Investigating Fluency and Vocabulary Instruction in Small Group Guided

Reading and an Increase in Second Grade Developmental Reading Assessment

Scores

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A Special Project

Presented to

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Investigating Fluency and Vocabulary Instruction in Small Group Guided

Reading and an Increase in Second Grade Developmental Reading Assessment

Scores

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to see if fluency and vocabulary instruction within small group guided reading instruction would increase Developmental Reading Assessment scores from fall 2013 to spring 2014. Students were instructed using guided reading within a balanced literacy instructional model. The guided reading instruction focused on building vocabulary and fluency. Eleven students who remained in the class from fall to spring were given the DRA2 as a pre-test and post-test. All students made positive growth in their reading levels. The teacher-researcher concluded that there was a relationship between the fluency and vocabulary instruction and the growth in DRA2 scores.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

<u>Background for the Project</u>

The study took place at a school located in Southeastern Washington with students grades K-5. Data showed that in the spring of the 2012-2013 school year, 44% of second grade students at the school could not pass the Developmental Reading Assessment 2 (DRA 2) level 28, the benchmark for the end of second grade. This data suggested that 44% of students did not read fluently enough to pass the assessment. Some of the relevant demographics at the school include: approximately 97% of students at the school were receiving free and reduced lunches and approximately 70% of students were identified as transitional bilingual.

It was clear that the school's students were struggling to comprehend what was read and were passing the Washington State MSP (Measurement of Student Progress) test at a rate of 33.3% in third grade reading. If student scores on the MSP were to improve, second grade students needed to become more capable readers before they entered third grade.

Statement of the Problem

If students were to become successful in later years of school as well as in college or career, students would need to become fluent readers with grade level appropriate comprehension skills. In order for students to become fluent readers and develop comprehension strategies, the teacher needed to implement vocabulary and fluency strategies to improve those skills.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to investigate if guided reading instruction with a focus on reading fluency instruction and vocabulary instruction strategies would improve reading comprehension scores on the DRA 2 test from fall to spring.

Delimitations

The study took place at an elementary school in southeastern Washington State with 70% of the population of the school eligible for the state transitional bilingual program. The teacher-researcher was teaching in a second grade classroom with 25 students. Three students in the classroom were receiving Special Education services, and one student was in the process of being evaluated for services. Approximately 97% of the students were receiving free or reduced lunches, and seven students in the classroom were identified as English Language Learners (ELL).

Assumptions

Assumptions in the study include that the teacher-researcher was teaching guided reading lessons with an emphasis on fluency and vocabulary instruction regularly, meeting with each guided reading group two to four times per week and that students were reading and answering comprehension questions to the best of their ability when assessed using the DRA2.

Hypothesis or Research Question

Students instructed using guided reading with an emphasis on reading fluency and vocabulary will increase their DRA2 score from fall to spring to at or above grade level.

Null Hypothesis

Students instructed using guided reading with an emphasis on reading fluency and vocabulary will not increase their DRA2 score from fall to spring to at or above grade level.

Significance of the Project

Third grade reading MSP scores at the school improved from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2012-2013 school year. However, 70% of third grade students did not read proficiently enough to reach passing levels on the MSP in 2012-2013. It was becoming clear that for third grade students to achieve proficiency in reading on the MSP, students needed to increase their proficiency in reading at an

earlier grade level in order to be more successful at reading and comprehending grade level text on the third grade assessment.

Procedure

The researcher administered the DRA 2 test to students on October, 2013. The assessment consisted of three parts: reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The student was required to meet a minimum score for each part of the assessment in order to be considered independent at each level.

The researcher administered the DRA 2 again in spring 2014. The researcher then compared the test scores.

Definition of Terms

Guided Reading. A small group approach to reading instruction. Students were grouped by reading skill level and instructional need and reading materials were chosen to scaffold students to the next level of reading.

Developmental Reading Assessment 2. The Developmental Reading Assessment 2 was a one-on-one assessment in which the teacher determined the independent reading level of the student. The assessment consisted of three parts: reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The assessment was used as a diagnostic tool to inform teacher instruction.

Acronyms

DRA 2. Developmental Reading Assessment 2

 ELL. English language learner.

SES. Socioeconomic status.

