

Heritage University Special Project Permission to Conduct Research

Permission has been given for

Oksu Ellis _____

By

Alissa DeSart, (Principal of Sherwood Forest Elementary)

to conduct an action research project as part of the Heritage University Masters Degree Program entitled

Using 1:1 Time in Small Groups.

The Hypothesis of this study is: **Using 1:1 time in small groups is effective for student learning and confidence**

The results of the study will be shared with the Principal and other building departments as appropriate.

Signature



Alissa DeSart

February 4, 2016

APPENDIX

Survey Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. After the test I felt:



2. The test was easy.



3. This test was easier than the last time.



4. The math was easier than the last time.



5. The reading was easier than the last time.



6. I like one on one time with teacher.



7. I like group time with teacher.



8. When I have one on one with teacher I understand:



9. When I have in my small group I understand:



10. Since the beginning of the year I enjoy math:



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considering intensive individual instruction for severe cases. While the initial review of this material seemed to support the hypothesis—that infusing small group instruction with 1:1 instruction times—the data did not support that application. Instead, the Action Research Project results proved inconclusive. This author concluded that the results, especially from the student surveys, mildly supported the null hypothesis—that multilevel instruction within small groups could be most effective, both in helping students improve their test scores, and in building confidence and enjoyment in their studies.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Special Education Resource Room teachers do their best to group students according to ability, and to avoid mismatching ability. This writer is planning next year's groups, so that they are mostly in 30-minute sessions, so that there are more groups, and ability-matching will be easier. Previously, there were a number of sessions that went longer, thus limiting the ability to match students by ability. When a student is mismatched in a small group, the teacher would seem to do best by keeping the group cohesive, and engaging in multilevel instruction. At the same time, since this project used a very small study pool, and there is some question about the appropriateness of using instruments that include frowny faces and straight faces with young students

from a Resource Room. In chapter two, literature was considered relevant to legal matters in Special Education, the importance of individualized instruction, strategies for reading and math groups, and the use and analysis of STAR testing (the instrument upon which this research would be based). Next, the approaches used for the Action Research aspect of this project were described. Students were given a post-project assessment, asking them to reflect on how easy they found subjects and testing, and how much they enjoyed small groups and 1:1 instruction. In chapter four the results were presented. The null hypothesis could not be rejected, and this author concluded that she would use multilevel instruction within small groups, when in a Resource Room setting. Though the testing was inconclusive, this approach did garner mildly superior testing results. Perhaps more important—the students appeared to enjoy the instruction more, and to believe that they were learning better.

Conclusions

The literature reviewed for this project emphasized the importance of individualized instruction. The liability schools and districts face is significant, if they do not provide for a student's individual needs, especially if the reasons given related to scheduling and convenience concerns. Strategies for individualizing included: scaffolding questions, differentiating work, and

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topic: (a) introduction, (b) summary, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations. The purpose of this project was to determine whether or not infusing small group instruction time with some 1:1 instruction, as a means of individualizing instruction, especially for students who were somewhat mismatched in ability with their peers. The project reviewed relevant literature concerning special education, individualized instruction, Legal concerns, and strategies for reading and math groups. Then data and results from the project research, based upon a pool of seven students receiving Resource Room Support at Sherwood Forest Elementary School, within the Federal Way Public Schools (Washington State), were presented, and analysis was offered.

Summary

This project began with a description of a problem—that individual students were sometimes mismatched when placed in ability-grouped reading and math groups. A hypothesis was offered, that it might have proved effective to infuse small-group instruction with some 1:1 instruction, when such a mismatch was discovered. The research project involved seven students who received services

The data did not reject the null hypothesis. In retrospect, this writer could cautiously support it. Nevertheless, of necessity, the significance of this project's findings was quite limited. The study pool was small, with only seven students. Additionally, there may have been some psychological influence, in that young students, with significant learning issues, may have been hesitant to select frowny face, or even neutral, straight-faced icons. Thus, while this writer has decided to revert to multilevel instruction, when faced with no options for placing a mismatched-ability student with a more appropriate group, others may want to research this matter in a more intensive manner.

