Global Scientific JOURNALS

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPREHENSIVE RAPID LITERACY ASSESSMENT (CRLA) IN BRIDGING THE GAP IN READING LEVEL AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 1 PUPILS IN THE MOTHER TONGUE

Abstract

The present study ventured into the role of the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) tool as an innovative reading assessment instrument in Mother Tongue for early-grade learners. The adoption of remote learning modality by the schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic made CRLA a practical and timely measure to assess Grade 1 learners' reading profiles which paved the way for Grade 1 teachers to determine the factors affecting the utilization of the tool and the crafting of differentiated and developmentally appropriate reading interventions. Anchoring the employed interventions to the results provided by the tool, the Grade 1 learners' reading level and academic performance in Mother Tongue have improved.

Keywords: Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA), bridging the gap, reading profiles, Mother Tongue, developmentally proper intervention

Introduction

Learners' ability to read has been considered a parameter of their success in school. Those who have the competency in reading are expected to experience

successful interaction in their school life and can easily cope with the pressures brought by the demands of learning new things. However, the presence of learners who struggle in reading particularly in their early grades has been a growing worldwide phenomenon (Shea and Ceprano,2017).

Relative to the cited global reading predicament, the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results were an affirming fact when the Philippines scored lowest among the 79 participating countries (San Juan,2019). This reading quandary among Filipino schoolchildren had been expected to worsen when COVID- the 19 pandemics engulfed the school system.

The landscape of the education sector has been altered by the pandemic and the learning delivery modality has been limited to remote way or distance learning. Learning loss has been expected to escalate among early-grade learners, especially Grade One pupils who are about to receive formal learning engagement with their mother tongue as the initial medium of instruction and with their Mother Tongue as a learning area. The adoption of Mother Tongue -Based -Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is to support the goal of the Department of Education's thrust-Every Child a Reader and a Writer by Grade 1 (DepEd Order No.16, s.2012).

Assessing the reading competency of Grade 1 learners during the time of the pandemic has to be made continuous despite the stringent health protocols imposed by the authorities to gauge the level of compliance with the standards of the curriculum. The crafting of the Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment as a mechanism to assess the literacy profiles of early grades learners in Mother Tongue, specifically during the pandemic is a timely and essential response to the adoption of a remote way of learning. In addition, the CRLA becomes a forerunner reading inventory tool in terms of evaluating the learners' proficiency in the Mother Tongue

(SHARED-RTI, 2020). Teachers in early grades have now the chance to assess the reading profiles in Mother Tongue for them to craft developmentally appropriate activities thereby achieving the quality academic performance of the Grade 1 learners.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory views the important role of assessment in attaining learners' optimum reading potential. Similarly, ZPD recognizes the part that the teachers take in achieving desired growth and progress of learners in their reading journey as well as in their academic feat. The zone of proximal development offers guidance to the teachers on how to venture with learners in achieving reading and scholastic success (Ediger,1999).

Considering the aforementioned scenario and suppositions, this study endeavors to how the CRLA bridges the gap in reading level and academic performance of Grade 1 learners. Specifically, this undertaking looks into the factors that affect the utilization of the CRLA tool, the reading interventions designed by the teachers and their effectiveness, and the researcher's proposed differentiated reading activities.

Methodology

Samples

The 213 Grade 1 learners of Casiguran District who enrolled for School Year 2021-2022 were the respondents of the CRLA tool. These respondents had their pre-test in October 2021 and post-test in May 2022. They served as the primary sources of data compared to CRLA results. Likewise, they were the schoolchildren exposed to the reading interventions employed by the teachers.

20 Grade 1 teachers were purposively selected as respondents to the questionnaire checklist and participants in the Focus Group Discussion. Their participation in the study

was compelled by their designation of being the Grade 1 teacher advisers of those learners subjected to the CRLA.

Sampling Procedure

Initially, a complete enumeration of Grade 1 learners was considered as respondents however, in consideration of paired pre- and post-CRLA results, only those who were able to complete the 2-stage testing process composed the final number of learner respondents. 213 Grade 1 learners participated in the study.

