Increasing the Number of Students on Grade Level

By Using Reading Workshop Consistently

A Special Project

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Increasing the Number of Students on Grade Level

By Using Reading Workshop Consistently

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to prove that when *Reading Workshop* was followed closely and all components were utilized in the classroom, second grade students would perform better on the DRA than if only some components were used. The researcher used the independent t-test to analyze data and when the results were reviewed they showed a positive correlation between the spring 2007 DRA scores and the consistent use of *Reading Workshop*. When the *Reading Workshop* was used consistently in 2007-2008, the students performed better as measured by the DRA assessment in the spring.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Prosser was a small town located in the Columbia Basin and known for its wine production. The town boasted about 5,000 residents. Prosser School District was acknowledged for providing an excellent foundation and preparing students for higher education.

Keene-Riverview Elementary was comprised of 493 students. The school had 342 English speaking students and 151 Spanish speaking students. Keene-Riverview had 63 percent of its children participating in the free and reduced lunch program.

The Prosser School District continued to show growth as measured by the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). However, the early elementary growth was measured according to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), which showed little growth. This lack of significant growth posed a question about how effectively reading was being taught in the classroom.

The community members of Prosser truly valued the education their children were receiving. The parents spent a great deal of their time volunteering in their child's classroom. The district was known for its smaller class sizes throughout most of the elementary classrooms. It was believed that powerful instruction would guide the children to success.

Statement of the Problem

Reading was essential for students to be successful on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The data from 2006-2007 showed that reading had flat- lined across second grade and a plan to review that problem was needed. The growth was measured using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to prove that when *Reading Workshop* was followed closely and all components were utilized in the classroom, second grade students would perform better on the DRA than if only some components were used. In 2006, the program was followed without the daily guided reading and *Making Words* lessons. In 2007, guided reading and *Making Words* were completed daily.

Delimitations

In 2006, the researcher had 20 children in the class. At the beginning of the 2005 school year, 12 of the children were pre-selected to be placed in a multiage classroom. The children that were selected had little behavioral concerns and were mostly academically high, although each child had certain content areas that proved to be a struggle. The remainder of the students were placed in the class at random. The class had one student who was on a 504 plan for hearing difficulties and three

other students who received special education support in reading and mathematics.

In 2007, the researcher had 23 children in the class. The children were chosen at random to be placed in the classroom. At the beginning of the school year the researcher had one student who qualified for speech assistance and no children who qualified for special education services. In September, the researcher noticed deficiencies in two of the children in the class. The researcher then had those children tested and referred for special education, although they did not actually start in the program for extra assistance until January, 2008.

At Keene-Riverview there were two programs that supported children who were below grade level and did not qualify for special education. There was a reading program that pulled the lowest children for a half an hour four days a week, and there was a paraprofessional that went into the classroom three times a week to work with struggling children.

Assumptions

The researcher was in the second year of teaching, but was in the first year of teaching second grade. The researcher previously taught in a district that had the reading requirements clearly spelled out. However, when the researcher began teaching second grade, the expectations were not quite as clear.

When children were young, many parents invested a little time in the evening to assist their child. The researcher required the children to read at least 20 minutes a night as part of the daily homework. The teacher also sent home progress reports with student goals for improvement.

Each day there was a paraprofessional in the classroom for a 90 minute reading block. Children would see the teacher at least once a week and the paraprofessional once a week. Often times the amount that the children actually worked one-on-one with an adult was more than twice a week. An additional assumption was that in 2006 the teacher used the paraprofessional for reading and writing, whereas in 2007 the paraprofessional only worked with the children in reading for the full 90 minutes.

Hypothesis

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores for the 2007-2008 second grade students had a larger increase in growth than the 2006-2007 second grade students when guided reading and *Making Words* were implemented daily.

Null Hypothesis

The Developmental Reading Assessment scores for the 2007-2008 second grade students had no significant change when guided reading and *Making Words* were implemented daily. Significance was determined for $p \geq .05$, .01, and .001.

