

Increasing Kindergarten High Frequency Word Knowledge
Using the Daily 5 Approach to Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades

A Special Project

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Increasing Kindergarten High Frequency Word Knowledge

Using the Daily 5 Approach to Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The project examined the impact of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach when used with kindergarten students to increase High Frequency word knowledge. The results of a January post-test showed a relationship between an effective early literacy program and increased high frequency word knowledge abilities in kindergarten students. The researcher concluded that an effective literacy approach should be implemented in the early grades to increase the opportunity for success in reading and enhance literacy development for young children.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Kindergarten Readiness has recently been an important topic for educators nation-wide. Research has determined that early detection of literacy and reading difficulties had the potential to help struggling students overcome academic deficiencies. Detection of reading and literacy difficulties were grounded in the new knowledge research has acquired regarding instruction and developmental methods.

The report of the National Research Council has concluded that concerns about literacy derive not from declining levels of literacy in our schools but rather from recognition that the demands for high levels of literacy were rapidly accelerating in our society (Britsch, 1993). The rising demands could only be met by changing the way professionals approached reading so that better literacy for children could be the outcome.

Research has supported that providing students with recovery strategies, planning strategies and problem solving strategies positively affected literacy development. Modeled reading strategies in the classroom environment aided in student-developed reading and literacy skills (Borsa, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Research has concluded that early intervention in acquiring literacy and reading skills ensured success in developing early reading skills. Children helped in developing a vocabulary

of high frequency words for reading and writing secured reading levels earlier than children not given the opportunity. If children needed to use high frequency words in their independent writing and were taught to access these words in the classroom, they were likely to learn more high frequency words.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to investigate the relationship between the Daily 5 Literacy Approach and kindergarten high frequency word knowledge. The importance of the relationship to pre-test scores and post-test scores demonstrated how the kindergarten students improved through the implementation of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach. The elements of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach provided students the opportunity to read independently using the strategies modeled through the text and encouraged the development of high frequency vocabulary through the use of the classroom word-wall and other instructional tools available in the classroom. Opportunities for independent writing were presented daily to support practice of high frequency words.

Delimitations

The study compared high frequency word knowledge gains from fall to post-test results in January. The study was done in a parochial school in an urban community in eastern Washington. The school had about 250 students from preschool to 8th grade and 30 staff members. Most of the students were Hispanic and represented several socio-economic levels. All of the students had to pay tuition to attend the school; tuition assistance was available to families needing financial help. The school did not provide free or reduced lunches or breakfasts

to any of the students. The school did not provide transportation to or from school for any students. Student did have the option to purchase a hot lunch once a week on Friday from a local fast food restaurant. The study began at the end of August 2007 and was completed in December 2007 of the same school year.

The school had two kindergarten classrooms with a total of 33 kindergarteners; 17 kindergarteners from the same classroom were used in the study. Four kindergarteners were Caucasian; nine students were Hispanic and four were multi-racial. Twelve students were monolingual in English, and five students were bilingual. The students represented a wide range of socio-economic levels. Most of the kindergarteners lived with both the father and mother. The students were not required to attend pre-kindergarten classes to apply for kindergarten; students had to take a kindergarten entrance assessment to establish acquired skills or lack thereof. None of the students were determined special education students or evaluated for any learning disabilities.

Assumptions

The kindergarten class received students that attended the school's preschool/Montessori programs and students who either received no preschool or attended preschool elsewhere. The researcher was certified to teach elementary education in the state of Washington and was qualified to teach kindergarten. The researcher acquired a master's in education with a professional studies endorsement and had taught five years at the kindergarten grade level. The researcher was trained in the Daily 5 Literacy Approach and planned lessons reflecting the Daily 5 Literacy Approach. The researcher presented the information to staff and parents.

The researcher assumed that all students were five and had attended a pre kindergarten skills program or no pre-school. Most of the students had completed the school's preschool/Montessori program. A few students passed the kindergarten entrance assessment before being enrolled at the school. The researcher assumed that each student had some experience with the alphabet, phonemes, name identification, color identification, shape recognition and number recognition.

The Dolch High Frequency word knowledge pre-test and post-test were given by the researcher in a quiet environment outside of the classroom. The other students were working independently or in a small group with a classroom support staff member. Individual students were tested away from other students to avoid distractions. The researcher tested all students within a day to prevent academic indifferences of some students.

Research Question

Kindergarten students should make significant achievement on high frequency word knowledge using the Daily 5 Literacy Approach as measured by the Dolch High Frequency word knowledge list.