A purposive sampling technique was employed in determining the teacher respondents. These respondents possessed characteristics worthy to be part of research such as they handled Grade 1 classes, adopted CRLA in their classes, utilized CRLA results in crafting reading interventions in Mother Tongue, and willingly implemented the interventions in their respective classes. There were 20 Grade 1 teachers involved in this research.

Instruments

Reading profiles of the Grade 1 learners were determined by the CRLA. This CRLA is a continuum of reading assessments designed to help teachers quickly determine the reading profiles of Grade 1 learners in Mother Tongue and develop appropriate reading instruction for each profile. The main goal is to identify children who need additional support for learning.

A validated questionnaire checklist was used to generate the teacher respondents' data. It consisted of 3 parts. The first part found the facilitating and hindering factors in utilizing the CRLA. The second part determined the reading interventions employed by teachers, while the third part specified the level of effectiveness of the interventions.

Sets of open-ended questions were prepared which were utilized by the researcher in the conduct of FGD. Doing this became a measure of triangulation to verify the data provided in the questionnaire checklist and those facts observed by the researcher.

Data Collection

The main source of data in this study is the research instrument. However, the researcher sought other sources of data which strengthened the contention and findings of this paper. She used articles from magazines, newspapers, online publications, and books as her sources of data. She also used published and unpublished theses and dissertations and earlier research as references.

Upon obtaining the approval of the topic, related literature, and studies were collected to support the researchers' claims and to strengthen the content of the study. Questionnaires were developed to seek answers to the formulated questions and sub-problems.

The researcher then sought permission from the Sorsogon Division Superintendent, District Supervisors, School Heads, and the teacher-respondents to gather data in their respective schools. The Beginning of School Year (BoSY) and End of School Year (EoSY) Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) results were collected from the identified respondents to determine the reading level of the Grade 1 pupil.

Meanwhile, the researcher similarly distributed the questionnaire to the teacher-respondents. The answered questionnaires were collected a week after their distribution for data analysis and treatment.

The researcher conducted Focus Group Discussion with the respondents to clarify some answers they provided. She also conducted home visitations and actual observations along with the teacher-respondents to further obtain the gist of the laid variables in this study.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed different statistical tools to determine the answers to the posed questions of this study.

For question 1, the reading level of the grade 1 pupils as revealed in their CRLA, the researcher employed the CRLA automated formula in excel form. The standard computation of CRLA according to the prescription of the Department of Education is employed.

For question 2, determining the hindering and facilitating factors, frequency count, and ranking were applied.

For question 3, the interventions employed by teachers in improving the reading level and academic performance of the pupils were identified through the frequency count and ranking.

For question 4, the level of effectiveness of intervention of teachers, the weighted mean is employed. The following description of the respective weighted mean is thus given:

Very Effective —   4.60-5.00

Satisfactorily Effective—3.60-4.59

Moderately Effective— 2.60-3.59

Fairly Effective—   1.60-2.59

Somewhat Effective—   1.00-1.59

Results and Discussions

This study has generated the following results:

1. The Reading Level of Grade I Learners in Mother Tongue

The reading level of the Grade I pupils as revealed in their CRLA during the beginning of

the school year showed that out of 213 assessed pupils, 142 learners belonged to full refresher, 29

learners in a moderate refresher, 14 in light refresher and 28 learners are grade ready.

Table 1.1

The Reading Level of Grade I Learners in Mother Tongue at the Beginning of the School Year

Language	No. of Learners Assessed	Reading Level			
		Full Refresher	Moderate refresher	Light Refresher	Grade Ready
Northern Sorsoganon	213	142	29	14	28

Meanwhile, at the end of the school year, there were 34 learners in a full refresher, 114 in

a moderate refresher, 13 in light refreshers, and 52 grade-ready learners. This showed that the

reading level of the learners improved after the intervention was conducted as further revealed by

year-end assessment results.

Table 1.2

The Reading Level of Grade I Learners in Mother Tongue at the End of School Year

Language	No. of Learners Assessed	Reading Level			
		Full Refresher	Moderate refresher	Light Refresher	Grade Ready
Northern Sorsoganon	213	34	114	13	52

Based on the result, there was a decrease of 76% in a full refresher, from 142 at the

Beginning of the School Year (BoSY) to 34 at the End of the School Year. Meanwhile, the

moderate refresher increased by 293% or from 29 to 114 learners. The light refresher learners on

the other hand decreased by 7%, or from 14 at the beginning of the school year to 13 at the end of

the school year. The number of Grade Ready learners increased by 86%, or from 28 at the

beginning of the school year to 52 at the end of the school year.