PBIS. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

<u>Introduction</u>

The researcher reviewed literature focused on reading comprehension for elementary students. The author first focused on the relationship between students from poverty and English language learners (ELLs) and reading skills, particularly vocabulary development. Finally, the researcher reviewed literature surrounding the correlation between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension as well as strategies used to teach reading comprehension to elementary students.

<u>Poverty and Reading</u>

Children who come from poverty are more likely to live in chaotic environments where caregivers come in and out of the household and the household is disorganized, when compared to their more affluent peers (Vernon-Feagans, Garrett-Peters, Willoughby, & Mills-Koonce, 2012). Vernon-Feafans et al. (2012) found that chaos in the home was the biggest predictor of low expressive and receptive language in young children. Aikens and Barbarin (2008) investigated the link between socioeconomic status (SES), family, school, and neighborhood factors and children's reading achievement. The authors found

there were differences in achievement between students of high SES and low SES backgrounds. The authors also found that from fall to spring, the differences in achievement grew and continued to grow larger from kindergarten to third grade.

Gladwell (2008) discussed a similar pattern in achievement gaps among elementary school students whose reading scores were studied in Baltimore schools. This study looked at differences in achievement among low, middle, and high SES. The study found that in first grade, there were some, but not tremendous differences in knowledge and ability level. However, as the years progressed the differences in achievement scores between high and low SES students became larger. Although the students from a lower socioeconomic status showed great progress in learning during the school year, the students from high socioeconomic status homes made growth in the summer months as well. The students from poverty actually showed a decline in scores over the summer months.

Ways to address this summer setback were researched by Allington et al. (2010). The researchers ran s summer book fairs for three consecutive years for economically disadvantaged students in 17 high-poverty elementary schools. Each student participating in the study selected and received 12 books to take home for summer reading. The authors found that students who were able to select books for summer reading reported being more engaged in reading during

the summer. The students who received books also made higher reading gains than similarly economically disadvantaged peers.

Jensen (2009) stated that children from poverty have many problems that other children may not, including social and emotional problems, high levels of stress, cognitive gaps, and health issues. Behavior and academic performance are affected by these issues.

Students from poverty have a smaller range of behavioral responses than more affluent students (Jensen, 2009). Only the most basic emotions (joy, sadness, anger, surprise, and disgust) are hardwired into children's brains at birth. Other emotions, such as patience, empathy, and forgiveness must be taught. Students from poverty needed to be taught these emotions at school or some other environment.

Jensen (2009) stated that children from poverty live in environments where they are faced with challenges that their more affluent peers do not have to face. These students' brains adapt to these conditions and behave differently than children from higher SES households at school. "Chronic stress refers to high stress sustained over time" (Jensen, 2009, p. 22). Jensen stated that chronic stress has a negative effect on children's physical, psychological, and cognitive development. Students with chronic stress had more problems with concentration, memory, social skills, and effort. Jensen suggested that standards-based

instruction, engaging instruction, and building students' cognitive functions could improve student achievement. Jensen stated teachers could use formative assessments to assess student background knowledge and progress toward learning standards and adjust teaching to meet student needs. Jensen also discussed ways to engage students and improve cognitive functions by using activities that allowed students to practice working memory skills, focus and attention skills, and sequencing skills. Jensen also suggested that enrichment, sports activities, and arts improved cognitive functions in students from low SES backgrounds.

Children from poverty came to school with more needs that had to be addressed in order to be successful in school than their higher SES peers. However, there were several practices and techniques that school staff used to close the opportunity gap in schools that serve students who come from poverty. One of these practices was Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The first core principal of the PBIS framework was that children from all backgrounds could be taught to behave appropriately. "It is our responsibility to identify the contextual setting events and environmental conditions that enable exhibition of appropriate behavior" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2014, p.1). Horner, Sugai, Smolkowski, Eber, Nakasato, Todd, and Esperanza (2009) studied the effectiveness of PBIS in elementary schools. The

researchers measured four areas of effectiveness of PBIS: success in adopting

PBIS, the influence of PBIS on school safety, the levels of discipline referrals to

the office, and the influence of PBIS on third grade students meeting reading

standards. Horner et al. concluded that there was more of a perceived feeling of

safety in the schools that implemented PBIS as well as initial improvement of

third grade reading scores. The schools involved in the study had not kept data of

office referrals prior to implementation of PBIS. However, schools who

implemented PBIS were found to have lower numbers of office referrals when

compared to schools of similar demographics. The researchers attributed these

changes in the school environment to increasing "(a) the amount of time students

are in school, (b) the proportion of minutes that classrooms are engaged in

instruction, and (c) the level of student academic engagement during instruction,"

(Horner et al., 2009, p. 8).