Summary

This chapter was designed to analyze the data and identify the findings. From the data, the hypothesis was not supported, and the Null Hypothesis could not be rejected. Chapter 5 will summarize the study, draw conclusions, and make recommendations. It will detail why the null hypothesis was supported, while the hypothesis was not. It will review the pertinent research and data, and then offer recommendations.

when they offer whole group instruction (Vaughn, Moody, & Schumm, 1998). Once again, though, Resource Room Teachers have been trained and driven towards providing individualized instruction. Their “whole groups” have usually consisted of only two to five students. Thus, in retrospect, it would seem that this project may have been attempting to solve a general education phenomenon that is not so common in the SPED setting. Finally, Price and Cole made two recommendations that seemed to support the hypothesis, but, in hindsight, may have bolstered the *status quo* that exists in most Resource Rooms. They said first that in severe cases of Learning Disability, effective instruction was intensive. They defined this as instruction that is at least one-hour a day. Considering this writer’s case load, 90% of the students received Resource Room support for at least one-hour a day. Additionally, about 10% of this writer’s case load received scheduled 1:1 time. Price and Cole’s second recommendation was to insist that SPED instruction be individualized—that “one size does not fit all.” Individualized instruction has not had to be 1:1, however. This project demonstrated that it could be as effective to empower students in becoming members of a small, cohesive group, tasked with intensive learning of remedial subject matter. They fit in, even if their ability level was not the same as their peers, because their group was small, and, no matter what, they were all “behind.”

instruction in reading or math. The subjects did not report to a significant degree that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times. Additionally, since the subjects expressed, to a moderate degree, greater confidence without 1:1 time infused into their small group instruction time. Thus it cannot be supported that that ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who received individualized instruction in reading or math scored higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who received multilevel instruction in reading or math. Students who received individualized instruction in reading or math did not report to a great enough degree that taking the STAR test felt significantly easier than previous times.

Discussion

This study did not fit with expectations. Much of the research cited in this project emphasized the value of individualizing instruction for those with IEPs—especially if they are also ELL students. Wrightslaw.com heightened this understanding, by suggesting that schools and districts have been held liable for their failures in this arena. Concerning the hypothesis, however, it turned out that offering individualized instruction within the small group, resource room setting could not be supported as a significant help by this research. Part of what drove the hypothesis was the longstanding problem of teachers failing to differentiate

(2.86, see figure 7). Furthermore, the students reported only the most modest levels of confidence towards the STAR test, following the treatment. Overall, all of the students reported feeling neutral towards the question “The test was easy.” (2.0, see figure 2). While they did report that the test was generally easier than previously (2.71, see figure 3), concerning specific subjects, the confidence was less significant. There was an even number who reported feeling the math test was easier than last time versus those who felt neutral towards the statement. Also, one student circled the frowny face on this question. (2.29, see figure 4). Students reported greater confidence on the reading section (2.71, see figure 5). Finally, students reported understanding instruction better in small group (2.86, see figure 7) than they did during 1:1 instruction time (2.43, see figure 8). Concerning actual testing results, student STAR testing scores progressed somewhat more rapidly during the term without treatment than during the term in which students received treatment. There may be mitigating circumstances, such as easier material during the non-treatment period. Thus, while the null hypothesis could not be rejected, neither could the hypothesis be supported. It could not be disproven that ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who received multilevel instruction in reading or math scored higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who received individualized

Figure 10 depicts the answers to the statement, “From the beginning of the year I enjoy math,” three students chose the smiley face. Three students chose the neutral face, and one chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.29.

