

TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL (TaRL) THROUGH THE ALL SMART CHILDREN APPROACH (SAC) IMPROVES STUDENT'S LITERATURE ABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The TaRL approach was developed by Pratham. In his video entitled How to Teach Kids to Read in as Little as 50 Days he says: "All over the world a growing belief is that if you open a school the children will (successfully) learn. But children are not studying, for example in India 97% are enrolled in schools but 50% of children cannot read paragraphs for 2nd graders". The stages in the implementation of SAC consist of 3 stages: assessment, grouping, and learning according to level/ability. After going through these three stages by carrying out literacy learning for 2 weeks, then a reassessment is carried out. The results of the SAC program assessment can improve children's abilities, namely at the beginner level, letters, words, and paragraphs decreased from 55% to 50%, and at the story level increased from 45% to 50%. The students who progressed to level up reached 30%. The data on increasing students' literacy skills were obtained using the Naturalistic Research method. Grade 1 to grade 6 children are assessed individually. The instrument used is a test. The tests used are letter cards, word cards, paragraph texts, and short story texts equipped with questions about the content of the story.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conventional approach is considered the main cause of failure in forming children as lifelong learners, because this approach treats all children the same regardless of their abilities and learning needs, even this approach is very boring for children, and does not provide motivation to study harder. . This is further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic which caused learning loss, namely the loss of knowledge and skills as a result of the closure of face-to-face learning which was replaced with Distance Learning (PJJ) which lasted for almost two years, even this learning loss has caused the death of students' learning passion. . Even so, according to observers and education practitioners, Charismiadi said learning loss is more often caused by wrong teaching concepts (Wyatt-Smith, Gunn, & Elkins, 2011). In fact, according to education expert, Peter Kline, every human being is given instincts (natural tendencies) to learn (Meeks, Kemp, & Stephenson, 2014). Learning is a natural process just as we breathe.

According to Peter Kline, since birth humans are endowed with 2 instincts, namely the instinct to suck breast milk (sucking instinct) and the instinct to learn (Casey & Hallissy, 2014). Peter Kline further said that the thing that causes the death of the learning instinct in children is the attitude of parents and teachers who

are wrong in educating and treating children and the learning system in schools that does not attract children's interest. Ways of learning at home and school that are highly structured (children sit still a lot) and forced do not provide opportunities for children to explore and process them in their minds (Lusardi, 2012; Tout, 2020). If the teacher does not pay attention and consider education that is appropriate for the age, psychological development, and specific needs of the child, the child will feel uncomfortable in learning. This situation can cause children to be unable to accept learning and experience failures which have an impact on their self-confidence will disappear (Purpura, Hume, Sims, & Lonigan, 2011; Wulandari, 2012). These children will be increasingly left behind, especially in their reading literacy skills if teachers and parents do not pay attention to their way and speed in absorbing learning.

Learning will be meaningful according to the ability or level of the child (teaching at the right level). Besides that, learning according to ability will also arouse children's learning motivation so that they make themselves as true learners (learners). A person whose learning motivation is there, will be happy to face challenges, think creatively, and try to find solutions (Banerji & Chavan, 2016). Pratham in his video entitled How to Teach Kids to Read in as Little as 50 Days says: The place to start is always an assessment (assessment) then they are divided into small groups and the third is then the children write individually so that children really really starting to grow.

This TaRL was then adapted and developed by FKIP Unram into a program called All SMART Children (SAC). SMART itself is an acronym for Cute Literacy and Basic Numeracy. The SAC approach with the TaRL approach is facilitated by INOVASI (an Australian-Indonesian government cooperation agency). This program was then implemented in SD and MI in 4 villages in Central Lombok. The INTELLIGENT All Children approach with the TaRL approach is a collective effort to help students achieve the literacy skills needed. Therefore, teachers, principals, school supervisors, education offices, and other stakeholders need to understand the TaRL Approach through the SAC Program. The application of TaRL through the SAC approach in carrying out assessment, grouping, and learning allows teachers to treat children as whole children. Teaching children with diverse abilities is an interesting challenge. We need sufficient understanding so that we can provide learning services to all children according to their abilities.

