

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Model to Improve Reading and Writing Literacy Skills of Elementary School Students

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Abstract

The low literacy skills of elementary school students remain a fundamental problem in learning. One effort that can be made to overcome this problem is to apply the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model. This study aims to: (1) describe the application of the CTL learning model in improving the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students, and (2) identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in the application of the CTL learning model. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. Data were obtained through the collection and analysis of various relevant literature sources, such as books, journal articles, previous research results, and other supporting documents related to CTL learning and reading and writing literacy in elementary schools. The results of this study indicate that CTL learning can improve students' reading and writing literacy skills through the relevance of learning materials to real-life contexts, meaningful learning activities, and active student involvement in the learning process. The supporting factors for the implementation of CTL are teacher readiness, availability of learning resources, and a conducive learning environment, while the inhibiting factors are time constraints, low teacher understanding of the CTL learning concept, and a lack of supporting facilities. Thus, the CTL learning model has the potential to be an effective alternative in improving the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students.

Kata Kunci:

contextual
teaching and
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dasar

Abstrak

Rendahnya kemampuan literasi baca tulis siswa sekolah dasar masih menjadi permasalahan mendasar dalam pembelajaran. Salah satu upaya yang dapat dilakukan untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut adalah menerapkan model pembelajaran Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mendeskripsikan penerapan model pembelajaran CTL dalam meningkatkan kemampuan literasi baca tulis siswa sekolah dasar, dan (2) mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat dalam penerapan model pembelajaran CTL. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka. Data diperoleh melalui pengumpulan dan analisis berbagai sumber pustaka yang relevan, seperti buku, artikel jurnal, hasil penelitian terdahulu, dan dokumen pendukung lainnya yang berkaitan dengan pembelajaran CTL dan literasi baca tulis di sekolah dasar. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran CTL mampu meningkatkan kemampuan literasi baca tulis siswa melalui keterkaitan materi pembelajaran dengan konteks kehidupan nyata, aktivitas belajar yang bermakna, serta keterlibatan aktif siswa dalam proses pembelajaran. Faktor pendukung penerapan CTL

yaitu kesiapan guru, ketersediaan sumber belajar, dan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, sedangkan faktor penghambat yaitu keterbatasan waktu, rendahnya pemahaman guru terhadap konsep pembelajaran CTL, serta minimnya sarana pendukung. Dengan demikian, model pembelajaran CTL dapat berpotensi menjadi alternatif yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan literasi baca tulis siswa sekolah dasar.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing literacy is one of the fundamental competencies that elementary school students must master as a foundation for developing critical, creative, and communicative thinking skills (Putri et al., 2025). Reading and writing literacy plays an important role in shaping students' ability to understand information, process ideas, and convey thoughts logically and systematically. Literacy at the primary education level is the gateway to mastering various subjects and 21st-century skills. Reading and writing literacy is not limited to the mechanical ability to read and write, but also includes the ability to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate information. In addition, literacy is also related to students' ability to communicate ideas and thoughts effectively in various contexts of life (Srisuk et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening reading and writing literacy in elementary schools is a fundamental need that cannot be ignored. Good literacy will help students become lifelong learners who are adaptable to the changing times.

Literacy in the context of basic education is an important prerequisite for student success in various fields of study. Through various national education policies, the government has made literacy one of its top priorities in improving the quality of education. The implementation of the School Literacy Movement and the strengthening of competency-based learning in the Merdeka Curriculum are tangible manifestations of this commitment (Wulandari & Prastowo, 2022). However, the reality on the ground shows that the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students are still not optimal (Zakiah & Sukmandari, 2024). This condition is characterized by low interest in reading, limited comprehension of reading material, and difficulty in expressing ideas in writing in a coherent and meaningful manner (Dewi et al., 2025). This problem shows that there's a gap between education policy and classroom teaching practices. So, we need innovative ways to bridge that gap with more effective teaching approaches.