Vincent, Tobin, Hawken, and Frank (2012) researched the differences in

office discipline referrals among students from Hispanic, White, and African-

American backgrounds. Vincent et al. (2012) noted that African-American and

Hispanic students experienced more discipline and academic problems than their

White peers. Netzel and Eber (2003) investigated the effect that PBIS

implementation had on the amount of discipline referrals in an urban school

district. The researchers found that after one year of PBIS implementation,

student suspensions from school had decreased by 22% and office discipline referrals had decreased as well.

Horner, Sugai, and Vincent (2005) discussed the importance of focusing on preventing problem behavior rather than responding to it. School-wide PBIS implementation teaches all students the expected social behaviors of the school. As Jensen (2009) stated, students from poverty come to school with needs that their peers from higher SES homes do not have. These students often lacked the knowledge of appropriate social interactions. In the PBIS system, social expectations were taught in both classroom and non-classroom settings. Teaching students the expectations for appropriate behavior helped students from various backgrounds understand the social expectations at school. Teaching the appropriate behavior as well as positive reinforcement of appropriate student behavior decreased the incidents of inappropriate behavior and enabled more time for instruction.

Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, and Leaf (2008) researched the effects of school-wide PBIS on the organization of systems in elementary schools. PBIS was used as a prevention strategy to positively change the school environment by creating systems and explicitly teaching students expected behaviors. Bradshaw, et al. (2008) concluded that creating systems in the school and explicitly teaching

behavior to students enhanced the overall organizational health of elementary schools.

PBIS created safe and structured school environments. However, engaging and effective instructional strategies also needed to be used in the classroom. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez (2003) researched how teacher practices in high-poverty classrooms influenced student reading engagement and comprehension. The authors inventoried the practices of teachers in elementary school classrooms during literacy time. The researchers found teachers who used higher-level questioning strategies effectively increased students' reading comprehension. The researchers analyzed classroom observations and found that teachers whose students exhibited higher levels of reading achievement used questions that emphasized the following: theme, character traits, connections to one's own life, summarizing the text, and making predictions. The researchers also found that teachers whose students had higher reading comprehension levels engaged students in partner and/or small group work to discuss the text.

English Language Learners (ELL)

Along with students from poverty, ELL students had fewer receptive and expressive language skills in English (Kieffer, 2008). There were instructional strategies that benefited both ELL students as well as students from poverty. August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow (2005) investigated the role of vocabulary

development of ELL students in reading comprehension. The authors mentioned

several strategies shown to be effective in vocabulary instruction with ELL

students. These strategies included using cognates to teach English word meaning,

teaching meaning of basic English words, and reviewing and reinforcing

vocabulary through activities like read-alouds.

"Learning across content areas requires students to attain and utilize

reading and writing strategies to develop and gain knowledge. This process is

referred to as "content literacy." (Almaguer & Esquierdo, 2013, p.5). Almaguer

and Esquierdo (2013) stated developing content literacy is more difficult for

bilingual students, and these students must be actively involved in their learning.

There were three principles of learning that teachers could use to plan effective

instruction. These principles included activating prior knowledge, building

foundational knowledge, and self-monitoring the thinking process (Almaguer &

Esquierdo, 2013).

Hansen-Thomas (2008) stated teachers needed to meet the needs of ELL

and non-ELL students in their classrooms. The author recommended sheltered

instruction of English as a solution. Sheltered instruction of English emphasized

communication and functions of English instead of grammar instruction.

Sheltered instruction consisted of cooperative learning activities, academic and

content vocabulary, hands-on activities, and explicit teaching of learning

strategies. Sheltered instruction also included the activation of students'

background knowledge in the classroom.

Kieffer (2008) researched the differences in reading growth between ELL

students and students who entered school proficient in English. Kieffer found that

students who entered kindergarten with limited English proficiency had less

growth in reading in elementary years than students who came to school speaking

English. Kieffer also found, however, that ELL students who attended high

poverty schools had similar reading growth when compared to students who

entered school English proficient. Students who come to school with limited

proficiency in English needed specialized instruction in order to develop

vocabulary necessary to comprehend text. Aside from vocabulary, another factor

related to comprehension was the ability for a child to decode text.