Significance of the Project

Reading was a significant part of education. When taught correctly the growth of students in the classroom could show a significant percentage of growth. Prosser School District used the *Reading Workshop* approach to teaching reading in the early grades. While the researcher understood the importance of the components of the program, there were holes in the researcher's instructional approach. Without daily individualized reading goals, word work, guided reading strategies and fluency practice through small group work, students were not performing to their optimal potential.

Procedure

Children participated in daily mini-lessons, small group work, word work and individual reading practice. Each day a skill was taught through a mini-lesson and the children were given time to practice the new skill in individualized book bags. Children participated in two thirty minute small group activities and one thirty minute *Making Words* lesson per week. Small groups were created based on student needs and reading skill level.

The researcher conducted the Developmental Reading Assessment in the fall. The assessment contained three parts for scoring students. The children were required to read the text with an eighty percent accuracy rate, comprehend the text with a score

of 3, and read the text with a rate that was determined using a formula that subtracted the number of errors during reading from the amount of words in the text, divided by the amount of time of reading.

Children were retested using the DRA in the spring and the data from both 2006 and 2007 fall and spring were compared. The researcher examined the growth of students and compared the growth of each group when instructional methods were altered.

Definition of Terms

Developmental Reading Assessment. A reading assessment that tested children's comprehension and fluency.

Guided Reading. An instructional setting that allowed the teacher to work with a small group of children to help them learn effective reading strategies.

Making Words. A word program that had students make words using letters and word chunks.

Reading Workshop. A framework for teaching reading with an approach to reading that was considered balanced with mini-lessons, activity time, and sharing time.

Stat Pak. A computer program used to calculate statistics.

Writing Workshop. A framework for teaching writing that included mini-lessons, activity time, and sharing time.

Acronyms

DRA. Developmental Reading Assessment

ESL. English as a Second Language

NCLB. No Child Left Behind Act

WASL. Washington Assessment of Student Learning

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

The researcher chose to discuss the importance of guided reading, balanced literacy, reading assessment, and specific learning theories as they related to reading development at the second grade level. Reading was an essential component of the classroom curriculum.

Guided Reading

According to Schulman and Carleen (2000), guided reading in the classroom provided opportunities for the teacher to tailor the instructional needs of many students at various levels effectively. Guided reading groups presented the chance to work on many valuable skills in reading instruction such as word work, fluency activities, and other extension activities outside of individual conferring time. Students also had the chance to extend their repertoire of problem-solving strategies to read new books successfully (Schulman & Carleen, 2000).

Children around the country struggled to read each day. In fact, one in three children suffered from difficulties learning to read. Consequently, having programs that focused on teaching, not only to the individual child but also guided reading

groups that allowed the teacher to focus on structured needs, had a greater student impact (Iaquinta, 2006).

Guided reading text had an essential function in the process. It provided the opportunity for the student to work through learning and use the new skill and strategy. The group setting provided the chance for student error followed by immediate teaching. As stated by Schwartz (2005), young children do not attend to all the information in a book, no matter their expertise level. Therefore it was imperative that teachers, when teaching in a guided reading group, knew how to manipulate their theory of reading and learning to effectively respond to student miscues.

Balanced Literacy

Balanced literacy had essential components that permeated through the well-balanced curriculum. As stated by Mermelstein (2006), having an actual balanced program depended on how the components of the program were linked together and taught simultaneously. Balanced literacy had seven components: shared writing, read aloud, interactive writing, shared reading, *Writing Workshop*, *Reading Workshop* and word study. A well- gelled program used all seven areas of focus together throughout the year and was intertwined in various units of study.

In this program *Writing Workshop* had shared writing and interactive writing as a part of the daily lesson. In many instances, the writing units of study and topic ideas coincided with the focus of study in reading.