Table 1.3

Comparative CRLA Results

	No. of Learners Assessed	Reading Level			
		Full Refresher	Moderate refresher	Light Refresher	Grade Ready
End of School Year Assessment	213	34	114	13	52

Beginning of School Year Assessment	213	142	29	14	28
Increase / Decrease		(108)	85	(1)	24
Percent of Decrease		76%		7%	
Percent of Increase (Gain)			293%		86%

2. **The Hindering and Facilitating Factors encountered by the Teachers in the Use of CRLA in the Mother Tongue**

There were 6 hindering factors in the employment of CRLA in the Mother Tongue as identified by the teachers. These include uncooperative parents which resulted to delay or haphazard conduct of assessments and limited training exposure of teachers on how to conduct the assessment and how to interpret and use the results being the topmost in the rank. These cited factors had 18 as their frequency. Refusal of the learner to undergo reading assessment had 15 as its frequency and ranked 3rd. Confusion among teachers to reconcile the purpose and utilization of existing reading tools was encountered by 10 respondents. This hindering factor was ranked 4.

Table 2.1

The Hindering Factors in the use of CRLA in the Mother Tongue

Hindering Factors	Frequency Count	Rank
Limited training exposure of teachers on how to conduct the assessment and how to interpret and utilize the results.	18	1.5
	18	1.5

Uncooperative parents which resulted to delay or haphazard conduct of the assessment.	15	3
Refusal of the learner to undergo reading assessment.	10	4
Confusion among teachers to reconcile the purpose and utilization of the existing reading tool.	8	5
Lack of technical assistance during assessment and intervention	5	6
The passivity of teachers to utilize CRLA		

The hindering factor such as the lack of technical assistance during assessment and intervention had 8 as its frequency count. This was ranked 5th by the teacher-respondents. The hindering factor which is least in rank was the passivity of teachers to utilize CRLA. This hindering factor had 5 as its frequency.
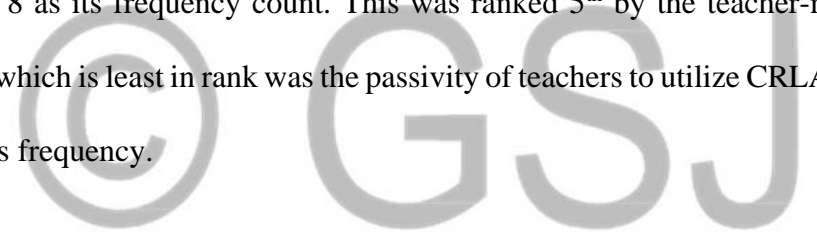
Table 2.2

The Facilitating Factors in the use of CRLA in Mother Tongue

Facilitating Factors	Frequency count	Rank
Assessment results manifest comparable reliability.	20	2

The focus of the assessment is on identifying learning gaps for proper intervention.	20	2
The teacher knows where and how to begin the lesson based on the result.	20	2
Appropriateness of the tool to the target learners.	18	4
The CRLA puts less pressure on teachers and learners alike.	16	5
Collaboration is promoted and evident among parents.	15	6.5
Astounding support of reading enthusiasts/stakeholders on the tool utilization.	15	6.5

There were 3 facilitating factors topmost in rank identified by the respondents. These were the focus of the assessment is on identifying learning gaps for proper intervention; the teacher knows where and how to begin the lesson based on the result; and assessment results manifest comparable reliability. These factors had 20 as their frequency.

These were followed by the appropriateness of the tool to the target learners. The said facilitating factor had 18 as its frequency and ranked 4. The teacher-respondents also identified the CRLA putting less pressure on teachers and learners alike was deemed facilitating by 16 teacher respondents. This was ranked 5.

The factors which were least facilitating were collaboration promoted and clear among parents; and the astounding support of reading enthusiasts/stakeholders on the tool utilization. These factors had 15 as their frequency and ranked 6.5, respectively.