From the results of the assessment carried out after 2 weeks of learning can improve children's basic literacy skills with the progress of increasing up to 30% of children. Therefore, SAC with the TaRL approach is considered to be able to improve children's basic literacy skills in SD and MI, so the Central Lombok Education Office issued Circular Letter no.631 of 2021 concerning Implementation of Literacy and Numeracy Learning. The circular provides an opportunity to carry out SAC in a Systematic, Structured, Massive, and Affordable (STMJ) manner. Systematic means that SAC is implemented as a whole and integrated into the curriculum. Structured means that SAC has a person in charge, a clear schedule of activities, and can be measured/evaluated. Massive means that SAC should be implemented in all elementary schools, not only schools that are the target of the program, while affordable means that it can be implemented in an easy and inexpensive way. It's easy because teachers can implement this SAC without having to create a new administrative device, while it's cheap, meaning that in terms of funding it can be adjusted to the available school budget.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is naturalistic research. This method is often called a qualitative method, namely a research method used to examine the condition of natural objects (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is the key instrument. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalizations (Jennings, 2018). The purpose of using this method is to obtain data based on special circumstances to be treated according to their abilities and needs. The instrument used is a test. The tests used are letter cards, word cards, paragraph text, and short story texts. The instrument is a valid measuring instrument for all children from grade 1 to grade 6. Thus the results become more valid. The test kits can be handwritten or typed and can be used repeatedly.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to a study conducted by the Center for Educational Standards and Policy (BSKAP), Kemendikbudristek, and Innovation focused on students in grades 1-3 of elementary school (SD). The class was chosen considering that this moment is the key to learning, or a period in which students' mastery of learning is weak, and affects the success of student learning. The covid-19 pandemic has caused a very significant learn-

ing loss. There has been a decrease of 0.44 - 0.47 standard deviation (worth 5-6 months of learning) per year. Thus, the impact of learning during a pandemic is minimal or even non-existent, due to the lack of support and educational background for parents in learning.

The SAC approach becomes a very solution to overcome the learning gap. The SAC approach is an adaptation of TaRL developed by Pratham. In the SAC approach, learning is carried out according to the ability/level. Learning that is in accordance with the level of students' abilities has been proven to be the most effective in increasing students' competence and self-confidence. The SAC approach in its implementation uses 3 stages, namely: assessment, grouping, and learning based on level/ability.

3.1. Evaluation

The first stage of the SAC program is an assessment, the assessment will be a determinant of the implementation of the next stage therefore it must be carried out with the right procedure.

3.1.1. Purpose and Benefits of Assessment

The purpose of the assessment in the SAC program is to determine the child's current reading ability. Knowing the level of a child's reading ability will greatly determine the next step. The benefits of the assessment are:

- Benefits for students, namely students will receive learning according to their ability level;
- For parents, namely parents will get information on how to support children to continue to develop;
- For teachers, which are materials for evaluating the effectiveness of learning, determining interventions;
- For School Superintendents, which is to be a guidance material on how to support teachers and school principals in carrying out effective and meaningful learning;
- For schools and the Education Office, it will be the next program/activity/policy;
- For the community, it is a collaboration material to improve the quality of education.



Figure 1. Reading Ability Level in SAC

3.1.2. Reading Literacy Level

After the assessment is carried out, the level of the child's reading ability will be obtained. The levels of children's reading literacy skills are as follows:

- *Beginner Level*. Children who are at the beginner level are children who do not know or only know a few letters.
- *Letter Level*. Children who are at the letter level are children who already know most of the letters. Word Levels. Children who are at the word level are children who can already read familiar words or words that they have often heard.
- *Paragraph Level*. Children who are at the paragraph level are children who can read familiar words and are able to read simple short sentences in the form of paragraphs. At this level, the child is also able to read according to the correct punctuation marks and the correct intonation.
- *Story Levels*. At this story level, besides the child is already fluent in reading according to the right punctuation and the correct intonation, the child is also able to understand the content of the reading. At this level the story is divided into two. Story level 1 is that the child is already fluent in reading according to the correct punctuation marks and the correct intonation but still cannot answer the questions about

the content of the story. Story level 2, namely the child is fluent in reading according to the correct punctuation and intonation and is able to answer questions about the content of the story he is reading.