The *Reading Workshop* aspect of balanced literacy allowed the student to not only learn and practice the new skill or strategy taught, but provided time for the student to critically analyze text the teacher had read aloud throughout the day. Mermelstein (2006) affirmed that in *Reading* and *Writing Workshop* the students had the chance to put everything together they had learned through meaning, structure and visual sources.

The balanced literacy program had a strong emphasis in ongoing assessment that drove the instruction. For example, as the teacher met with the children, the teacher looked for a common error among the children. The teacher then used the common error to teach a lesson about the proper way to fix that mistake. With a program such as *Reading Workshop,* it became essential for the teacher to teach appropriate strategies during the initial learning- to- read phase and then to follow that with more intense skills that the children then needed (Afflerbach, Pearson & Pairs, 2008).

Assessment

After the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, the way assessment was viewed and administrated changed greatly (Allington, 2006). High stakes testing became the priority and student interest in the content and what was being taught was put aside.

The idea of accountability came to the forefront. Critics felt that with the little amount of time that the educator spent with children, it should be an easy process to continually document student progress (Opitz & Ford, 2006). Essentially this was what most called ongoing assessment; quick precise note-taking of one-on-one work with each child at least once a week.

Writing and *Reading Workshop* continually provided the ongoing assessment that the NCLB required. In fact, when planning the next area of focus in *Writing* and *Reading Workshop*, most, if not all, lessons were derived from the observational instruction and ongoing assessment that happened daily (Mermelstein, 2006).

With a subject such as reading, the achievement gap varied greatly, specifically in early elementary. The factors that influenced the reading development of young children varied significantly. For example, a student may be an excellent reader because developmentally they were ahead of most children, whereas, another student may be an excellent reader because Mom or Dad read with them everyday. When NCLB was written, it set optimistic reading achievement goals for all children no matter their socioeconomic background, their language deficiencies, their disabilities, or their belonging to a minority group (Allington, 2006).

Differences in Learning

The manner in which children learned varied greatly. Children relied on the varied modalities that teachers used to teach the curriculum material. Some children

learned best by watching a teacher teach a skill or activity and then they could grasp the topic or skill. Other children needed alternative ways to practice the new skill or activity. The main reason that children learned differently was because of the function of the brain in each child. The way children's brains functioned also depended on their personal experience. Every child came to school with prior experience of some sort. The experience the children came with depended greatly on what they were introduced to at home.

According to Vosniadou (2000), "Cognitive development involves the gradual acquisition of strategies for remembering, understanding, and solving problems" (p.80). Two famous researchers, Vygotsky and Piaget, investigated the varied ways that children learn. Vygotsky was most famous for the Zone of Proximal Development. The Zone of Proximal Development related the distance between the actual development of the brain when a child used problem solving independently to a child completing problem solving with an adult.

Vosniadou (2000) continued to discuss student readiness. Not all children came to school ready to learn in the exact same way. Many theorists believed that there was more than one correct way to learn something. It then became a goal for teachers to learn varied ways to deliver instruction. When children were in school they had the opportunity to have a rich environment to learn the context of different

sentence structures and word meanings. Language development depended on meaning for a clue to language rather than language as a clue to meaning (Anselmo & Franz, 1987).

Children learned at varied rates. When research was reviewed, generally the statistics proved that the average age of reading development and readiness was first grade or six years old. Thus, the amount that children learned depended on how meaningful and culturally relevant the material being taught was (Vosniadou, 2001).

Many variables influenced the way that children learned. This was why it was important for teachers to take into consideration practice, habits and social roles while they reviewed their teaching methods and styles to better suit the needs of the students. When considering the best way to teach children, teachers needed to keep in mind the importance of teaching strategies to children that would help them solve problems. It was also important to focus on teaching children to understand, not to memorize (Vosniadou, 2001).