The low literacy skills of students cannot be separated from various factors that influence the learning process in elementary schools. One of the main factors is teaching practices that are still dominated by lecture-style methods and teacher-centered learning (Ansya et al., 2024). The use of teaching materials that lack context also makes it difficult for students to relate the material to their real-life experiences. In addition, student engagement in reading and writing activities is still relatively limited. Students tend to be passive recipients of information without being given the opportunity to explore and construct knowledge independently. This situation results in low motivation to learn and a lack of critical and reflective thinking skills (Sari et al., 2023). For this reason, a learning model that engages students and connects learning to everyday contexts is needed.

One alternative solution that can be applied to overcome literacy problems is the

use of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model. CTL is a learning model that emphasizes the connection between learning materials and the real-life context of students, so that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant (Maulida et al., 2024). Through this approach, students are encouraged to actively construct knowledge based on their experiences. The learning process in CTL involves inquiry activities, group discussions, problem solving, and reflection on learning outcomes (Pepilina et al., 2025). CTL also integrates important components such as constructivism, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. The integration of these components enables holistic, student-centered learning. Thus, CTL has great potential to improve the quality of literacy learning in elementary schools

The application of the CTL model in literacy learning enables students to connect reading and writing activities with their daily experiences and surroundings. Students can read texts related to activities at home, school, and their social environment that are close to their lives (Putri et al., 2024). After reading, students are instructed to rewrite their understanding in the form of a story, simple report, or personal reflection. This activity not only trains their reading comprehension skills, but also develops their contextual and meaningful writing skills (Robikho et al., 2024). Context-based learning also encourages students to think critically about real-world problems they encounter. In addition, students become more motivated and confident in expressing their opinions both verbally and in writing. Thus, CTL contributes to the development of comprehensive literacy skills.

Based on this description, the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model is considered relevant and strategic for improving the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students. This model is in line with the demands of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes active, contextual, and student-centered learning. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing the CTL model in improving the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students. This study is expected to provide an empirical description of the impact of using CTL on students' reading and writing skills. In addition, the results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of literacy learning studies. Practically, this study is also expected to serve as a reference for teachers in designing contextual, innovative, and meaningful learning. Thus, literacy learning in elementary schools can be more effective and sustainable.

METHODS

This study uses a library research approach. Data collection was carried out through the stages of searching, collecting, and selecting written sources relevant to the research topic (Abdurrahman, 2024). Data sources include scientific journals, research articles, and books obtained from national and international journal databases, digital libraries, and online sources with academic credibility. Each source is carefully analyzed to identify information directly related to the focus of the research study (Adlini et al., 2022). Important information from each source is then recorded and classified based on predetermined research themes.

The collected data were analyzed through a process of grouping, comparing, and synthesizing findings from various sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding and systematic conclusions. This analysis aimed to strengthen the theoretical basis and identify

patterns and trends in relevant previous research results. The objectives of this study are: (1) to describe in depth the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model in improving the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students, and (2) to identify the supporting factors and obstacles that affect the effectiveness of the CTL learning model in the context of elementary school learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Application of the CTL Learning Model in Improving the Reading and Writing Literacy Skills of Elementary School Students

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a learning model that encourages students to actively engage in the learning process by relating the subject matter to real-life contexts that are familiar to students (Nasution & Yusnaldi, 2024). Through CTL, learning does not only focus on conveying abstract concepts, but emphasizes the process of discovering, understanding, and interpreting knowledge directly. This model aims to ensure that students do not merely memorize material, but are able to construct meaningful knowledge and apply it in everyday situations (Ratu & Kusumaningrum, 2025). This makes learning more relevant, meaningful, and contextual. The application of CTL can also increase student motivation, foster critical thinking skills, and develop creativity and independence in learning.