. Numerous studies suggested that fluency and comprehension are related.

Quirk and Beem (2012) researched the relationship between reading fluency and

reading comprehension for ELL students. The researchers found that 15.8% of the

ELL students in the study were "word callers." In other words, they were fluent

readers, but not comprehending text. The study also found that 39.7% of the ELL

students in the study had gaps between their fluency level and their level of

comprehension. The authors suggested that these gaps may be due to the need for

vocabulary development in ELL students.

Research has shown several strategies to be effective in vocabulary instruction for ELL students. Tran (2006) analyzed research of several vocabulary development strategies. Tran recommended effective strategies that can be used for ELL students:

- Use appropriate simplified materials for ELL students.

- Identify frequently used vocabulary in English.

- Extensive reading of a wide variety of reading materials that is focused on meaning.

- Explicitly teach vocabulary.

- Use word notebooks and dictionaries.

Fluency and Reading Comprehension

Children from poverty and ELL students have been shown to benefit from similar kinds of reading instruction components in order for these students to read and comprehend text at high levels. LaBerge and Samuels (1974) researched the relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. The authors described reading as a process of at least two parts: decoding and the construction of meaning. The reader could not remain focused on both components at the same time. However, when the reader has become proficient in decoding, more attention can be paid to the processes of comprehension. Kalyuga (2011) described cognitive load as the architecture of the human brain. Kalyuga

stated that the brain consists of a long-term memory knowledge base and a temporary processor, or working memory. The author indicated that working memory could only process a few things at a time and only for a short time. When the working memory was overloaded, learning was impaired.

Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barnes (2007) discussed the way that reading fluency and working memory are involved in reading comprehension. The authors described reading fluency as requiring several cognitive processes. These were word recognition, rapid naming, speeded processing, and orthographic processing. People with processing and word recognition problems would also have comprehension difficulties. The researchers described working memory as a workspace in the brain that can store words and sentences while other information is processed. Poor working memory has consistently been found to be a common factor in reading comprehension difficulties (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007).

The National Reading Panel's Report: Teaching Children to Read (2000) analyzed research of effective approaches of reading instruction. The National Reading Panel mentioned that "fluency is one several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension" (p. 9). However, The National Reading Panel also found that fluency instruction was often neglected. According to the report, guided oral reading was an effective practice to increase reading fluency.

Pikulski and Chard (2005) suggested that wide independent reading is one way for children to build fluency, but the authors mentioned many students needed more explicit instruction to become fluent readers. Independent reading should not be discouraged, but there has not been enough research to show that independent reading alone was enough instruction for all students. The authors suggested that there are nine steps of effective fluency instruction:

- Build phonological awareness and understanding of phonics.

- Build vocabulary and oral language.

- Build recognition of high-frequency words.

- Teach word parts and spelling patterns.

- Teach and practice decoding strategies.

- Use appropriate texts to practice decoding strategies.

- Use repeated readings for struggling readers.

- Encourage wide independent reading.

- Monitor fluency through assessment.

Guided Reading

There were many strategies that teachers could use to help students become fluent readers in order to comprehend text. Guided reading was one strategy in which teachers helped students become increasingly more independent readers. Guided reading was an instructional strategy in which the teacher

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supported the child's development of effective strategies as he or she accessed

increasingly more difficult levels of text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Guided

reading instruction was meant to give children the skills they need in order to

independently solve problems while they are reading. Ongoing assessment was

also part of the guided reading model. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) stated that there

are three kinds of information that young readers encounter when trying to make

sense of text: meaning cues, structural cues, and visual cues. The authors stated

that children need a teacher's guidance in order to make sense of the cues.

Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez, and Rascon (2007) discussed the benefits of

the guided reading model for ELL students. During a guided reading lesson,

students read text simultaneously as they received support from the teacher. The

students benefited from the conversation that the students and teacher engaged in

before and after reading the text. ELL students in particular benefited from the

structure of a guided reading lesson because they were able to pick up on text

structure, culturally relevant topics, and explicit vocabulary instruction (Avalos,

Plasencia, Chavez, & Rascon, 2007).