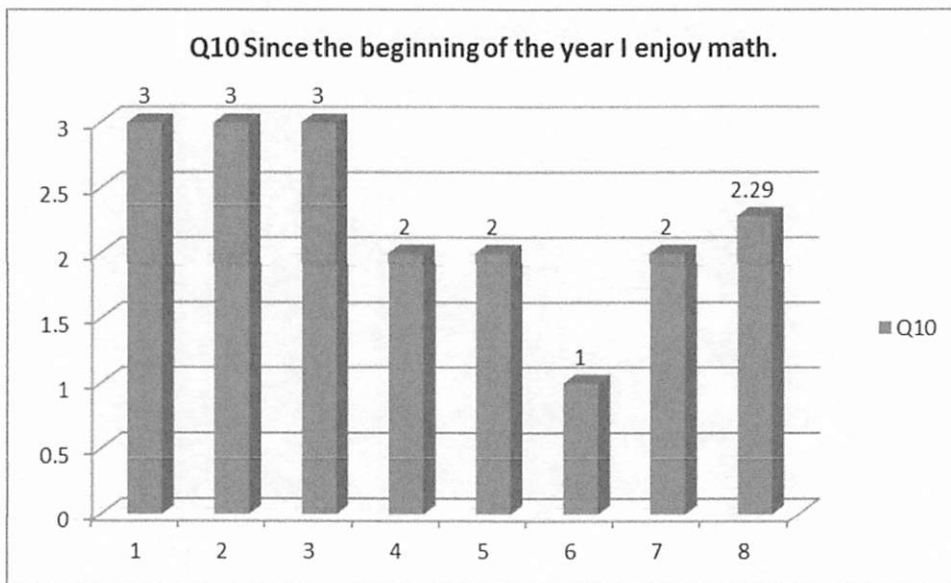


Figure 10

Findings

Given the analysis of the data and the testing of the null hypothesis a limited number of findings became apparent. First, while students reported some level of satisfaction with 1:1 instruction, during small group instruction time (2.57, see figure 6), they reported even more satisfaction with the small group time itself

Figure 9 depicts the responses to the statement, “When I have one on one with the group I understand,” six students chose the smiley face. One student chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frown face. The mean score was 2.86.

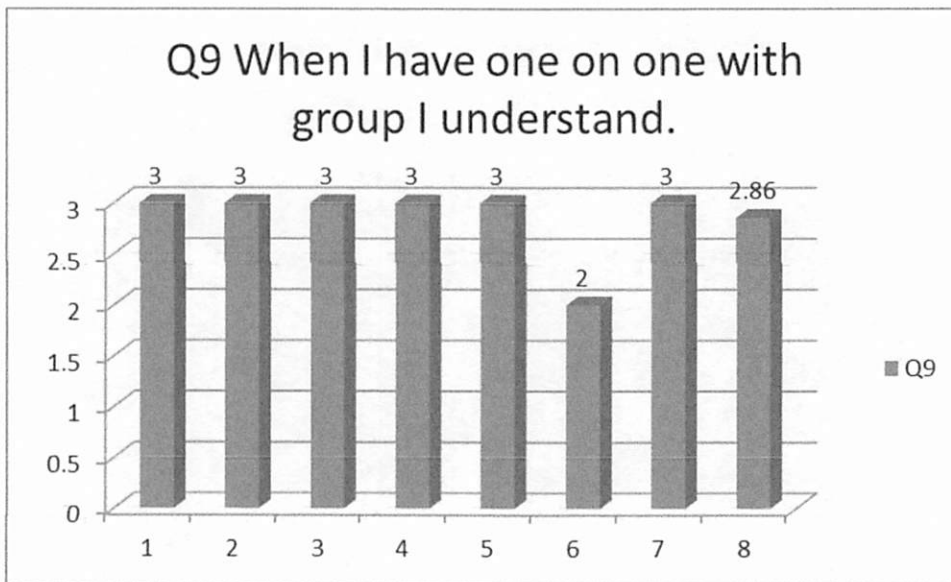


Figure 9

Figure 8 depicts the responses to the statement, “When I have one on one with teacher I understand.” Three students chose the smiley face. Four students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.43.