Significance of the Project

The researcher understood that reading and writing were significant for kindergarten students. The students needed to acquire these skills in order to be successful in the first grade. Basic reading skills were needed in kindergarten such as letter names, sounds, and distinction between upper-case and lower-case letters. When students had mastered these skills, the skill of word recognition could begin to develop. Instructional strategies that modeled and taught these

literacy skills were provided in the text, *Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*.

Procedure

All 17 kindergarten students were individually given the Dolch High Frequency word knowledge pre-test during the first week of September. All of the students were tested on a Tuesday. The students were all tested by the researcher to increase the reliability of the test. All of the students were tested outside of the classroom, in the same environment, and with the same testing conditions. The other students quietly worked independently or worked in a small group with a classroom support staff member. Students were tested individually in the hallway facing away from the hallway to avoid distractions. The students in the class were tested within 90 minutes on the same morning to avoid academic discrepancies.

In September, the parents were invited to come to Back to School Night to receive information about kindergarten, reading curriculum, and academic activities prepared by the teachers. The researcher presented the strategies, activities and handouts to the parents.

The students were required to practice the three ways to read a book as defined by the Daily 5 Literacy Approach; read the pictures, read the words, or re-tell the story at home with parents. Students were also required to complete a teacher-created homework packet each month. The homework packet consisted of alphabet knowledge activities, fine motor development activities and sight word knowledge activities. Completed and returned homework packets were recorded and posted on a classroom chart.

The researcher used the text, *Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*, for about ninety minutes each morning. Then thirty minutes of the morning were spent in literacy centers and small reading groups. Kindergarten students were divided into groups of three or four students (five groups total) by pre-reading ability and letter/letter sound identification ability. Students independently rotated through three literacy centers and spent 8-10 minutes at each center. The students read books at the appropriate reading level from *KinderReaders* by Sandi Reyes with the researcher. At another center, a classroom support staff member worked with students on specific literacy skills (onsets, phonics or spelling skills). The other centers consisted of handwriting, vocabulary building, letter tile word building, word family manipulation, alphabet flashcards, computer skills, read the room, abc puzzles, independent reading, stencils, alphabet order, games, budding reading, dry-erase boards, and sight words. The researcher monitored the student's progress at least once a month with a letter knowledge and sight word knowledge assessment while the students worked at the centers.

In January, the researcher used the Dolch High Frequency word knowledge list as a post-test to measure the kindergartener's high frequency word knowledge achievement. The post-test was given by the researcher so that all the students were tested on the same morning and in the same environment with little to no distractions. The students' individual Dolch High Frequency word knowledge achievement was compared to the Daily 5 Literacy Approach.

Definition of Terms

Dolch High Frequency word list. The Dolch High Frequency list was published by Edward William Dolch, Ph.D, in his book, *Problems in Reading*, (Dolch, 1948). The Dolch List of High

Frequency words comprised the 220 words, excluding nouns that were common to the word lists of the International Kindergarten Union, the Gates List and the Wheeler-Howl List --- all lists that were used in beginning reading programs in the 1940s. The Dolch High Frequency List has held up over time as a reliable high frequency word list that has been used in beginning reading programs

Daily 5 Literacy Approach:. The Daily 5 Literacy Approach was a series of literacy tasks (reading to self, reading with someone, writing, word work, and listening to reading) which students completed daily while the teacher met with small groups or conferred with individuals.

phonics. Phonics was the form of instruction given to students to develop an understanding and usage of the alphabet, the relationship between phonemes and graphemes, and the ability to decode and read words.

graphemes. Graphemes were the letters that represented the sounds in the written language.

phonemes. Phonemes were the smallest units of sound that changed the meaning of spoken words, the English language has about 41-44 phonemes.

Acronyms

IDEA. Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

Our nation was engaged in an educational reform movement that addressed the current rapidly changing social, economic and technological climates. Many of those issues had a direct impact on the educational goals and achievements of early learners. In 1990, then President Bush sponsored a summit of governors and policy makers that outlined and adopted the National Education Goals. This document stated that by the year 2000 all children in the United States would enter school ready to learn. Since then educators have been researching and testing ways to provide early intervention techniques and instruction of readiness skills for early learners.

In this project, the researcher studied the effect of one literacy approach to measure kindergarten high frequency word knowledge achievement.