3. **The Differentiated Interventions Utilized by Teachers to Improve the Reading Level and Academic Performance of Grade 1 Pupils**

There were 20 strategies suggested by the respondents. Accordingly, 7 interventions were utilized by all the respondents. These strategies are: Introducing single letters and their sound; Using sight words; Reinforcing learners' alphabet knowledge; Employ word sort activities to familiarize the learners with similar sound words; Having the learner sound the difficult words to read; Reading aloud to model; and read a passage and point the words to the learners. These interventions had 20 as their frequency and ranked 4.

The interventions Create phonics patterns learned in the previous grade and practice reading the word with the child; Have the learners practice writing the difficult words they encountered; and Practice reading using phonic patterns in the previous grade all had 15 as their frequency and ranked 13th.

Table 3.0

The Interventions Utilized by Teachers to Improve the Reading Levels and

Academic Performance of Pupils

Interventions/Strategies	Frequency Count	Rank
1. Read a passage and point the words to the learners.	20	4
2. Read aloud to model.	20	4
3. Have the learner sound out the difficult words to read.	20	4
	20	4

4. Employ word sort activities to familiarize the learners with similar sound words.	20	4
5. Reinforcing learners' alphabet knowledge.	20	4
6. Introduce single letters and their sound.	20	4
7. Use of sight words.	18	9.5
8. Use pictures with vocabulary words	18	9.5
9. Give direct explicit instructions to learners to know their goal (I do, we do, you do).	18	9.5
10. Allows learners to read passages/materials to enhance reading accuracy.	18	9.5
11. Create phonics patterns learned in the previous grade and practice reading the word with the child.	15	13
12. Have the learners practice writing the difficult words they encountered.	15	13
13. Practice reading using phonic patterns in the previous grade.	15	13
14. Build learners' oral vocabulary through conversation.	14	15.5
15. Explore the learner rhyming words.	14	15.5
16. Employs basic tongue twisters.	12	18.5
17. Introduce the learners to wordless picture books.	12	18.5
18. Employ games that help the learner build vocabulary.	12	18.5
19. Allow learners to do kinesthetic and tactile activities in learning letters.	12	18.5
20. Employ games that help the learner build vocabulary		

Meanwhile, building learners' oral vocabulary through conversation and exploring learners to rhyming words had a frequency count of 14. These interventions ranked 15.5 according to the teacher-respondents.

There were 4 indicators with the least frequency count. These are employing games that help the learner build vocabulary; introducing the learner to wordless picture books; allowing learners to do kinesthetic and tactile activities in learning letters; and employing basic tongue twisters. These interventions had 12 as their frequencies and ranked 18.5, respectively.

4. The Level of Effectiveness of Intervention Employed by the Teachers along with Reading and Academic Performance

The level of effectiveness of the interventions along targeted areas of reading competencies. There were 4 interventions that the teachers employed. Table 4.1 revealed the level of effectiveness of the picture-word association in enhancing the reading skills of the learners.

Topmost in the rank was the indicators which include the use of pictures that prompts the learner to at once remember the word and the learner can easily have cues on the words shown through the pictures used. These had weighted mean values of 5.0 respectively, and were similarly interpreted as "very effective."

These indicators followed the indicators Engage learners in a print-rich learning environment and pictures attached to the given word can arouse learners' interest. These succeeding indicators had a mean rating of 4.5 and were interpreted as "very effective".

Table 4.1

Level of Effectiveness of Picture-Word Association

Indicators	Weighted Mean Value	Description
The use of pictures prompts learners to immediately remember the word.	5.0	Very Effective
The learner can easily have cues on the words shown through the pictures used.	5.0	Very Effective
Engaged learners in a print-rich learning environment.	4.5	Satisfactorily Effective
Pictures attached to the given word can arouse learners' interest.	4.5	Satisfactorily Effective

Weighted Mean Average	4.75	Very Effective

Meanwhile, another intervention employed by the teachers was enhancing the phonological awareness of the learners. The effectiveness of this intervention is revealed in Table 4.2.

Consequently, enhancing the level of effectiveness of phonological awareness of the learners had a weighted mean average of 4.5. This was interpreted as "very effective by the respondents".