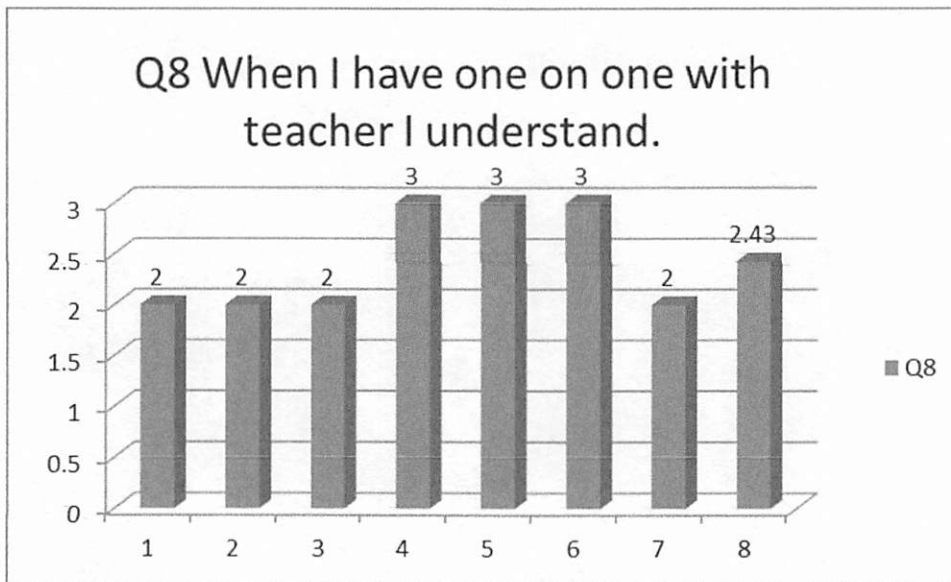


Figure 8

Figure 7 depicts the responses to the statement, “I like group time with teacher,” six students chose the smiley face. One student chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.86.

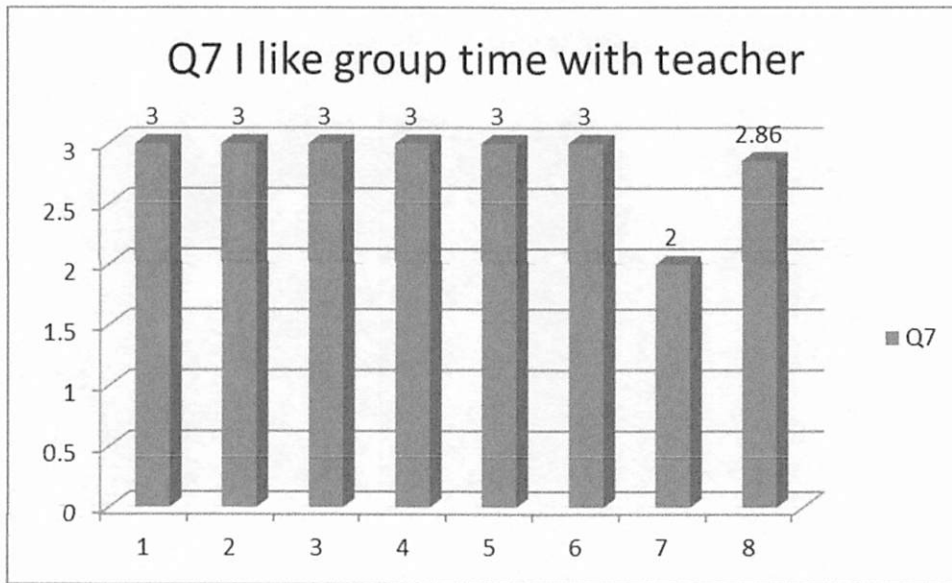


Figure 7

Figure 6 depicts the responses to the statement, "I like one on one time with teacher." Four students chose the smiley face. Three students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.57.

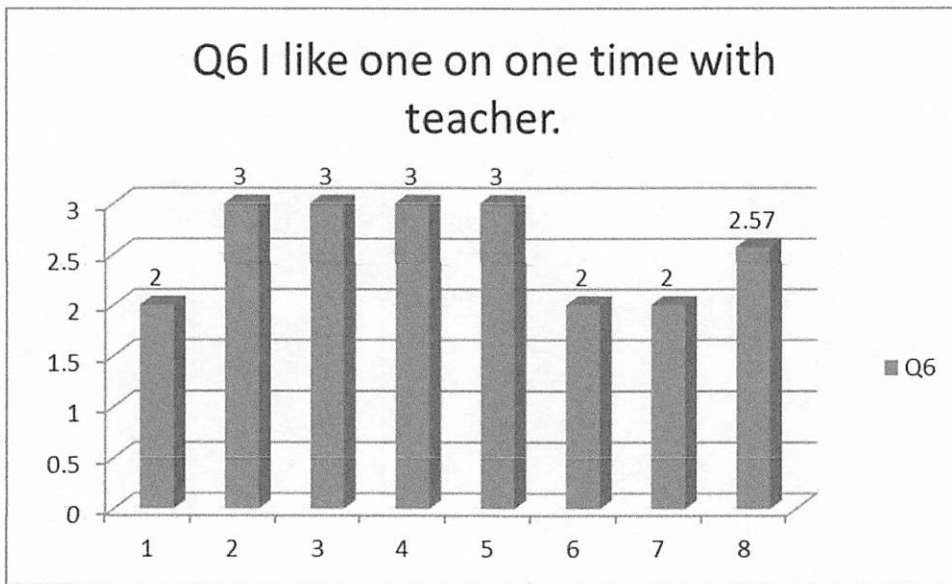


Figure 6

Figure 5 depicts the responses to the statement, “The reading was easier than last time,” five students chose the smiley face. Two students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.71.