3.1.3. Reading Literacy Ability Assessment Tool

Tools/instruments to measure reading literacy skills in children consist of: letter cards, this card contains 14 letters, word cards containing 10 familiar words, paragraph text, and simple story texts equipped with 2 questions about the story content. If you have problems, this tool can be handwritten neatly on a piece of paper that is divided into 4 parts; 1 page contains one part of the test kit.

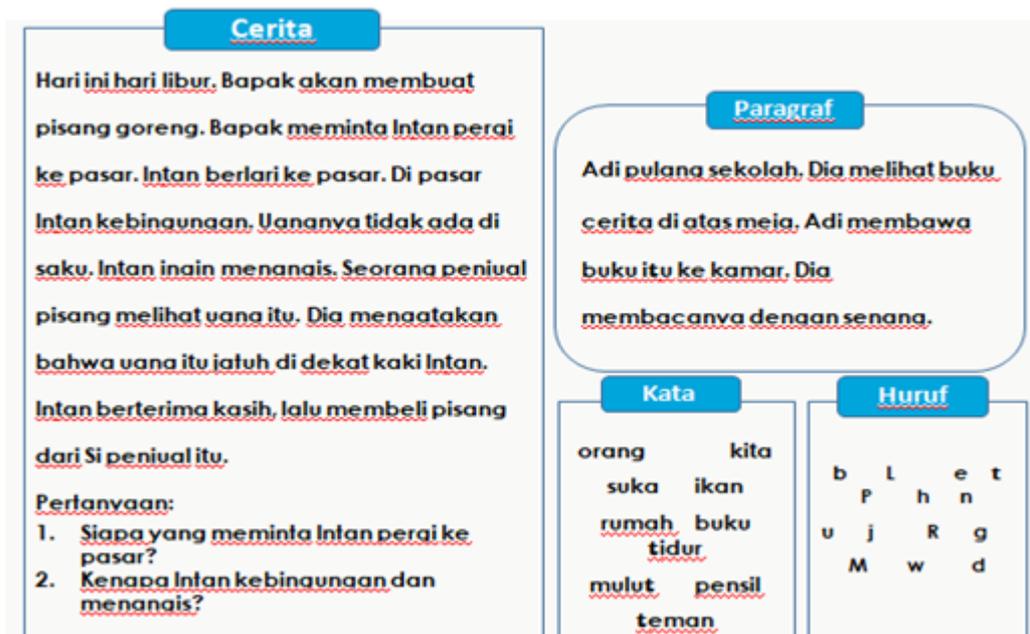


Figure 2. Tools/instruments to measure reading literacy skills

3.1.4. Assessment Procedures/Steps

Before making an assessment, in order to get valid results, it is necessary to pay attention to the following things:

- Call students one by one. Other students are asked to do independent activities.
- Before starting the test, have a conversation with students to warm the atmosphere.
- Avoid using the word “test”, “exam”, or other words that make students anxious or uncomfortable.
- Students who are still spelling are considered not fluent in reading
- Perform periodic assessments at least every 2 weeks.
- Make a note of the student’s level of reading ability every time they make an assessment.

Assessment starts from reading paragraphs, then the level of students is determined with the following criteria:

- Story level 2 students: fluent in reading stories (not misreading 3 words in the story) and able to answer questions related to stories (although only 1 question)
- Story level 1 students: fluent in reading stories (not misreading 3 words in the story) but unable to answer questions related to the story
- Paragraph level students: fluent in reading paragraphs (not misreading 3 words in the paragraph) but not reading stories fluently (misreading 3 or more words in the story)
- Word level students: fluent in reading words (not misreading 3 words) but not fluent in reading paragraphs (misreading 3 or more words in a paragraph)
- Letter level students: able to read letters (not misreading 3 letters) but not fluent in reading words (misreading 3 words or more)
- Beginner level students: misread 3 letters or more.