Early Reading Intervention

An early reading intervention program was one that identified, through assessment, students at risk of reading failure when they entered school. Students received intense one-on-one instruction designed to accelerate their growth in reading (Bergeron, Wermuth, Rhodes, & Rudenga, 1996). There were several key components to successful early reading intervention programs. One component was that the intervention occurred at the onset of schooling. Secondly, ongoing assessments were used to direct instruction. Thirdly, intervention instruction was frequent, regular, and of sufficient duration to make a difference. Instruction included reading familiar text, word study, writing that supported reading and application of skills and

strategies to new material. Through intervention techniques students built confidence and viewed themselves as readers and writers (Bredekamp, 1993). A few examples of successful programs included; Reading Recovery, Book Buddies and Early Interventions in Reading.

The Impact of an Early Literacy Intervention

Children learned to read and write at the start of their schooling. When children had difficulty with the learning process the goal became daunting. Evidence suggested that children who experienced these difficulties fell further and further behind their peers as time went on.

The Prevention of Reading Difficulties

The ultimate goal of reading instruction was to help children acquire all the skills necessary to comprehend the meaning of text in its many forms and genres. To be able to do so a child must have: 1) general language comprehension skills, and 2) the ability to accurately and fluently identify the individual words in print. Knowledge and active application of specific reading strategies were helpful to maximize reading comprehension (Borsa, 1997). Most of the variability among children and adults in comprehension was accounted for by measuring the skills of good general language comprehension and good word reading skills.

A critical problem for most children who experienced reading difficulties involved early and continuing problems in acquiring accurate and fluent word identification skills. A typical poor reader in third or fourth grade showed two kinds of word level reading difficulties; a reliance on guessing the word based on the context, and encountering many more words in grade level text than they could read “by sight”. Children destined to be poor readers in the upper grades almost invariably had difficulties understanding and applying the alphabetic principle in

deciphering unfamiliar words. Difficulties in developing good analytic strategies for identifying unknown words made it difficult for them to read independently, and produced far too many word reading errors. Failure to acquire good phonemic decoding skills affected the development of fluent word reading ability, which depended heavily on learning to identify a large number of words “by sight” (Bredenkamp, 1992). Words did not become “sight words” until read accurately a number of times. Both inaccurate reading and diminished reading practice caused slow growth of fluent word identification skills.

The most common cause of children’s early difficulties in acquiring accurate and fluent word recognition skills involved individual differences in phonological knowledge and skill.

Summary

The researcher described three broad ways that instruction for children who were at-risk for reading failure needed to be different from the instruction that was typically provided to all children in the classroom. Insuring that all three of these elements were part of the instruction for most at-risk children represented an enormous challenge for schools. The requirement for more explicit and supportive instruction demanded a higher level of training and skill for teachers than was usually provided at present (Bracey, 1994). The requirement for more intensive instruction for at-risk children involved a reallocation of resources to make more teacher time available for preventive instruction, and in many cases it required entirely new resources to adequately meet the instructional needs of all children who were at-risk for reading failure.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The researcher explored the relationship between kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge achievement and the instructional approach of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach as measured by the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge list pre-test in September and the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge list post-test in January of the same school year. The researcher trained in the Daily 5 Literacy Approach in August and met weekly with the second kindergarten teacher to discuss mini-lessons and strategies for the upcoming week. The researcher reflected on the effectiveness of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach and concurred with the other kindergarten teacher as to the potential effectiveness of using that approach.

Methodology

The experimental and descriptive study was conducted in one kindergarten classroom in a parochial school in eastern Washington (Gay, 2006). The researcher gathered the descriptive data from the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test in September and the post-test in January of the same school year.

Participants

The study compared kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge gains using the instructional strategies presented in the Daily 5 Literacy Approach. The study was done in a parochial school in a rural community in eastern Washington. The school consisted of 178 students from preschool through 8th grade and approximately 30 staff members. The ethnic

backgrounds of the students were represented by Hispanic, Caucasian and a small percent Filipino. The socio-economic levels of the school families varied widely from one family to the next. All students had to pay tuition to attend the school; financial assistance was available to families who qualified for assistance. The school did not provide free or reduced lunches or breakfasts to any of the students. Students did have the option to purchase a hot lunch once a week on Fridays. The study began September 2007 and was completed in January of 2008 of the same school year.

The school had two kindergarten classes with a total of 35 kindergarteners; only the 17 students from the one kindergarten class were used in the study. Eight of the students were Hispanic, four students were Caucasian, and five students were multi-racial. One student was monolingual Spanish; two students were English Language Learners, and the other kindergarteners were monolingual English students. The students represented a wide range of socio-economic levels. Most of the students lived with the father and mother. All of the students had to pass the school's kindergarten entrance assessment. None of the students were evaluated for any learning disabilities. The Open Court Reading and Phonics curriculum was used and supplemented in each kindergarten classroom.