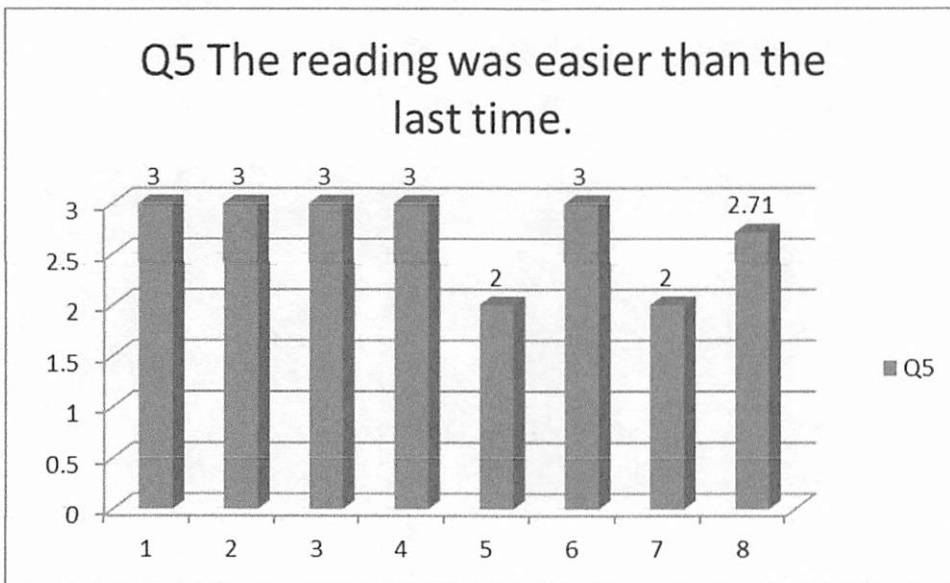


Figure 5

Figure 4 depicts the responses to the statement "The math was easier than the last time," three students chose the smiley face. Three students chose the neutral face, and one chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.29.

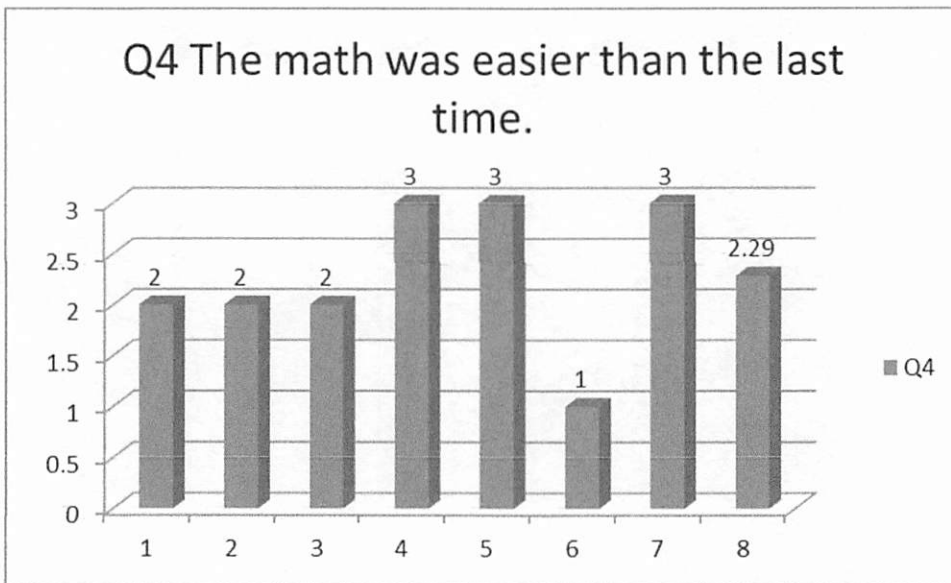


Figure 4

Figure three depicts the responses to the statement "The test was easier than the last time." Five students chose the smiley face. Two students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.71.