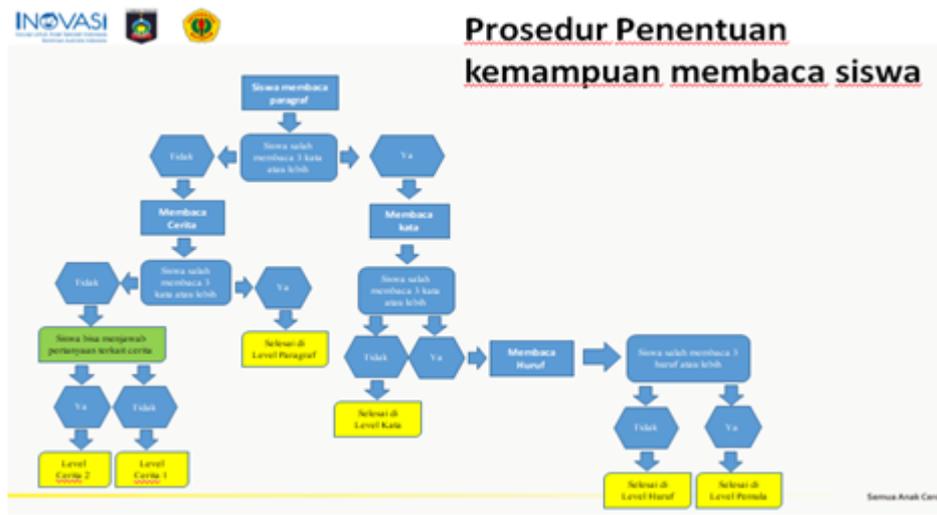


Figure 3. Flow of Determining Students' Reading Level

3.1.5. Student's Initial Ability Assessment Results (First Assessment)

The first step in the SAC program is to conduct a student's initial ability assessment. This initial assessment is a diagnostic assessment to determine the level followed by grouping and learning according to level. The SAC program is implemented in SD/MI located in 4 villages in 4 sub-districts in Central Lombok. The author himself conducted research in two schools, namely SDN Setiling and SDN Sekedek. The results of the initial assessment are as follows:

Table 1. Results of the Initial Assessment of Students' Basic Literacy Ability

Nama sekolah	Kelas/Level	Pemula	Huruf	Kata	Paragraf	Cerita 1	Cerita 2	Jumlah
SDN Setiling	1	23	7	1	2	0	0	33
	2	10	5	8	3	1	4	31
	3	6	9	7	1	0	9	32
	4	3	3	3	3	3	18	33
	5	1	1	1	0	4	42	49
	6	3	2	1	5	12	23	46
	Jumlah		46	27	21	14	20	96
Percentage		20,53	12,05	9,37	6,25	8,93	42,86	
SDN Sekedek	1	25	1	0	0	1	0	27
	2	13	10	5	1	2	0	31
	3	10	2	5	1	7	6	31
	4	2	3	10	5	7	5	32
	5	1	4	4	8	6	4	27
	6	1	0	4	12	4	5	26
	Jumlah		52	20	28	27	27	20
Percentage		29,88	11,49	16,09	15,55	15,55	11,49	
Total		98	47	49	41	47	116	398
Percentage		24,62	11,81	12,31	10,3	11,81	29,15	100

3.2. Grouping

After getting data on the level of reading ability of all students from grades 1-6, the next step is grouping. Group 1 consists of beginner and letter level students, Group 2 consists of word and paragraph level students, and group three students at story 1 and story 2 levels.