Summary

Reading challenged many children. It provided the foundation building blocks for later education. When children were introduced to guided reading and *Reading Workshop* they had the opportunity to experience the reading program that challenged them to practice skills and strategies independently and in a small group setting. Balanced Literacy and *Reading* and *Writing Workshops* truly focused on the

individual child and the way the child learned best. When teachers approached teaching and taught with student strengths and weaknesses in mind and how they learned best, learning excelled.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The researcher conducted an experimental design. The t-test for independent groups was used to calculate the data. Data was collected to see if the there was any significance in assessment scores when the teacher altered the reading program between two different groups of students throughout the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.

Methodology

The research design that was being studied was an experimental design. The researcher was using data from two different school years. The data was from the 2006-2007 school year and the 2007-2008 school year. During both years the participants were given the same reading assessment. The participants were given the Developmental Reading Assessment. The part of the design that changed was how the researcher was teaching the reading curriculum and the activities that participants were doing. In both years the participants received the same program, but they did not receive the same amount of time in each activity connected to the program.

Participants

In 2006, the researcher had 20 children in the class. At the beginning of the 2005 school year, 12 of the children were pre-selected to be placed in a multi-age

classroom. The children that were selected had little behavioral concerns and were mostly academically high, although each child had certain content areas that proved to be a struggle. The remainder of the students were placed in the class at random. The class had one student who was on a 504 plan for hearing difficulties and three other students who received special education support in reading and mathematics.

In 2007, the researcher had 23 children in the class. The children were chosen at random to be placed in the classroom. At the beginning of the school year the researcher had one student who qualified for speech assistance and no children who qualified for special education services. In September, the researcher noticed deficiencies in two of the children in the class. The researcher then had those children tested and referred for special education, although they did not actually start in the program for extra assistance until January, 2008.

Instruments

The researcher used the Developmental Reading Assessment, a pencil, calculator, and a timer to collect the data. The students read to the researcher, while the researcher took a running record on the students. As the students read the researcher timed the students in order to calculate the words read correctly per minute.

According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2006), “Criterion-related validity is determined by relating performance on a test to performance on a second test or other

measure" (p. 135). Furthermore, in order for the research design to be valid, the data must show that by changing the method in which the curriculum was taught the students would perform better during the 2007-2008 school year as measured by the Development Reading Assessment. For the assessment to be reliable it must measure what it was suppose to measure consistently (Gay et. al., 2006).

Design

The researcher used the experimental design method. The researcher gave each group of participants the DRA assessment in the fall and then again in the spring. The researcher used the reading level scores based on the assessment after testing fluency, comprehension and intonation to compare the data.

Procedure

Children participated in daily mini-lessons, small group work, word work and individual reading practice. Each day a skill was taught through a mini-lesson and the children were given time to practice the new skill in individualized book bags for forty-five minutes daily. Children participated in two thirty minute small group activities and one thirty minute *Making Words* lesson per week. Small groups were created based on student needs and reading skill level.

The researcher conducted the Developmental Reading Assessment in the fall. The assessment contained three parts for scoring students. The children were required to read the text with an eighty percent accuracy rate, comprehend the text with a score

of 3, and read the text with a rate that was determined using a formula that subtracted the number of errors during reading from the amount of words in the text, divided by the amount of time of reading.

Children were retested using the DRA in the spring and the data from both 2006 and 2007 fall and spring were compared. The researcher examined the growth of students and compared the growth of each group when instructional methods were altered.

Treatment of the Data

The researcher used the t-test for independent groups to statistically calculate the data. The scores from spring 2007 were compared with the scores from spring 2008. The calculation was completed by using the Stat Pak.

Summary

When the DRA assessment was used to attain reading scores for both groups of participants the researcher was provided with an accurate account of the learning that took place throughout the school year. The data was calculated for accuracy using the t-test for independent groups to show a representation of the student's reading abilities.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The participants were second grade students from the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. The factors discussed were the number of children, how they were selected for the classroom, and the children's special needs. The researcher represented the data with a table, line plot and a bar graph. Finally, the researcher discussed the findings of the study.