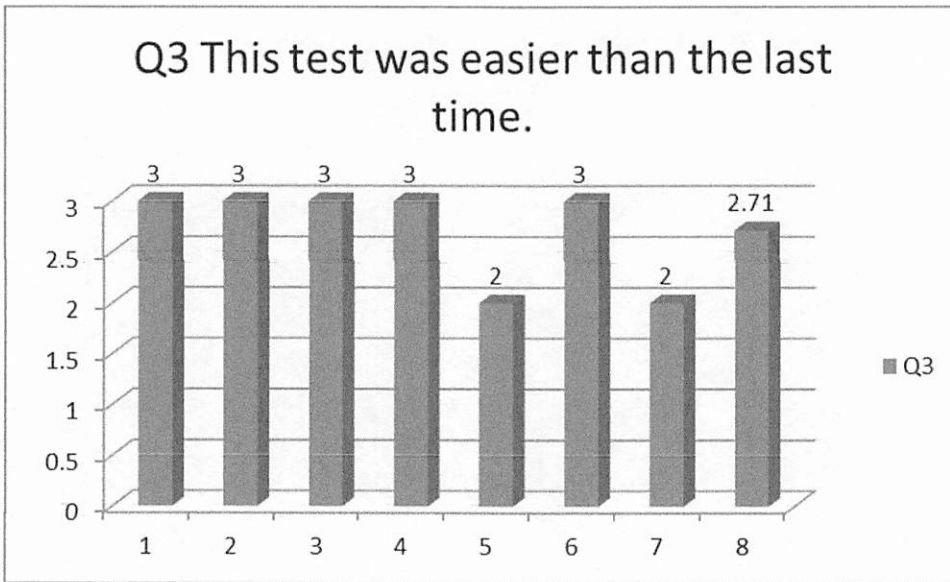


Figure 3

Figure 2 depicts the responses to the statement “The test was easy,” zero students chose the smiley face. All seven students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 2.0.

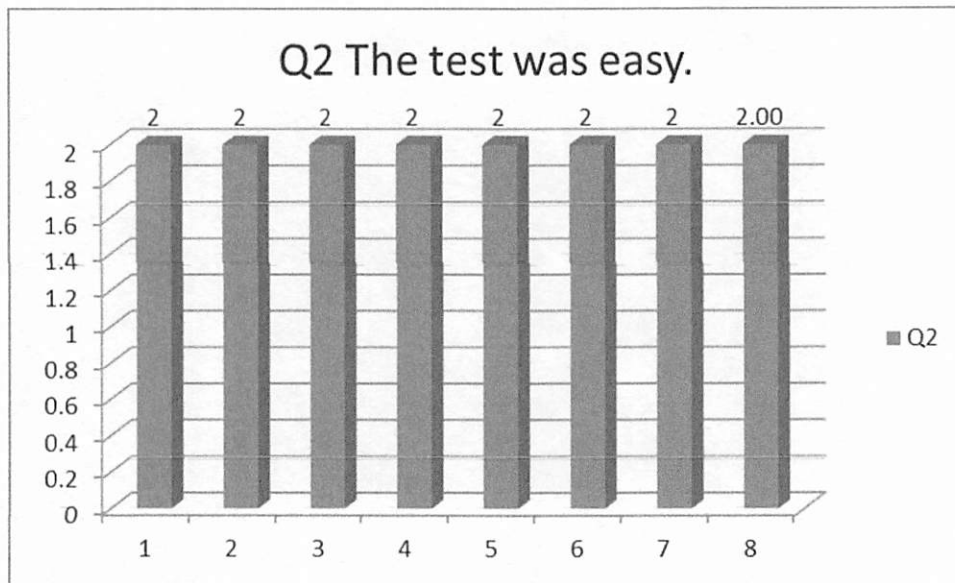


Figure 2

Figure one depicts the responses to the statement, “After the test I felt...” All seven students chose the smiley face. Zero students chose the neutral face, and zero chose the frowny face. The mean score was 3.0.