Figure 4. Grouping of students by level

Based on the results of the initial assessment, grouping data is obtained as shown in the table below:

Table 2. Grouping of students by level

Nama Sekolah	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3
SDN Setiling	73	35	116
Percentage	32,58	15,62	51,79
SDN Sekedek	72	55	47
Percentage	41,37	31,64	27,04
Total	145	90	163
Percentage	36,43	22,61	40,96

If seen from the data above, literacy skills in the two elementary schools are still very concerning. Group 1, as many as 145 students (36,43%) are students in the category of requiring special intervention, namely they have just had the ability to read letters and are even very limited. Group 2 of 90 students (22,61%) were students in the basic category. This group already has the basic concept of reading familiar words and short sentences in simple paragraphs. Group 3 is a group of 163 students (40,96%), who are able to apply and integrate the concept of reading stories quite smoothly, and begin to be able to understand the meaning of sentences read in stories or other more complex readings. Based on the grouping data above, more than 50% of students' literacy level is still in the category of needing special and basic interventions. It is hoped that with the implementation of the SAC approach in STMJ, there will be a significant increase in student literacy.

3.3. Learning by Level

The third step in the SAC approach is to carry out learning according to the child's ability level. Learning is carried out based on groups that have been formed and named. Groups with a large number of participants are divided into sub-groups and given names. In giving names, it is necessary to pay attention to names that do not indicate the level of students' abilities. For example, names of flowers, fruits, trees, names of cities, colors, and so on. In the SAC approach, literacy learning activities are carried out in three steps, namely: building student learning readiness, reading stories by teachers, and reading activities according to level. This activity lasts for 60 minutes at the beginning of the lesson.



Figure 5. Steps for Learning Literacy according to Level

Before learning begins, the teacher builds student learning readiness first so that the class becomes conducive and students are ready to take part in learning. In building student learning readiness there are two things that are recommended, namely:

- *Conversing with students.* The teacher invites students to talk about their feelings that day and other things that can build positive character.
- *Build calm and concentration of learning.* Building calm and learning concentration can be done by practicing breathing techniques. Students are invited to take a deep breath of air like when they inhale the scent of flowers and exhale slowly as if they were about to blow on a windmill.

This activity can be combined with instilling positive thoughts, empathy, compassion, and humility. Students are invited to imagine someone they care about saying soothing words to them (instilling/training positive thoughts). Imagining themselves saying or doing something nice to someone who is poor (cultivating empathy and compassion for others and praising the strengths of others (cultivating/training humility). This activity to build student learning readiness is carried out for five minutes.

Story reading is done by the teacher, it is intended to foster children's interest in reading. The teacher reads stories with interesting themes and according to the conditions of the children and the local environment. Digital reading materials in the form of stories can be accessed through the website www.letsreadathome.org, www.literacycloud.org, or other sources. This activity is a core activity in literacy learning according to level. This activity was carried out for 40 minutes. In this activity students are in groups that have been formed. Keep in mind that these groups are not based on class and age but based on their level of reading ability. Each group will carry out learning activities with material according to their level of reading ability. The material studied in each group is arranged in the form of modules. These learning modules are arranged according to the characteristics of students.

Group Learning 1. Learning in group 1 contains students who are at the beginner and letter levels. The characteristics of this group are:

- Have awareness of sound (the word "Mama" is composed of the sounds /m/, /a/, /m/, /a/)
- Stringing several sounds into spoken syllables (/ma-/ , /-ma/)
- Recognize sound symbols (letters) for example the sound /f/ the symbol is F/f)
- Assemble some sound symbols into syllables (ma; da; di; sir; etc.)
- Reading syllables
- Start stringing some syllables into words (reading)

Group Learning 2. Learning in group 2 contains students who are at the word and paragraph level. The characteristics of this group are:

- Transition from reading letters and syllables to reading simple word chains.
- Need to read letters or spell syllables to read new/unknown words.
- Can connect words with objects/symbolized/understand the meaning of words. Easy to read familiar words.
- Begins to be able to read a few simple words in short sentences.
- Can string words into simple sentences.
- Begin to recognize punctuation.
- Recognize sentence structure and make simple sentences yourself.
- Fairly fluent in reading sentences even if slowly.
- Read punctuation marks (periods, commas, exclamation points) correctly orally.
- Start reading with appropriate intonation and expression.

