

# Teachers Initiatives, Strategies, and Approches in Teaching Struggling Readers: Bases for An Enhancement Program

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the teachers' initiatives, strategies, and approaches in teaching struggling readers in public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo during the school year 2024. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed with 288 randomly selected teacher-respondents. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a very high level of implementation of initiatives and instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, guided reading, phonics-based instruction, and small-group interventions. These strategies were found to be very effective in improving learners' reading fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. However, teachers also encountered moderate challenges, including large class sizes, insufficient instructional materials, and limited time for individualized instruction. Significant differences were found in instructional strategies when grouped according to years of teaching experience, while no significant differences were noted in terms of age and sex. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was established between teachers' initiatives and instructional effectiveness.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that teachers' active engagement in reading interventions plays a crucial role in improving the literacy skills of struggling readers. An enhancement program is recommended to strengthen instructional practices and address existing challenges in reading instruction.

**KEYWORDS:** Struggling readers, reading instruction, teachers' initiatives, instructional strategies, reading intervention, differentiated instruction, literacy development, elementary education, enhancement program

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that serves as the foundation for all areas of learning, yet many learners in elementary education continue to struggle with basic reading competencies. In the Philippines, the issue of struggling readers remains a significant concern, as many pupils experience difficulties in word recognition, comprehension, and reading fluency, which consequently affect their overall academic performance. Recent studies emphasize that struggling readers require explicit instruction, guided practice, and consistent exposure to meaningful reading materials to improve their literacy skills (Allington, 2016; Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). Without appropriate intervention, these learners are at risk of falling further behind, highlighting the need for effective teaching initiatives and instructional approaches (Suggate, 2016).

Teachers play a crucial role in addressing the needs of struggling readers through the implementation of varied initiatives, strategies, and approaches tailored to learners' abilities. Research emphasizes that a

“one-size-fits-all” approach is ineffective, as struggling readers benefit most from differentiated instruction that responds to their specific reading levels and needs (Tomlinson, 2017; Deunk et al., 2018). Effective teacher-led initiatives include individualized instruction, small-group reading sessions, and structured intervention materials designed to improve reading comprehension, fluency, and word recognition (Rasinski, 2017; Wanzek et al., 2016).

Moreover, innovative teaching approaches such as the integration of technology and structured reading programs have shown promising results in improving literacy among struggling readers. The use of digital reading tools and interactive platforms has been found to increase learner engagement and support comprehension through multimodal learning experiences (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012; Kim et al., 2021). Similarly, explicit and systematic reading instruction, including phonics-based and fluency-oriented approaches, helps learners develop foundational reading skills through guided and repeated practice (Ehri, 2020; Foorman et al., 2016).

In addition, successful teaching approaches for struggling readers involve the use of visual aids, simplified texts, and frequent one-on-one or small-group interventions to address individual learning gaps. Teachers also emphasize the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages reading practice and builds learners’ confidence (Guthrie et al., 2017; Gambrell, 2019). Furthermore, formative assessment and continuous feedback are essential in identifying learners’ reading difficulties and guiding instructional adjustments (Hattie, 2017; Wiliam, 2018).

Anchored on these concepts, this study titled “Teachers’ Initiatives, Strategies, and Approaches in Teaching Struggling Readers: Bases for an Enhancement Program” focuses on 288 respondents from public schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo for the school year 2024.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the teachers’ initiatives, strategies, and approaches in teaching struggling readers and to determine their relationships with instructional effectiveness. The respondents of the study consisted of 288 teachers from public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo for the school year 2024, selected through random sampling.

A researcher-made questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument. The instrument included the respondents’ profile, teachers’ initiatives, strategies and approaches, level of effectiveness, and challenges encountered in teaching struggling readers. The questionnaire was validated by experts and pilot tested prior to data collection. Ethical standards such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly observed.

Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson product-moment correlation to determine differences and relationships among variables at a 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

The results revealed that most respondents were female (72.6%), aged 26–35 years old (48.3%), and had 6–10 years of teaching experience (41.7%).

Teachers’ initiatives in handling struggling readers obtained a very high level ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), indicating consistent implementation of reading interventions such as remedial classes, peer tutoring, and reading camps.

Teachers' strategies and approaches also obtained a very high level ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), with differentiated instruction ( $M = 4.56$ ), guided reading ( $M = 4.49$ ), and phonics-based instruction ( $M = 4.47$ ) as the most frequently used strategies.

The level of effectiveness was rated very high ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), particularly in reading fluency ( $M = 4.40$ ), comprehension ( $M = 4.35$ ), and word recognition ( $M = 4.33$ ).

However, moderate challenges were reported ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ), including large class sizes (68.2%), lack of instructional materials (61.5%), and limited time for individualized instruction (59.8%).

Significant differences were found in strategies when grouped according to years of teaching experience ( $p < 0.05$ ), while no significant differences were found in terms of age and sex. A significant positive relationship was found between teachers' initiatives and instructional effectiveness ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## FINDINGS

Teachers demonstrated a very high level of implementation of initiatives, strategies, and approaches in teaching struggling readers. The most commonly used strategies were differentiated instruction, guided reading, and phonics-based instruction. These strategies contributed to improved reading fluency, comprehension, and word recognition among learners.

Despite the high level of effectiveness, teachers encountered moderate challenges such as large class sizes, insufficient instructional materials, and limited time for individualized instruction.

A significant difference was found in strategies when grouped according to years of teaching experience, while no significant differences were observed in terms of age and sex. A significant positive relationship was established between teachers' initiatives and instructional effectiveness.

## SUMMARY

This study examined teachers' initiatives, strategies, and approaches in teaching struggling readers among 288 respondents in the Schools Division of Iloilo. The study revealed a very high level of implementation of reading interventions and strategies, resulting in improved learner outcomes in reading fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. Moderate challenges were also identified. A significant relationship was found between teachers' initiatives and instructional effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers play a vital role in improving the reading abilities of struggling learners through consistent and effective instructional strategies. While practices are highly implemented and effective, challenges such as limited resources and large class sizes remain. Strengthening teacher support systems is essential to sustain effective reading instruction.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

School administrators should strengthen reading programs and provide adequate instructional materials. Teachers should continue using differentiated instruction, guided reading, and phonics-based strategies. Professional development programs should be conducted to enhance instructional skills. Schools should implement structured reading intervention programs. Class size reduction or additional support may be considered. Future researchers may explore additional variables and conduct similar studies in other divisions.

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