

Abstract: Teaching language arts to middle school students can be challenging and rewarding. Students in the middle grades have a wide variety of reading levels and interests. Finding the right books to place in all students' hands can be an overwhelming task for teachers. This article describes how two language arts teachers at a middle school discontinued their whole class approach to reading instruction and instead utilized Reading Workshop, an individualized methodology of instructing students in their classes.

In the method familiar to generations of students, an entire language arts class reads the same novel. Supporters of the Reading Workshop methodology believe assigning books to students leaves many bored or unable to understand the texts. Letting students choose their own books, they say, can help to build a lifelong love of reading. The Reading Workshop format instructs students in how to select and comprehend texts. Reading Workshop students read many books, exploring different genres, authors and texts with the emphasis on the interaction between the students and their texts.

Many middle school teachers do not think they can apply Reading Workshop in their classrooms. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the application of Reading Workshop in the 7th and 8th grade language arts classrooms. The two teachers implemented this teaching methodology with all of their classes to improve their reading instruction and their students' learning.

This study analyzed the teachers' perception of how effective they believe their instruction is and how they implemented and taught with this new methodology. The researcher conducted classroom observations weekly over the course of four months of one school year and four months of the following school year. Interviews were also conducted with the two teachers.

Keywords: Readers' Workshop, Middle School, Language Arts, Teaching