Group Learning 3. Learning in group 3 contains students who are at story level 1 and story 2. The characteristics of this group are:

- Can read stories fairly fluently, at a good pace.
- Understand the meaning of sentences read in stories or other more complex readings.
- Use of intonation and expression in reading (using punctuation correctly).
- Switch from understanding simple concepts to complex concepts.

3.4. Learning Outcomes by Level

After carrying out literacy learning for 2 weeks, a stage 2 assessment is carried out. This assessment is carried out to measure and find out if there is an increase after learning with the steps described above. The results of the second stage of the assessment of 2 elementary schools, namely SDN Setiling and SDN Sekedek,

are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Literacy assessment results

Nama Sekolah	Kelas/ Level	PENILAIAN TAHAP 2						Jumlah	Naik	Tetap	Turun
		Pemula	Huruf	Kata	Paragraf	Cerita 1	Cerita 2				
SDN Setiling	1	17	11	2	0	3	0	33	11	22	0
	2	7	5	12	2	3	2	31	7	22	2
	3	0	5	6	6	4	11	32	21	11	0
	4	2	3	2	6	3	17	33	8	22	3
	5	3	0	0	1	12	33	49	8	38	3
	6	2	2	1	5	18	18	46	12	33	1
	Jumlah		31	26	23	20	43	81	224	67	148
Percentage		13,84	11,61	10,27	8,93	19,19	36,16	100	29,91	66,07	4,46
SDN Sekedek	1	21	5	0	0	0	1	27	6	20	1
	2	8	12	4	4	3	0	31	13	18	0
	3	7	4	3	2	7	8	31	13	17	1
	4	2	1	10	7	6	6	32	9	23	0
	5	1	0	5	4	8	9	27	17	10	0
	6	1	0	0	6	6	13	26	16	10	0
	Jumlah		40	22	22	23	30	37	174	74	98
Percentage		22,99	12,64	12,64	13,21	17,24	21,26	100	42,52	57,47	0,01
Total		71	48	45	43	73	118	398	141	246	11
Percentage		17,84	12,06	11,31	10,8	18,34	29,65		35,43	61,81	2,76

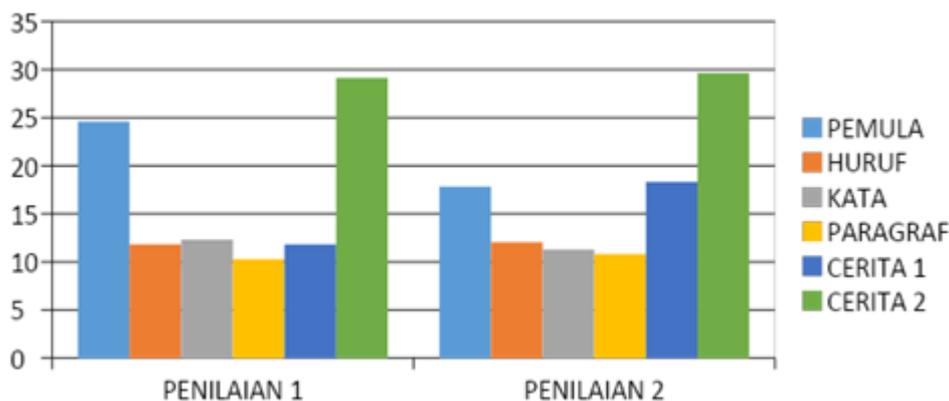


Figure 6. Data from assessment 1 and assessment 2

From the table of results of the literacy assessment above, it is clear that there was a significant increase in literacy skills, such as SDN Setiling increased by 29.91% and SDN Sekedek experienced a very high increase, namely 42, 52%. 35, 5%. If converted into groups it will look like the table below.