Reading and writing literacy skills are fundamental abilities that students must master as a basis for understanding various fields of knowledge. The application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model in literacy learning has been proven to significantly develop students' reading and writing skills (Hidayati & Zainil, 2025). This is because CTL places students as active subjects in the learning process through activities of discovering, understanding, and relating information to real experiences in everyday life. Through this approach, students not only understand the text literally, but are also able to interpret its meaning and express it in writing. Literacy learning becomes more effective, contextual, and meaningful, and is able to increase student motivation, understanding, and activity.

The purpose of applying the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model in reading and writing literacy activities is to improve students' ability to understand reading texts more deeply (Yudiyanto et al., 2025). This is done by linking the content of the reading material to the students' personal experiences and real-life contexts, so that the reading process becomes more meaningful and less abstract. In addition, CTL also aims to develop writing literacy skills, namely the ability to express students' ideas, opinions, and experiences in a coherent and communicative manner through relevant activities. The CTL approach is able to foster students' interest in reading and motivation to write because it emphasizes contextual, active, and enjoyable learning, so that students are more enthusiastic and involved in the literacy learning process.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) not only encourages students to understand literacy concepts cognitively, but also plays a role in increasing students' interest and motivation to learn. Through active involvement in the contextual learning process, students are encouraged to develop their reading and writing literacy skills optimally. CTL is considered relevant and is one of the strategic alternatives in basic literacy learning because it is able to support the development of students' skills comprehensively (Yasa & Adiyanti, 2023). By linking learning materials to students'

experiences and daily lives, the learning process becomes more meaningful. The connection between literacy concepts and personal experiences can foster students' intrinsic motivation to actively engage in reading and writing activities on an ongoing basis.

The CTL principles that can be applied in reading and writing literacy are: first, constructivism, which means that students build their own understanding through texts and writing based on their experiences. Second, inquiry, which means that students are encouraged to find out, ask questions, and explore information from reading materials. Third, questioning, which means that reading activities are followed by question and answer sessions to deepen understanding of the text/reading material. Fourth, learning communities, which means group discussions in reading stories and writing together. Fifth, modeling, which means teachers provide examples of effective reading and good writing. Sixth, reflection, which means students reflect on their understanding after reading and writing. Seventh, authentic assessment, which means assessment based on the results of the work.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) encourages students to actively engage in the learning process through various activities, such as discussions, question and answer sessions, and constructing knowledge based on their experiences (Arsyad & Safitriani, 2025). This active involvement can improve students' understanding and mastery of reading and writing literacy, so that literacy skills develop more optimally. Through a contextual and interactive approach, CTL fosters descriptive reading and writing literacy skills by linking learning materials to real-life situations that are relevant to students' lives. This meaningful learning process enables students to understand texts in depth and express their ideas coherently in writing. Thus, CTL has been proven to be effective in significantly improving students' learning motivation, literacy skills, and interest in reading and writing.

The main characteristics of the CTL learning model for developing reading and writing literacy in elementary school students include:

1. Creating meaningful connections; through CTL, learning content can be linked to everyday experiences and contexts, making the learning process more relevant and meaningful (Septiani & Kamil, 2024).
2. Performing relevant tasks (doing significant work); students are given meaningful tasks that are relevant to real-life experiences, encouraging them to actively participate in reading and writing in real-life contexts.
3. Active and participatory learning; students actively seek knowledge themselves and construct knowledge based on experience, rather than just memorizing, so that learning becomes more profound (Sastradiharja et al., 2020).
4. Collaboration and cooperation (teamwork); student learning activities are carried out in groups, through discussion, and by giving assessments to their friends. This can improve students' social skills and literacy.
5. Critical thinking and creativity; CTL learning encourages students to develop critical thinking and creativity skills, enabling them to understand and process information that has been read and written (Septiani & Kamil, 2024).
6. Authentic learning; this learning is carried out in natural situations that are relevant to students' daily lives, so that the learning material is directly implemented in students' daily lives (Sastradiharja et al., 2020).
7. Self-directed learning management; students carry out the learning process independently and are trained to take responsibility for their learning process, which

can certainly increase motivation and literacy skills.