Instruments

The researcher used the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge list in the project. The kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge list was designed for students in kindergarten and represented the 40 most frequently used words in pre-primer and early emergent readers. The students were asked to read and identify as many High Frequency words with two or three

phonemes as possible during the assessment. The students' answers were recorded and given a score based on how many High Frequency words were correctly identified.

Design

The kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test was given to the students the fourth week of September. In January, the researcher used the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge post-test to measure the kindergarteners' word knowledge achievement.

Procedure

All 17 kindergarten students were given the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test on the fourth week of September, 2007. All of the students from the group were tested on Wednesday of that week. The students were all tested by the researcher to maintain the testing environment. The students were tested individually outside of the classroom facing away from potential distractions. The students were tested within 90 minutes during the morning literacy block to assure that the students were given similar testing environments.

In September, the parents were invited to the Back to School Night provided by the school to receive information about the kindergarten curriculum, how the school day was scheduled, and academic activities to use at home with a kindergartener.

Students were given the kindergarten High Frequency words on flashcards to use with the academic activities demonstrated at Back to School Night. Students were also given the High Frequency words in their monthly homework packets with a variety of strategies and activities to reinforce learning.

The kindergarten classroom used the Daily 5 Literacy Approach during the 90 minute literacy block each morning. Four of the five strategies, Read to Self, Read to Someone, Work on Writing and Word Work, were introduced through mini-lessons and modeled by the students. The four strategies were modeled and practiced daily for the first 45 minutes of the school day. Then students were able to continue to practice these strategies as the class transitioned to literacy centers and small reading groups. The kindergarten students were divided into groups of three or four students (five groups per classroom) according to the students' ability to recognize both letters and sounds. Students rotated through three centers and spent 10-15 minutes at each center. The students had access to resources to perform each center task at the appropriate level. A classroom aide helped students maintain a level of working independence and also worked with students on specific spelling or phonetic skills. The literacy centers were made up of a writing task, a read task, and a word working task. The researcher worked with small groups on reading instruction, letter knowledge and sound knowledge within small groups. The researcher monitored the students' progress and gave letter knowledge, sound knowledge, high frequency word knowledge, number knowledge, and shape knowledge assessments once a month while students worked at the centers.

Treatment of the Data

In January, the researcher used the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge post-test to measure the kindergarten High Frequency word achievement. The post-test was given by the researcher and all students were tested on the same morning in the same environment with few distractions. The results from the pre-tests and post-tests were compiled, tabulated, and

presented in a table (Table 1). The table identified individual students, the scores received out of a possible 30 words on the pre-test, and the scores received out of a possible 30 words on the post-test.

Summary

Kindergarten students were given the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test in September of 2007. All of the kindergarten students received instruction based on the Daily 5 Literacy Approach throughout the school year. Most of the parents attended the Back to School Night and received helpful information on how to help their children with High Frequency word knowledge retention. Throughout the school year the kindergarten students were instructed and given time to practice and model the desired literacy techniques needed to acquire High Frequency word knowledge. In January, the students were given the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge post-test. The students' post-test scores were compared to the pre-test scores. The scores were presented in a table and the use of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach was evaluated based on these results.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The researcher explored the relationship between the Daily 5 Literacy Approach, and kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge achievement as measured by the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test given in September and the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge post-test given in January of the same school year. The researcher attended the Daily 5 literacy approach workshop with a fellow colleague and sought guidance from other teachers trained in the approach throughout the study. The researcher reflected on the effectiveness of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach at the conclusion of the study.

Description of the Environment

The study examined the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge gains made from September 2007 to January of the same school year. The study was done in a parochial school in an urban community in eastern Washington. The school consisted of 178 students from preschool through 8th grade and approximately 30 staff members. The students in the study consisted of eight Hispanic, five Caucasian and four multi-racial. The students in the study represented several socio-economic levels. All of the students had to pay tuition to attend the school; financial assistance was provided to families who needed assistance. The school did not provide free or reduced lunches or breakfasts to any of the students. Students did have the option to purchase a hot lunch once a week on Fridays. The study began September 2007 and was completed in January 2007 of the same school year. The school had two kindergarten classes

with a total of 35 kindergarteners; the 17 students from one kindergarten were used in the study. Most of the students lived with both the father and the mother. All students had to pass the kindergarten entrance assessment to enter kindergarten. None of the kindergarten students were special education students. The Open Court Reading and Phonics curriculum was used and supplemented in the kindergarten classroom.