Table 4. Data on increasing literacy skills per group

Nama sekolah	Penilaian 1			Penilaian 2		
	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3	Kelompok 1	Kelompok 2	Kelompok 3
SDN Setiling	73	35	116	57	43	124
Percentage	32,6	16	52	25	19	55
SDN Sekedek	72	55	47	62	45	67
Percentage	41,4	32	27	36	26	39
Total	145	90	163	119	88	191
Percentage	36,43	22,61	40,96	29,9	22,11	47,99

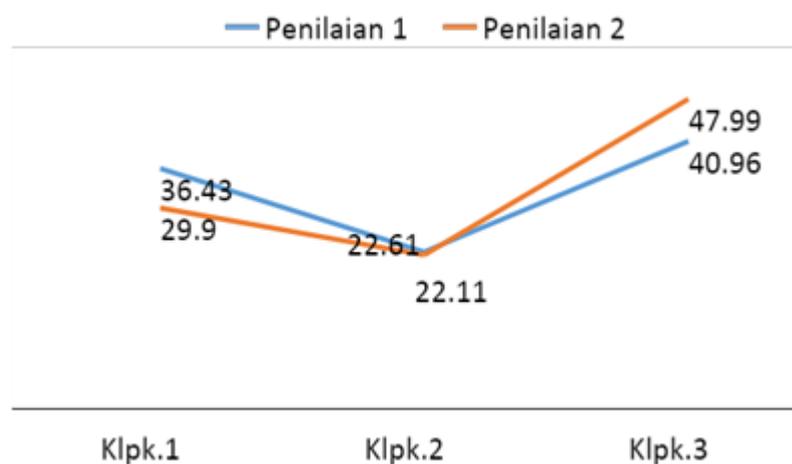


Figure 7. Data on the results of the assessment and grouping

There was a decrease in the number of students in group 1 (the group requiring special intervention) consisting of students at the beginner and letter level, i at SDN Setiling down from 32.6% to 25% (a decrease of 6.4%). At SDN Sekedek from 41.4% to 36% (a decrease of 5.4%). Cumulatively, the two schools decreased from 36.4% to 30% (a decrease of 6.4%). In group 2 (basic group) consisting of students at the word and paragraph level, at SDN Setiling increased from 16% to 19% (up 3%) and at SDN Sekedek decreased from 32% to 26% (down 6%). Cumulatively, the two schools decreased from 23% to 22% (a decrease of 1%). In group 3 (proficient and proficient group) there was a quite encouraging increase, namely SDN Setiling increased from 52% to 55% (an increase of 3%) and SDN Sekedek increased from 27% to 39% (an increase of 12%). Cumulatively, the two schools increased from 41% to 48% (an increase of 7%).

4. CONCLUSION

TEACHING at THE RAIGHT LEVEL (TaRL) which was adapted to All SMART Children (SAC) is the most solution approach to reduce the learning gap. This learning gap is believed to be the cause of students having various abilities in the field of reading literacy. Students who have low reading skills will be left behind and will not be able to participate in learning activities in the next class. These children will then lose their motivation to learn, this must be addressed immediately so that they do not become left behind. The SAC Approach has 3 stages, namely assessment, grouping, and learning according to the child's ability level. Assessment is intended to measure the initial ability of students, while grouping is intended to obtain learning according to their ability level. After grouping, literacy learning is carried out according to their abilities.

In the initial (first) assessment, data on the literacy skills of students in two schools, SDN Setiling and SDN Sekedek were obtained, namely beginner level 24, 62%, letter level 11, 81%, word level 12, 31%, paragraph level 10, 3%, level story 1 11, 83%, and story level 2 29,5%. Then in the second assessment after two weeks of reading literacy learning, data obtained for beginners level 17,8%, letter level 12,06%, word level 11,31%, paragraph level 10,8%, story level 1 18, 4%, and story level 2 29.6%. Students who experienced an increase in level reached 35,43%. In assessment 1 (groups 1 and 2), which is the group that still really needs attention, it is at 59% and only 41% of students (group 3) who already have good reading skills and abilities. After learning for 2 weeks, then a second assessment was held, there was a decrease in (groups 1 and 2) from 59% to 52% (7% decrease) and in group 3 there was an increase from 41% to 48% (7% increase). If the SAC Approach continues to be carried out in a Systematic, Structured, Massive, and Reaching (STMJ) throughout the school, it is certain that students' reading literacy skills will increase significantly.

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