8. Authentic assessment; this assessment is carried out based on students' ability to apply knowledge and skills in a real or contextual manner, not only through written tests alone (Angkat et al., 2024).

The characteristics of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) make this learning model highly effective in developing the reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students. With the CTL approach, the learning process becomes more relevant, interesting, and motivates students to actively participate in teaching and learning activities. CTL connects learning content with students' daily lives, making the material more meaningful and relevant to their experiences. In addition, CTL encourages students to actively seek, understand, and construct knowledge based on personal experiences and observations of their surroundings. Through these contextual and interactive activities, students not only memorize material, but are also able to apply their knowledge in practical ways (Ester et al., 2023).

The steps of the CTL learning model in reading and writing literacy are as follows: first, introduction, where the teacher presents texts that are relevant to the students' lives (fairy tales, fables, etc.). Second, exploration, where students read the text while noting down interesting points or questions. Third, discussion, where students discuss the content of the text in small groups and ask each other questions. Fourth: writing activities, where students write responses, summaries, or retellings based on the text. Fifth: presentation of results, where students present their writing aloud in front of the class. Sixth: reflection, where students write conclusions or feelings after the reading and writing activities. Seventh: assessment, where the teacher evaluates based on student engagement and literacy products.

CTL learning can improve reading and writing skills, making students more active and engaged in learning activities, thereby improving their reading and writing literacy skills. For example, in lower grades of elementary school, CTL learning significantly improves students' early reading and writing skills compared to conventional methods (Hoiyati et al., 2022). Second, it increases motivation and critical thinking. CTL can also motivate students and improve their critical thinking skills because students are encouraged to connect the subject matter with real life. CTL learning is one of the learning approaches that has been proven effective in developing the reading and writing literacy of elementary school students. By connecting lesson material with real-life contexts, CTL makes students play an active role, gain motivation, and be able to understand and apply the knowledge they have acquired in their daily lives, thereby significantly increasing their interest in reading and writing.

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model is one of the learning approaches that has been proven effective in improving students' reading and writing skills. The main objective of CTL is to help students understand learning content in depth by relating the material studied to the context of their daily lives (Maulida et al., 2024). Through this approach, students are encouraged to see the connection between the concepts taught in class and their personal experiences, surroundings, and real-life situations. This makes learning more relevant, meaningful, and motivates students to actively engage in learning activities. With this active involvement, reading and writing literacy skills can develop optimally, while significantly fostering creativity, critical thinking, reading interest, and learning motivation in students.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) has systematic steps designed to make the learning process meaningful and effective. First, develop students' thinking so that they can learn meaningfully through work, construct knowledge, and master new skills. Second, carry out inquiry-based activities on all topics to achieve the expected competencies. Third, foster students' curiosity through challenging questions. Fourth, create group learning activities so that collaboration and interaction between students occur optimally. Fifth, present real models or examples in learning activities. Sixth, conduct a final reflection on learning so that the knowledge gained is not easily forgotten. Seventh, apply authentic assessment using various methods and sources to evaluate students' learning outcomes comprehensively (Nababan & Sipayung, 2023).

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model has been proven effective in developing students' reading and writing literacy skills. CTL not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also plays a role in building students' character as active learners who are able to think critically, discover knowledge independently, and develop independence in learning. This approach encourages students to be directly involved in the learning process, relate the material to real-life experiences, and actively construct their own knowledge. The impact of implementing CTL is clearly seen in the improvement of students' reading and writing literacy skills, both in terms of comprehension and application in everyday life. Thus, the implementation of CTL in reading and writing literacy has positive and significant results on the cognitive and character development of students' literacy.

Of course, this is supported by several previous studies, such as those conducted by (Nadiya et al., 2019) shows that reading and writing literacy activities through the CTL learning model are able to foster reading and writing competencies in elementary school students. This study explains that the CTL learning model is the right solution in developing students' reading and writing competencies and can achieve classical mastery standards. The research conducted (Susanti et al., 2024) explains that the CTL model has a significant effect on improving reading and speaking skills, as well as reducing the gap in abilities between students. The findings from this study support the use of the CTL model as an effective learning method for developing students' literacy skills.

