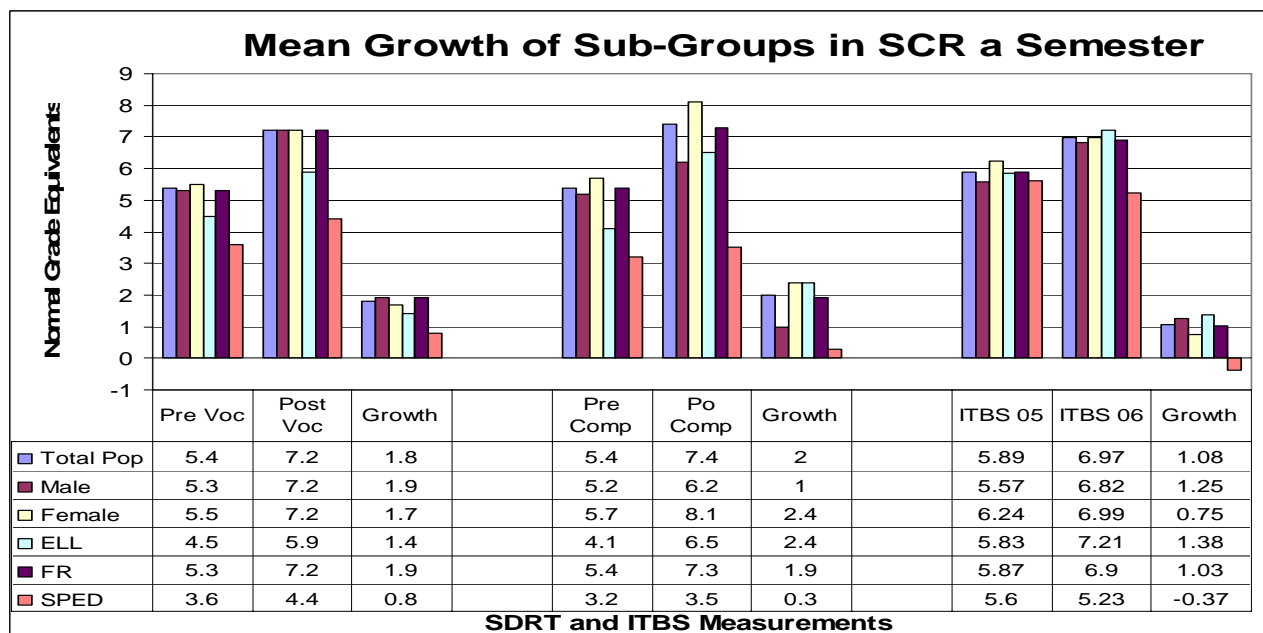
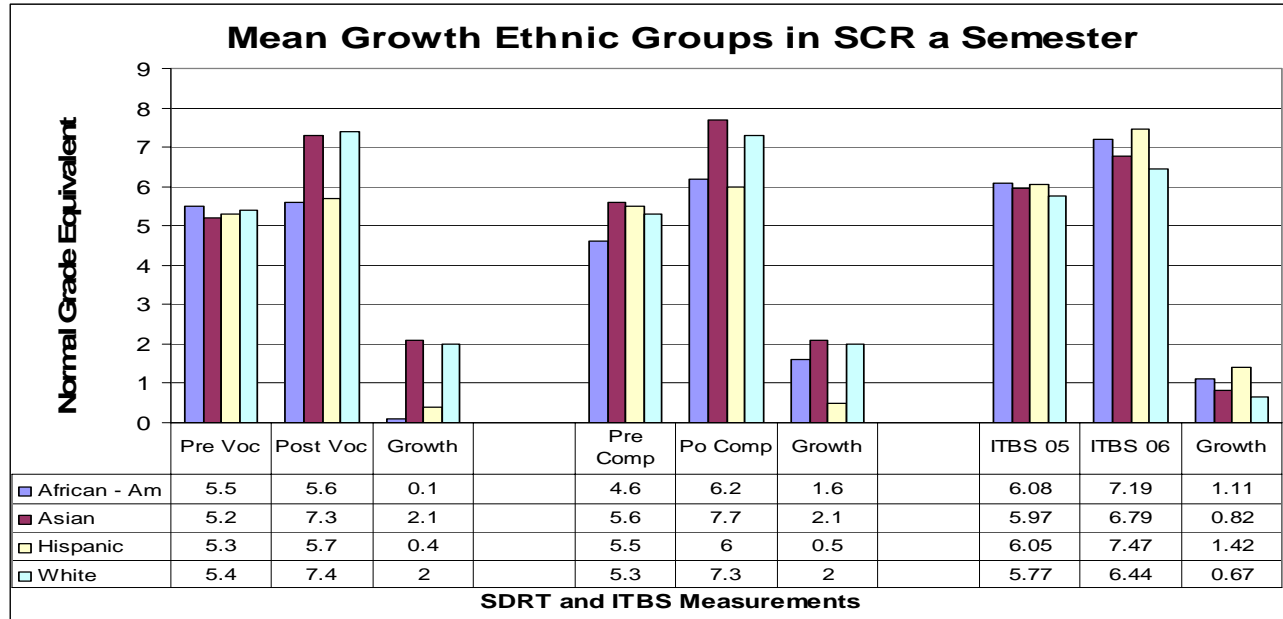
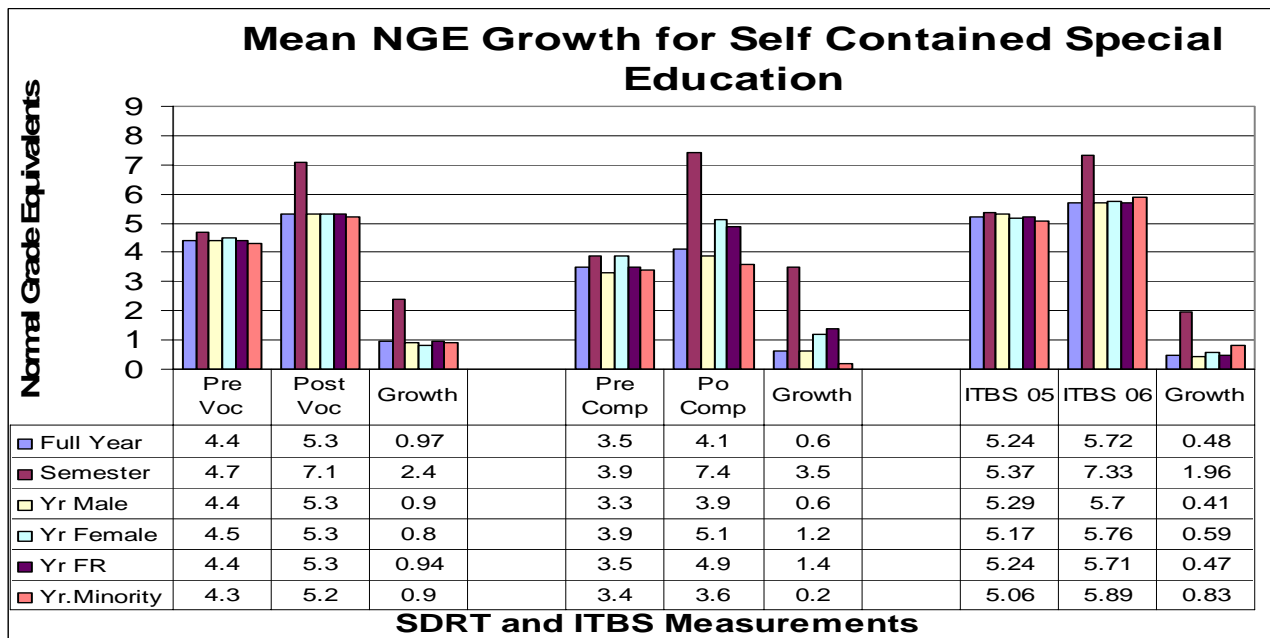