Description of the Environment

In 2006, the researcher had 20 children in the class. At the beginning of the 2005 school year, 12 of the children were pre-selected to be placed in a multi-age classroom.

One factor of the study was how the children that were selected had little behavioral concerns and were mostly academically high, although each child had certain content areas that proved to be a struggle. The remainder of the students were placed in the class at random. The class had one student who was on a 504 plan for hearing difficulties and three other students who received special education support in reading and mathematics.

In 2007, the researcher had 23 children in the class. The children were chosen at random to be placed in the classroom. At the beginning of the school year the

researcher had one student who qualified for speech assistance and no children who qualified for special education services.

An additional factor was that the researcher noticed deficiencies in two of the children in the class. The researcher then had those children tested and referred for special education, although they did not actually start in the program for extra assistance until January, 2008.

A final factor was the *Reading Workshop* program that the school used focused on the individual students needs. It had several components that the students participated in daily. The components were, guided reading, independent reading, mini-lessons, and *Making Words.* The program lacked consistency to move students that were not receiving special assistance in reading.

Hypothesis

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores for the 2007-2008 second grade students showed a larger increase in growth than the 2006-2007 second grade students when guided reading and *Making Words* were implemented daily. The data on the line plot showed that student scores on the DRA had a greater increase in the 2007-2008 school year than in the 2006-2007 school year. The researcher performed the t-test for independent samples to see if there was a correlation between the changes of the program. The correlation was significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

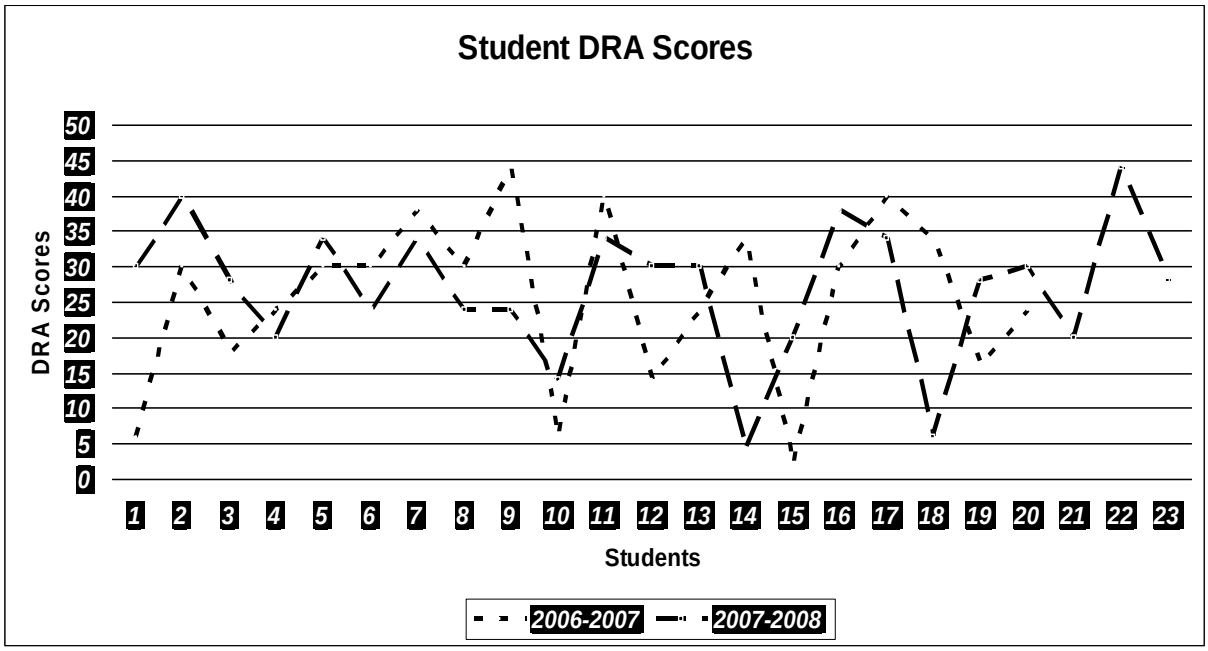
Null Hypothesis

The data showed that there are more students on grade level when the teaching was altered. Therefore the null hypothesis, which stated that the 2007-2008 second grade students would show no significant change when guided reading and *Making Words* are implemented daily, was rejected.