There were 4 indicators specified by the teacher-respondents. Among these, the employed onset-rime blending and segmenting activities enable learners to say the complete word when the first sound and the rest of the word are broken apart; blending letter sounds enable the learners to read the word; and utilization of blending syllables activities enable the learners to read multisyllabic words. These indicators had a weighted mean value of 5.0 and were interpreted as "very effective".

Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest weighted mean value was the use of poetry and rhymes to familiarize the learners with the similarity and differences of sounds. This had a weighted mean value of 3.0 and was interpreted as "moderately effective by the respondents".

Table 4.2

The Level of Effectiveness of Phonological Awareness Strategies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
Employed onset-rime blending and segmenting activities enable learners to say	5.0	Very effective

the complete word when the first sound of the word and the rest are broken apart.		
Blending letter sounds to enable the learners to read the word.	5.0	Very effective
The utilization of blending syllables activities enables the learners to read multisyllabic words.	5.0	Very effective
Used poetry and rhymes to familiarize the learners with the similarity and differences of sounds.	3.0	Moderately effective
Average Weighted Mean	4.5	Satisfactorily Effective

Meanwhile, utilizing phonics intervention was another strategy employed by the teachers to improve the reading level of the learners. This strategy had an average weighted mean value of 4.19. This was interpreted as "Satisfactorily effective" by the respondents.

There were 4 indicators to determine its effectiveness. Among the stated indicators, Do-A-Dot letter tracing increases learners' ability to write and had the highest weighted mean value of 5.0. This was interpreted as "very effective" by the respondents.

Meanwhile, the indicator, Alphabet book allows children to learn letter recognition and improves the opportunity to learn and pronounce new words. This indicator had a weighted mean value of 4.5 and was described as "very effective". Another indicator is erasing the activity of the sound helps children develop good pre-literacy proficiency and increase a child's ability to read. This had a weighted mean value of 4.25 and was interpreted as "very effective".

The indicator with the least weighted mean value is phonic songs teach children how to spell words with the different sounds of letters. This had 3.0 as its weighted mean and was interpreted as "moderately effective."

Table 4.4 revealed the level of effectiveness of building vocabulary as an intervention for learners' poor reading skills. Accordingly, this intervention had a weighted mean value, of 4.06. This is deemed "satisfactorily effective" by the respondents.

Table 4.4

The Level of Effectiveness of Vocabulary Build-up intervention

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
Familiarize learners with sight words.	5.0	Very Effective
Have learners write the difficult words and determine their meanings.	4.0	Satisfactorily Effective
Engage the learners in the conversation using vivid words.	4.0	Satisfactorily effective
Build learner's word bank through root words	3.25	Moderately Effective
Weighted Mean Average	4.06	Satisfactorily Effective

There were indicators according to the respondents which figured out the strategy's effectiveness. Accordingly, the indicator, familiarizing learners with sight words had the highest weighted mean value of 5.0. This was deemed "very effective" by the respondents. This was followed by indicators having learners write the difficult words and determine their meanings, and engage the learners in the conversation using vivid words with had weighted mean value of 4.0. These were described as "very effective" by the respondents.

The indicator with the lowest weighted mean value was building learners' word banks through root words. This had 3.25 as its mean and was interpreted as "moderately effective."

Table 4.5 revealed the reading fluency strategy employed by the teachers. The level of effectiveness of this strategy had an average weighted mean value of 4.13 and was described as "very effective" by the respondents.

There were 4 indicators identified by the teacher-respondents in the reading fluency strategy that had the highest weighted value of 5.0. This was interpreted as "very effective".

Meanwhile, the indicators Read-aloud activities as often as possible and paired reading with classmates who can read fluently were given the weighted mean value 4.5 and 4.0, respectively. These were described as "satisfactorily effective" by the respondents.

Table 4.5

The Level of Effectiveness of Reading Fluency Strategy

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
Echo reading to practice how exactly texts are read.	5.0	Very Effective
Read-aloud activities as often as possible.	4.5	Satisfactorily Effective
Paired reading with classmates who can read fluently.	4.0	Satisfactorily Effective
Provide reading materials that interest them	3.0	Moderately effective
Average Weighted Mean	4.13	Satisfactorily Effective

The indicator with the lowest weighted mean value was providing reading materials that interest learners. This had 3.0 as its weighted mean value and was interpreted as "moderately effective".