This CTL learning model demonstrates effectiveness and significant improvement in developing students' reading and writing literacy competencies. Based on the results of the discussion, the following key points can be identified as the advantages of implementing CTL in the context of literacy learning:

1. Active student involvement

CTL encourages students to actively participate in the learning process through exploratory activities, group discussions, and learning projects that are relevant to students' daily lives. This will certainly have a positive impact on students' interest in reading and motivation to write.

2. Strengthening the connection between material and real-world context

By integrating lesson material with social and cultural contexts, CTL learning can make it easier for students to understand reading texts and apply the content of the reading in more meaningful writing.

3. Varied and collaborative learning strategies

CTL involves the use of various methods such as mind mapping, role play, problem solving, and reflection, all of which can improve students' critical thinking and communication skills.

4. Developing student independence and responsibility

Students are trained to search for information themselves, organize their ideas, and express them in writing. This process not only develops writing skills, but also shapes attitudes of responsibility and self-confidence.

5. Contextualization of personal values and experiences

CTL provides space for students to connect reading material with their life experiences. This learning method can reinforce the meaning of the text being read and produce more authentic and personal writing.

This is in line with research conducted by (Ramandhani & Widyartono, 2024), which shows that contextual learning in Indonesian language subjects has tremendous potential to improve the overall quality of learning. Through careful implementation and adequate support, this learning method can become an important instrument in the transformation of Indonesian language education to shape a future generation that is proficient in language, including reading and writing skills. A similar point was also raised by (Setiyaningsih et al., 2021) in their research, which showed that CTL learning can foster reading comprehension skills in lower grade elementary school students. This was evidenced by a significant improvement in the results of the first and second tests. This was proven by classical assessments, which showed an improvement in the first and second cycles.

A significant improvement in reading and writing literacy can be explained through the principle of constructivism, which forms the basis of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model. In this approach, students are encouraged to build their own understanding based on their prior knowledge and experiences. This active learning process makes it easier for students to understand, remember, and apply the learning content, thereby significantly improving their reading, writing, and speaking skills (Susanti et al., 2024). The results of this study are in line with CTL theory, which emphasizes that contextual learning makes it easier for students to understand the subject matter in relation to their daily lives and gain a deeper understanding of the concepts presented by the teacher.

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model motivates students to understand the meaning of lesson material by relating it to their personal, social, and cultural contexts (Yasin, 2023). Through CTL, students not only acquire knowledge and skills, but also learn to implement them conditionally from one problem to another, thereby encouraging them to find solutions to everyday problems. The main objective of CTL learning is to make learning activities productive and meaningful, because the material presented is not only text-based. This contextual approach encourages students to develop new ideas based on the texts they have studied and read, thereby significantly improving their creativity, critical thinking, and literacy skills (Ramdini et al., 2024).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the CTL Learning Model to Improve Primary School Students' Literacy Skills

The CTL learning model for improving students' reading and writing literacy skills can run smoothly and as expected if there are supporting factors, such as the readiness and competence of teachers in designing contextual learning, the availability of adequate learning resources, support from the school community, and active participation and motivation to learn from students. The supporting factors are as follows:

1. The availability and use of student worksheets that are interesting and relevant to the students' daily lives, so that they can generate enthusiasm and students can be actively involved in the learning process.
2. Group work and social interaction among students that encourages discussion, question and answer sessions, and collaboration in completing tasks, thereby strengthening students' understanding of the material and literacy skills.
3. The performance and exemplary behavior of teachers who are able to connect learning content with everyday life and provide motivation and appreciation to students can foster students' enthusiasm and interest in literacy (Hasanah et al., 2022).
4. A conducive school environment and support from parents, the community, and the entire school community, who support reading and writing literacy activities and fully support the CTL learning model (Nasution & Yusnaldi, 2024).
5. Availability of supporting learning resources and media, including a variety of books and adequate facilities to support literacy programs and contextual learning (Aryani & Purnomo, 2024).
6. Implementation of the seven main components of CTL learning, namely: constructivism, discovery, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. This can help students develop comprehensive literacy skills (Septiani & Kamil, 2024).
7. The use of learning strategies that connect lesson material to students' daily lives can make learning activities meaningful and foster students' reading and writing literacy (Hasanah et al., 2022).