Results of the Study/ Table 1

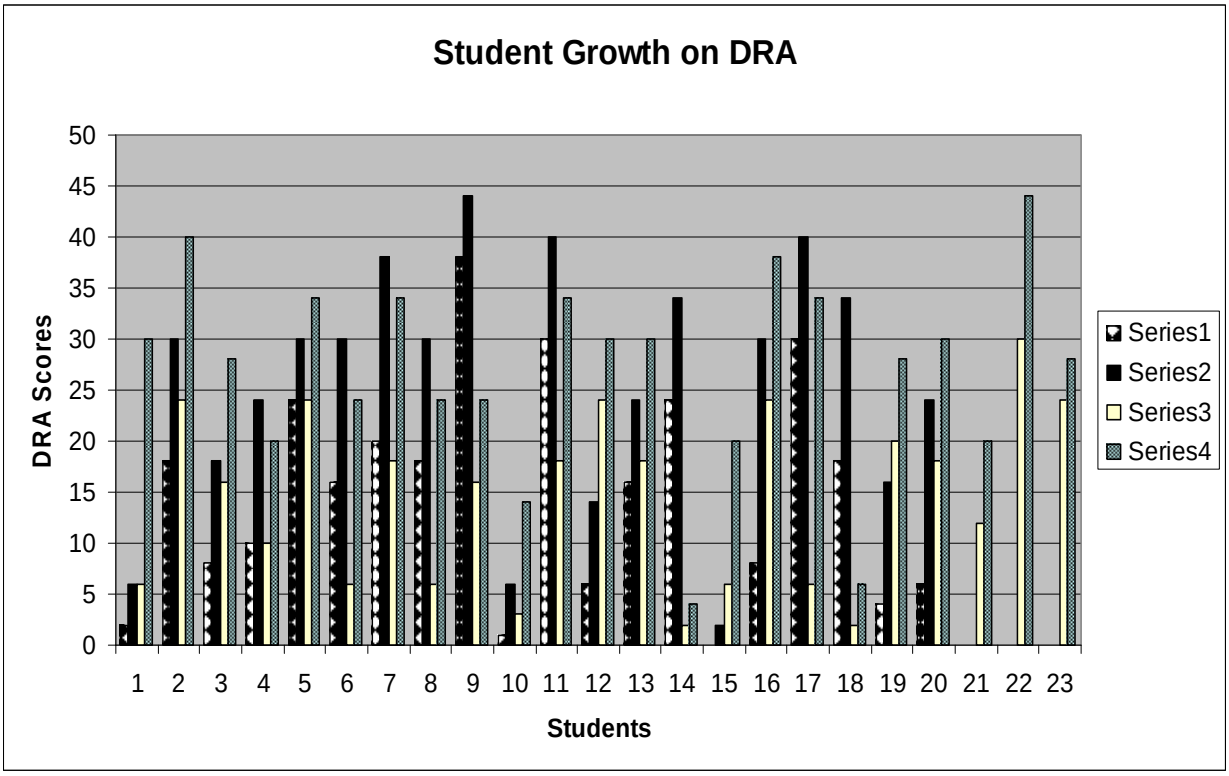
Students 2006-2007	DRA Test Score Spring 2007	Students 2007-2008	DRA Test Score Spring 2008
1	6	1	30
2	30	2	40
3	18	3	28
4	24	4	20
5	30	5	34
6	30	6	24
7	38	7	34
8	30	8	24
9	44	9	24
10	6	10	14
11	40	11	34
12	14	12	30
13	24	13	30
14	34	14	4
15	2	15	20
16	30	16	38
17	40	17	34
18	34	18	6
19	16	19	28
20	24	20	30
		21	20
		22	44
		23	28

The table showed the scores of all the students. It presented both groups' fall and spring DRA reading scores. The table showed that in 2006-2007 there were 55% of students on grade level and in 2007-2007 there were 61% of students on grade level.