Table 4.6

The Level of Effectiveness of Reading Comprehension Strategy

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
Allow the learners to sequence stories.	5.0	Very effective
Ask essential questions before and after reading.	4.5	Very effective
Employed a five-finger retelling strategy (thumb—characters, pointer finger—setting, middle—beginning of the story, ring finger—middle of the story, pinky—ending)	4.0	Moderately effective
Have the learners interpret the story through drawing	4.0	Moderately effective
Average weighted Mean	4.38	Very effective

Table 4.6 reflected the level of effectiveness of teachers' reading comprehension strategy as assessed by the teacher-respondents. This reading comprehension strategy had an overall mean of 4.38. This was generally interpreted as "very effective" by the respondents."

Meanwhile of the stated indicators, allowing the learners to sequence stories had the highest weighted mean value of 5.0. This indicator was deemed "very effective" by the respondents. This was followed by asking essential questions before and after reading with 4.5 as its weighted mean value. This was similarly interpreted as "very effective".

The indicators with the least weighted mean value were employing a five-finger retelling strategy (thumb—characters, pointer finger—setting, middle—beginning of the story, ring finger—middle of the story, pinky—ending) and having the learners interpret the story through drawing. These had 4.0 as their weighted mean value and were interpreted as moderately effective.

Based on the result that the teachers had at beginning of the school year using CRLA results, the learners' reading levels declined during the school closure because of the pandemic. In this regard, the teachers employed intervention strategies to improve the reading level of the learners based on the result.

The EoSY showed improvements in the reading level of the learners after the interventions. The reading progress shown by the learners is associated with teachers' provided interventions.

According to USAID[i], the early grade assessments fill the gap by providing information on the rate at which children acquire critical foundation literacy and numeracy skills. This is important in early intervention and ensuring the acquisition of basic literacy skills in the first 2 years of schooling.

The utilization of CRLA has met some hindering factors. These include teacher related as well as parent-related factors. Meanwhile, the facilitating factors identified by the teachers showed that they found this assessment method accurate in identifying the reading level of the learners.

Parallel to this, Ordetx[ii] the advantages of assessment in reading is immense. However, it is emphasized that the assessment outcome can also measure the effectiveness of teaching

strategies and provide vital information about the student's responsiveness to teaching, future learning potential, and instructional needs.

The interventions which consist of strategies employed by the teachers focus on developing the reading level of the learners. The teachers' strategies deal with word recognition, comprehension, reading fluency, and vocabulary. The effectiveness of these strategies varies as perceived by the teachers.

Parallel to this result, Maritha and Dakhi's[iii] study on the effectiveness of using pictures in enhancing the vocabulary of learners. The authors revealed that the learners' mastery improved. This result manifested through the test result of the learners. Thus, they concluded that vocabulary pictures can be effective media for vocabulary learning English. The strategy in which the teacher stimulates the visual senses of the learners to develop their reading skills is one of the effective strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the study, the following conclusion is drawn:

1. The number of Grade One learners belonging to full refresher and light refresher as reflected by the CRLA results while the number of learners in moderate refresher and grade ready increased.

2. Limited capacity building of teachers about CRLA, the passivity of parents, and learners' refusal to undergo assessment topmost the hindering factors while the reliability and validity of the tool are considered as facilitating factors.

3. Varied interventions are employed by the teachers to improve the reading level and academic performance of Grade One pupils in Mother Tongue.

4. The level of effectiveness of the interventions employed by teachers along with reading and academic performance is satisfactorily effective.

5. Differentiated Learning activities can be employed to enhance the reading level of the pupils based on CRLA results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions the researcher gave the following recommendations:

1. Differentiated learning like kinesthetic and tactile activities, proper support, and interventions to further improve learners' reading levels be employed.

2. Different avenues to overcome the hindering factors in the implementation of reading strategies be explored.

3. Other reading strategies/innovations to further improve/enhance pupils' reading level and academic performance be implemented.

4. Appropriate developmental reading strategies be implemented to enhance the reading level of the learners thereby improving their academic achievement.

5. Pilot testing of the Differentiated Learning Activity be conducted.

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