Research Question

Kindergarten students should make significant achievement on high frequency word knowledge using the Daily 5 Literacy Approach as measured by the Dolch High Frequency word knowledge list.

Results of the Study

The researcher assigned each student a number for the purpose of displaying the pre-test and post-test scores in a table. The researcher listed the students' pre-test scores first and in a second column listed the post-test scores. The pre-test scores were attained in September 2007 and the post-test scores were attained in January of that same school year. Student 4 in the table scored 0/30 on the September pre-test and 25/30 on the January post-test. This one student showed an impressive word knowledge gain supported by the Daily 5 Literacy Approach.

Table 1

Student	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score
1	2/30	27/30
2	5/30	29/30
3	3/30	27/30
4	0/30	25/30
5	3/30	29/30
6	3/30	30/30
7	8/30	30/30
8	5/30	28/30
9	6/30	30/30
10	3/30	28/30
11	5/30	29/30
12	3/30	27/30
13	2/30	26/30
14	7/30	30/30
15	2/30	29/30
16	5/30	29/30
17	3/30	30/30

Findings

The results of study indicated the students did make gains in their High Frequency word knowledge achievement. In September the teacher provided the parents with information on the Daily 5 Literacy Approach, resources and strategies to use at home with their child. The teacher reiterated these strategies to parents during fall conferences in November and asked for feedback from parents regarding the approach and home strategies. Most of the parents shared that they were using the Daily 5 strategies and the academic activities provided by the teacher in September. The results of the kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge post-test indicated that the Daily 5 Literacy Approach was an effective instructional approach to teach High Frequency word knowledge.

Discussion

The results indicated that the Daily 5 Literacy Approach was an effective method to instruct students in High Frequency word knowledge. All of the students were using some of the Daily 5 strategies to help reinforce High Frequency word knowledge skills. The researcher noticed that some students did not return monthly homework packets and could not accurately measure if the High Frequency flashcards provided were being used. Parents were provided with the initial introduction to the strategies and activities in September and the researcher followed up with parents at November conferences as to the use of the strategies and activities. There was no attempt to prove or disprove whether parental efforts were beneficial to students' achievement.

Summary

Students in the kindergarten classroom in this study made gains in regards to High Frequency word knowledge achievement based on the pre and post-test High Frequency word knowledge scores using the Daily 5 Literacy Approach.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The researcher reached conclusions and recommendations based on the increase in High Frequency word knowledge as measured by the post-test. The researcher discussed recommendations based on significance of the post-test data.

Summary

The purpose of the project was to examine if kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge would increase using the Daily 5 Literacy Approach and if, in fact, the approach was a valuable teaching model. The researcher predicted kindergarten students would show a relationship between literacy skill benchmarks and the use of the Daily 5 Literacy Approach to instruction of these skills. The pre-test and post-test scores demonstrated how kindergarten students all made significant word knowledge gains from September to January of that same school year.

The Daily 5 Literacy Approach offered five strategies, of which three were used in this project, to increase literacy skills through reading and writing activities. The first strategy modeled independent reading, or read-to-self. The student used a box filled with leveled readers to practice reading the pictures, reading the words, or re-telling the story. The second strategy modeled comprehension and fluency, or read-to-someone. Students modeled how to choose a partner, how to choose a book and how to read the book to someone. The third strategy modeled writing high frequency words, or work-on-writing. Students independently choose high

frequency word rings, mini-offices, which provided high frequency words, pocket charts displaying high frequency words in the form of poems and predictable texts, or books provided in the students' book boxes to practice writing skills.

The kindergarten High Frequency word knowledge pre-test and post-test scores were used to support the researcher's prediction that the Daily 5 Literacy Approach would increase High Frequency word knowledge at the kindergarten grade level. The post-test scores showed an increase in High Frequency word knowledge ability.

Conclusions

After the post-test scores were recorded, the researcher found that all 17 students had made significant gains in their High Frequency word knowledge abilities. The kindergarten students involved in the project supported the researcher's prediction that an effective literacy approach would increase students' word knowledge abilities.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researcher understands how the use of an effective literacy approach can benefit students at the early grade levels. The researcher believes that students at all primary grade levels would benefit from the use of this program. The Daily 5 Literacy Approach has shown to be a well-rounded approach to reading and writing skills for the kindergarten students in this study. The researcher believes that the results would be similar if the program were used with the new class of kindergartners next fall.

To replicate the study, there would need to be some similarities between the children in this study and children in a new study in terms of ethnicity, environment, age of students, and

number of students. In addition, the procedure used by the researcher would need to be replicated.

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