Table 6



Self-contained special education students in the full year SCR program entered with a mean reading comprehension SDRT score of 3.5; single semester students entered with a mean comprehension score of 3.9 (see Table 7). The full year students grew a disappointing .6 NGE, which is consistent with their learning histories. Conversely, the single semester students displayed outstanding growth in reading comprehension on both the SDRT and ITBS measurements, even surpassing the regular education students. All but two of these nineteen students were enrolled in SCR for first semester and then exited because of their gains. Due to the small size of this single semester group, scores were not disaggregated. Of the full year SCR program self-contained students, students qualifying for free or reduce meals exhibited greater growth on the SDRT. Minority students displayed greater gains on the ITBS (see Table 7).

Table 7



In Second Chance Reading, direct instruction in comprehension is combined with efforts to increase independent reading, fluency, and vocabulary, all aimed at increasing reading comprehension. Self-contained special education students' fluency level was measured with an individual assessment that was not part of the data collected. The one-semester program limits the number of books students can read and the number of new vocabulary mastered. However, due to the accelerated performance of the single semester students, their increased levels on the fluency measures are analogous (see Table 8). Students with absences greater than 20 days read fewer books, learned less new vocabulary, and rarely changed the level of difficulty on fluency measures.

Table 8
Mean Growth for SCR Students on Other Measures

Group	Books Read	New Vocabulary	Fluency Level Gain
Full Year: General Education	11	184	.720
Full Year: Mainstreamed SPED	11	173	.841
Full Year: Self-contained SPED	8	96	-
Single Semester: General Education	7	116	.783
Single Semester: Mainstreamed SPED	12	107	.833
Single Semester: Self-contained SPED	3	63	-