Through the existence of various supporting factors, the CTL learning model can effectively improve the literacy skills of elementary school students, both in terms of reading and writing. However, there are also factors that hinder the implementation of the CTL learning model, namely:

1. Due to limited school facilities, the CTL learning model requires adequate facilities, such as spacious classrooms, learning media that support literacy learning, internet access, and so on. If schools have limited learning facilities, this can certainly hinder the successful implementation of the CTL learning model.
2. Teachers' preparation and understanding are still lacking. If teachers' understanding and preparation regarding the concepts and flow of the CTL learning model are considered insufficient, this can actually hinder its implementation in the classroom.
3. Having a large number of students in the classroom can clearly make it difficult for teachers to implement CTL learning in a contextual manner and to give each student their full attention.
4. Lack of parental support. If parents or guardians are indifferent or do not provide any support, this can be an obstacle for teachers in connecting learning content with students' daily lives at home and in their social environment.
5. Given the limited time available for teaching and learning, the CTL learning model does indeed require a relatively long time compared to conventional learning. This can certainly be an obstacle for teachers in implementing the CTL learning model comprehensively and optimally (Nasution & Yusnaldi, 2024).

The various supporting and inhibiting factors are certainly interrelated and contribute to the CTL learning model for developing reading and writing literacy skills for elementary school students. With the full support of many parties, this certainly makes it

easier for teachers to implement a meaningful and effective learning process in improving students' reading and writing literacy. Therefore, in order to overcome the problems caused by the various factors described above, cooperation and responsibility from various parties, such as the entire school community, parents, and elements of society, are greatly needed. Through efforts to overcome existing problems, the CTL learning model, which is expected to improve reading and writing literacy skills, can be implemented optimally.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model offers a relevant and potentially effective approach to strengthening elementary school students' reading and writing literacy skills. The literature reviewed indicates that CTL enhances literacy by connecting learning materials with students' real-life experiences, encouraging active participation, and facilitating meaningful processes of inquiry, discussion, writing, reflection, and authentic assessment. Its constructivist, inquiry-based, collaborative, reflective, and authentic-learning components enable students not only to comprehend texts but also to interpret information, organize ideas, express thoughts coherently, and apply literacy skills in everyday contexts. The effectiveness of CTL is further supported by its capacity to increase students' motivation, engagement, critical thinking, creativity, independence, and confidence in literacy activities. Nevertheless, successful implementation depends substantially on teacher competence and preparation, adequate learning resources and facilities, a conducive learning environment, student participation, and support from parents and the broader school community.

This study is limited by its library research design, which relies on previously published literature and therefore does not provide primary empirical evidence from direct classroom implementation. Consequently, the conclusions regarding the effectiveness of CTL should be interpreted as a synthesis of existing findings rather than as evidence generated through a controlled intervention. In addition, the implementation of CTL may vary according to teachers' understanding and preparation, class size, available instructional time, school facilities, learning resources, and parental support, which may influence the consistency of its outcomes across different elementary-school contexts. Future research should therefore employ empirical and classroom-based designs, including quasi-experimental, experimental, action research, or mixed-methods approaches, to examine the magnitude and sustainability of CTL's effects on specific dimensions of reading and writing literacy. Further studies should also investigate how teacher training, digital and contextual learning resources, class size, parental involvement, and locally relevant literacy materials can optimize CTL implementation across diverse elementary-school settings.

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