Summary

"Although childhood is generally considered to be a time of joyful, care-

free exploration, children living in poverty tend to spend less time finding out

about the world around them and more time struggling to survive within it"

(Jensen, 2009, p. 8). The research summarized in this chapter showed that students who come from backgrounds of poverty and ELL students needed to be explicitly taught behavior expectations as well as language skills. PBIS was found to be an effective tool to explicitly teach students appropriate social behavior at school. The research also summarized that fluency is an important aspect of reading comprehension because children cannot construct meaning when reading if decoding is a struggle. Guided reading was described as an instructional strategy that taught students to become increasingly more fluent readers with scaffolding from the teacher. Students who came from poverty or who were learning English came to school with more needs to be met in order to be successful in school. These students had fewer opportunities and resources available to them outside of school, but there were effective cognitive and non-cognitive strategies teachers used to make the time these students spent in school valuable.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The teacher-researcher conducted an action research study to investigate explicit fluency and vocabulary instruction in small group guided reading lessons in the classroom and improved reading comprehension scores as evidenced by the DRA 2 assessment.

Methodology

The teacher-researcher used the DRA2 assessment as a baseline test in October, 2013, and then again as a post-test in February, 2014. The project was done using an action research approach (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The teacher-researcher used data collected from the DRA 2 assessment to determine if a relationship existed between guided reading using explicit fluency and vocabulary instruction and increased DRA 2 scores.

Participants

The study took place in a second grade classroom of 25 students. The participants in the study were eleven students who were identified by the researcher as students who were reading at or below grade level as indicated by the DRA 2 administered in October, 2013. The eleven students were chosen because with a high rate of mobility in the classroom, these eleven students were

the only students who remained in the class for the entire duration of the study.

The instruction was given by the teacher-researcher.

<u>Instruments</u>

The researcher used the DRA 2 assessment for a pre-test and post-test. The DRA 2 assessed students in the areas of reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. In second grade, a student was considered to be on grade level if he or she passed the level 20 in October. A student was considered to be on grade level in February if he or she passed the level 24.

<u>Design</u>

The researcher used a pre-test and post-test design. The DRA 2 assessment was used.

<u>Procedure</u>

The researcher administered the DRA 2 to all 25 students in October, 2013. The researcher used this data to determine the students who were reading below grade level and needed support in reading comprehension. The researcher provided instruction in a Balanced Literacy format including phonics instruction, guided reading, and opportunities for independent reading practice to all students in the class. The researcher explicitly taught reading fluency skills and vocabulary within small group guided reading instruction to the students participating in the study three days per week.

Treatment of the Data

The teacher-researcher compared data from the DRA2 assessments administered in October 2013 and February 2014. The teacher-researcher used the Microsoft Excel Analysis ToolPak to calculate data in order to determine the descriptive statistics of the data.

Summary

The teacher-researcher investigated fluency and vocabulary instruction within small group guided reading for students who were determined to be below grade level based on the DRA2 assessment and increased scores on the DRA2 assessment from October,2013 to February, 2014. The teacher-researcher instructed the students three days per week in small groups, using guided reading and explicitly teaching reading fluency skills and vocabulary within the guided reading lesson.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

<u>Introduction</u>

The study involved second grade students from a high poverty elementary school who were determined to be reading at or below grade level when assessed using the DRA2 in October, 2013. The teacher-researcher was concerned third grade students in the school were not reading proficiently enough to succeed on the state assessment. It became clear to the teacher-researcher that if students were going to be successful in third grade, they needed to read proficiently in earlier grades.

<u>Description of the Environment</u>

The project took place in a second grade classroom of 25 students. The teacher-researcher used the DRA2 assessment to assess students' reading abilities in the areas of reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Eleven students were chosen to participate in the study based on their DRA2 scores, which showed the students were reading below grade level. The students received small group guided reading instruction that included fluency and vocabulary instruction three days per week. The students were assessed again using the DRA2 in February, 2014.

Hypothesis/Research Question

Students instructed using guided reading with an emphasis on reading fluency and vocabulary will increase their DRA2 score from fall to spring to at or above grade level.

Null Hypothesis

Students instructed using guided reading with an emphasis on reading fluency and vocabulary will not increase their DRA2 score from fall to spring to at or above grade level.

Results of the Study

Table 1 illustrated the results of the assessment scores using the DRA2 assessment in October, 2013 and again in February, 2014. Students in first grade were considered on level at the end of the school year if they scored at a level 16 or 18 on the DRA2. Students in second grade were considered on level in the fall of second grade if they scored at a level 20 on the DRA2. In February 2014 second grade students were considered on level if their DRA2 score was a level 24.