Line Plot 1

The line plot showed both years of data for spring DRA scores. When the t-test for independent samples was used the t value was -0.35 and there was 41 degrees of freedom. The mean value for the 2006-2007 school year was 25.70 and the mean value for the 2007-2008 school year was 26.87.



Graph 1

This bar graph showed student growth over the two year span. It compared where the students were in the fall and where they were in the spring. The graph depicted that more growth was made in the 2007-2008 school year.

Findings

After the data was analyzed the researcher found a positive correlation between increasing the consistency of the reading program to a higher growth percentage and a greater percentage of students on grade level. The purpose of this project was to prove that when *Reading Workshop* was followed closely and all

components were utilized in the classroom, second grade students would perform better on the DRA than if only some components were used. The relationship showed that the null hypothesis was rejected because there was significance in their scores.

Discussion

The researcher believed there would be significance between DRA scores for each spring when instruction methods were changed. Once the researcher changed the program with the intention of increasing the amount of students on grade level, the researcher began to analyze the data and found that it was successful according to the t-test for independent samples. When instruction was followed with accuracy and consistency students performed better than when the program was not consistent.

Summary

This chapter discussed the materials, participants and methods for the design. It also discussed the results of the design. The data was closely analyzed using the t-test for independent samples. The data was entered into three different forms to show the results. It was entered into a table, a line plot and a bar graph. The hypothesis was supported and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores for the 2007-2008 second grade students showed a larger increase in growth than the 2006-2007 second grade students when guided reading and *Making Words* were implemented daily.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The researcher made conclusions and recommendations based on the data that was analyzed. The findings were discussed based on the presented tables and graphs. The data showed a positive correlation between the consistent program and the DRA scores.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to prove that when *Reading Workshop* was followed closely and all components were utilized in the classroom, second grade students would perform better on the DRA than if only some components were used. The study compared data from two different school years. The researcher believed that when all components were followed closely and consistently, the students' scores on the DRA would increase and there would be more students on grade level.

Children participated in daily mini-lessons, small group work, word work and individual reading practice. Each day a skill was taught through a mini-lesson and the children were given time to practice the new skill in individualized book bags. Children participated in two thirty minute small group activities and one thirty minute *Making Words* lesson per week. Small groups were created based on student needs and reading skill level.

The researcher then analyzed that data from the DRA assessment using the t-test for independent samples. The data was presented in three methods; a table, a line plot, and a bar graph. The data showed that indeed the program was successful and that there was a correlation between DRA scores and the program being used consistently.

Conclusions

Once the researcher analyzed the data, the researcher determined that there was a positive correlation between the DRA scores for the 2007-2008 school year and the *Reading Workshop* program when used consistently with all components. The data presented on the table, line plot, and graph showed the positive relationship between the program and the test scores. When the *Reading Workshop* was used consistently in 2007-2008, the students preformed better as measured by the DRA assessment in the spring. The hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected as expressed by the data.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researcher found a positive correlation between the DRA assessment scores in spring 2007-2008 and the consistent *Reading Workshop* program. Therefore, the researcher believed that if other schools designed a similar approach to their *Reading Workshop* program and followed this study their results too should show increased growth of students on grade level.

The researcher also believed that if a study was done using a random sample of 100 students, as long as the program mirrored the program used for this study, the results should be similar. However, to replicate this study there are some factors that need to be considered. Gender, ethnicity, environment, number of students, and non-native English speakers all need to be closely considered. For individuals that would like to replicate this study the procedures need to be followed closely.

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