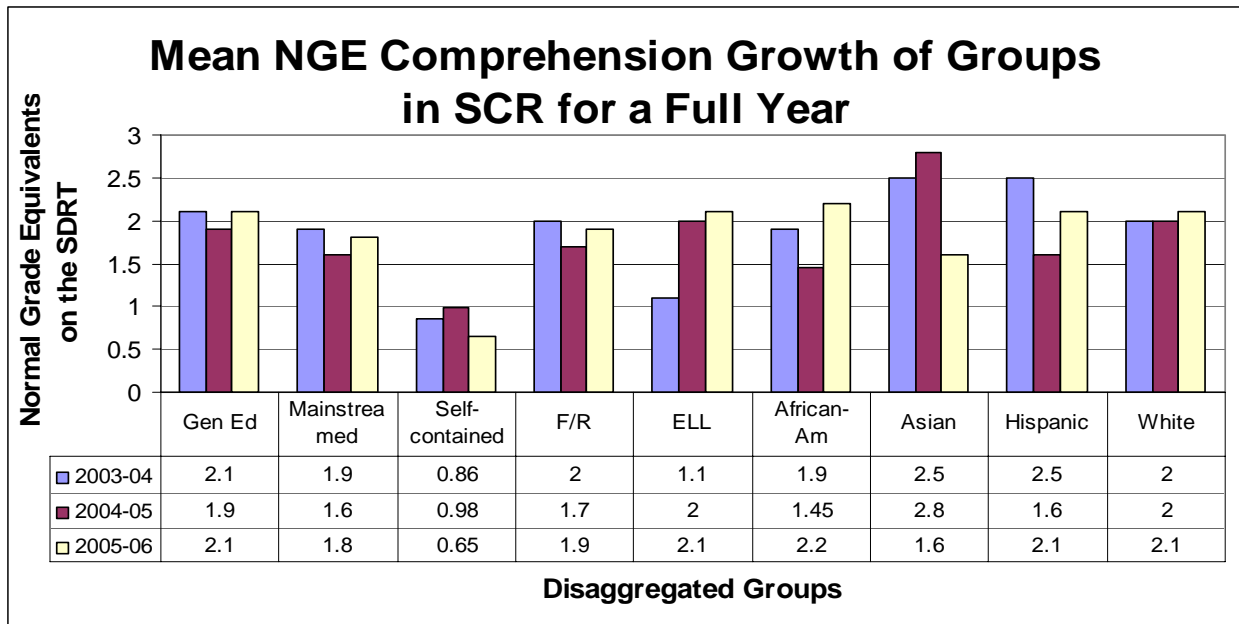
Discussion

Second Chance Reading was successful for the third year in a row for struggling secondary readers in Des Moines. An average growth of two years in reading comprehension significantly accelerates the learning process to begin to close the gap with their grade-level peers. The full year program is most beneficial to closing the achievement gap for African-American, Hispanic, males, and mainstreamed special education students. It appears from this past year's single semester results that students are highly motivated to improve their reading comprehension when provided the opportunity to be scheduled in an on grade-level reading class at the middle school or a different high school elective.

The results of the first three full implementation years of Second Chance Reading are very promising. Teachers have done an outstanding job of learning the course elements, preparing lessons, designing management systems, and accomplishing implementation. Disaggregated groups of students in the full year program consistently displayed an accelerated rate of growth in reading comprehension with the exception of self-contained special education students (see Table 9). The level of growth during the second full year of implementation, in 2004-05, is consistent with the research on implementation of a new program indicating a usual dip after the initial gains followed by a sustained period of growth.

All students in Second Chance Reading have shown accelerated growth. Teachers make instructional decisions and set goals based on the previous year's data. Because of these decisions, more diverse Think Aloud selections and classroom library titles were incorporated with positive results. The achievement gap has especially narrowed for African-Americans and English Language Learners with consistent growth patterns for students qualifying for free or reduced meals, mainstreamed special education students and Hispanic students (see Table 9).

Table 9
Mean NGE Comprehension Growth on SDRT: 2003-2006



Recommendations

Second Chance Reading should continue to be offered to secondary struggling readers as students continue to accelerate to a greater degree than in past learning histories. All sub-groups, except self-contained special education students, consistently show above average growth in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Generally, students who are reading above grade-level should not be scheduled into Second Chance Reading. Students who score above grade-level on the pre-test SDRT do not demonstrate comparable growth. The greatest growth impact continues to be at the ninth grade level as it has been during the past three years (see Table 10). Therefore, Second Chance Reading should be available to all ninth grade struggling readers who are not otherwise enrolled in a researched-based secondary reading program. Accelerating students to grade level was most successful at seventh grade when students entered on average of 1.41NGE below grade level. Second Chance Reading has benefited from having both a district-wide coordinator and Teacher Cadre to support the professional development and teachers and therefore these human resources should continue to be in place.

Table 10
Grade Level Reading Comprehension Gains on SDRT for Students Enrolled in a Full Year Program

	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10-12 th
Number	125	187	184	123	64
Avg. NGE Gain	1.8	2.1	1.8	2.7	2.0
% on Level	48.8%	60.4%	43.4%	45.5%	42.2%

Middle school reading programs (Readers Workshop, Read 180, and Second Chance Reading) should continue to use the common measures of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to do program evaluations to determine which model is most appropriate for what type of learner. Consideration should be given to students who are social learners to be in Second Chance Reading with its cooperative component in all of its strategies.