Table 1

DRA2 Assessment Results and Growth

Student	October DRA2 Score	February DRA2 Score	Growth
Target Score/Growth	20	24	4
Student 1	12	18	6
Student 2	12	18	6
Student 3	16	20	4
Student 4	20	24	4
Student 5	4	6	2
Student 6	4	10	6
Student 7	20	24	4
Student 8	20	28	8
Student 9	3	4	1
Student 10	12	14	2
Student 11	1	2	1

Table 2 illustrated the results of the analysis of the data. All students did make some growth in their reading levels. However, four students did not make the targeted amount of growth during the time of the study. Because of the limited amount of growth from these students, the achievement gap between them and

their peers is widening. Two of the four students who did not make adequate growth were then referred and later qualified for special education services, as it was determined that this was not the appropriate intervention for those students.

Table 2

	October DRA2	February DRA2
Mean	11.3	15.3
Median	12	18
Mode	12	18
Standard Deviation	7.3	8.7

Findings

The results of the project indicated that there was an increase in DRA2 scores after vocabulary and fluency instruction in small group guided reading. However, the results did not support the hypothesis that students would increase their DRA2 scores to be at or above grade level.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine if vocabulary and fluency instruction in guided reading would increase DRA2 scores to at or above grade level. Research from Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barnes (2007) was consistent

with the findings in this study, that oral reading fluency is related to reading comprehension.

Summary

Eleven students were chosen to participate in the study based upon results of the DRA2 pre-test that determined the students were reading at or below grade level. The teacher-researcher investigated vocabulary and fluency instruction within small group guided reading and an increase in DRA2 scores. The preliminary data suggested that students performed better than expected on the DRA2 assessment after receiving the small group guided reading instruction that included vocabulary and fluency instruction.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

<u>Introduction</u>

In the spring of 2013, approximately 67% of third grade students at the school where the project took place did not pass the state reading assessment. The teacher-researcher became concerned about the reading skills of second grade students as they prepared for the next grade level. It had become clear to the teacher-researcher that second grade students would need to improve in their reading comprehension skills. A relationship between vocabulary and fluency instruction and an increase in comprehension as determined by the DRA2 was investigated.

<u>Summary</u>

The problems faced at the school in which the project took place were not uncommon in other schools of high poverty and high numbers of ELL students. Students from poverty came to school at a disadvantage compared to their more affluent peers. The teacher-researcher wanted to determine if there was a relationship between certain instructional strategies and an increase in reading comprehension scores.

Eleven students were chosen to participate in the project based on the results of the DRA2 given in October 2013 that determined the students were reading at or below grade level. The DRA2 administration was typically given to all students in the classroom three times per year. The eleven students were also chosen

because they remained in the classroom throughout the duration of the project.

The students were instructed using a balanced literacy approach that included

small group guided reading with a focus on fluency and vocabulary instruction.

The teacher-researcher instructed students in a small group three days per week.

The students were assessed again in February 2014 using the DRA2.

The teacher researcher compared the two sets of DRA2 scores and analyzed the

data to find the measures of central tendency.

Conclusions

The study determined that there was an increase in DRA2 scores among all students who participated in the study. However, seven students made more substantial gains than the other four students. At the conclusion of the project, the data collected by the teacher-researcher helped to refer some students for additional school services. This increase in scores suggested that using small group guided reading instruction with a focus on reading fluency and vocabulary instruction may be an effective strategy for students reading below level. Based upon the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the analysis of the data in Chapter 4, the strategy may also be effective for children from poverty and ELL students. The data collected by the teacher-researcher in this project is consistent with what other researchers have established.

Several limitations existed in the project. The numbers of students able to be included in the project were limited to the ones in the teacher-researcher's classroom. The high rate of student mobility at the school was also a limitation.

Recommendations

After conducting this study, the teacher-researcher recommends that a similar project be done with a larger sample of students. This study only included data from eleven children because the teacher-researcher had only the students in her classroom who remained there throughout the year to include in the study.

At the conclusion of this project, the teacher-researcher also recommends that further research investigate the appropriateness of this intervention for students with learning disabilities, as there were students who made minimal progress in reading scores during this project.

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