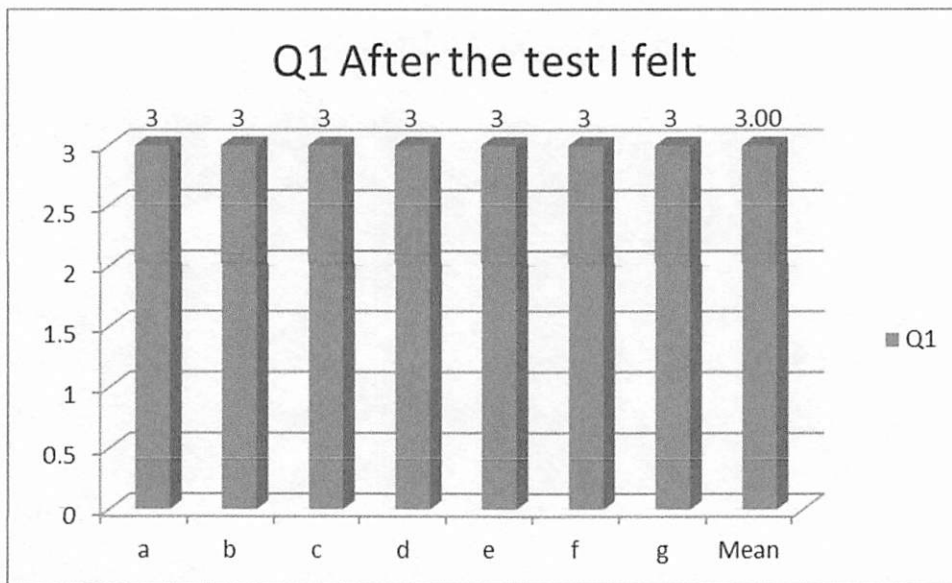


Figure1

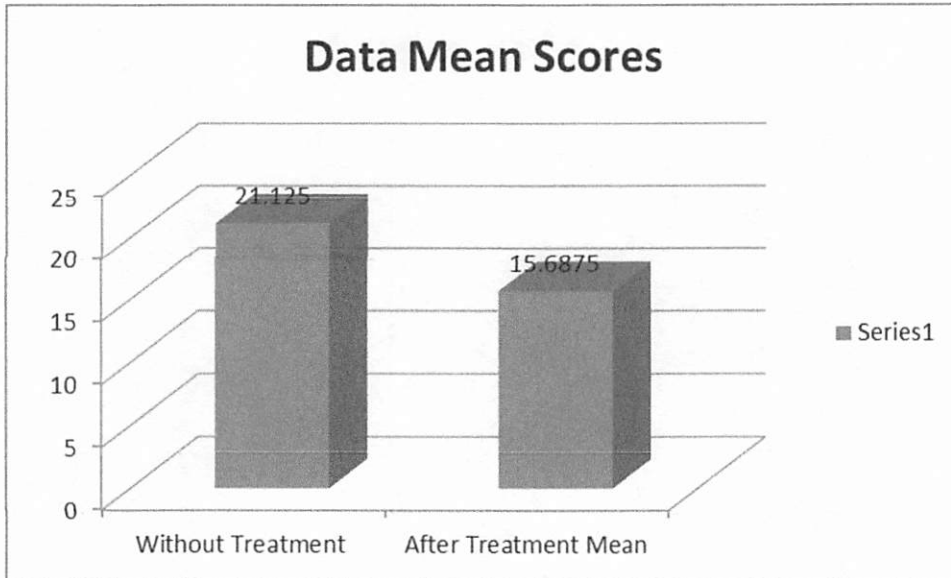


Figure a

A survey to answer the hypothesis, “Students who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.”

Results of the Study

Using the statistical calculator program Stat Pak, a statistical t-Test, was performed to determine whether there was significance of the hypothesis (ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who receive multilevel instruction in reading or math. Students who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times). The researcher used a dependent t-Test.

The results of the dependent t-Test showed the number of scores was 7. The mean score was 34.71. The t-value was 1.85, with the degree of freedom of 6. To show significance at $P=.05$ a t-value of 2.447, with the degree of freedom of 6 was required. The results showed that the null hypothesis could not be rejected and the hypothesis could not be supported.

The mean scores for the t-Test showed growth between the pre and post scores. This was consistent with the t-Test results.

treatment—that is, students who were significantly above or below their small group level received 1:1 instruction during the small group time. The subjects received the STAR test for reading or math at the end of the treatment project, in May. At the end the subjects were surveyed about the experience.

Hypothesis

ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who receive multilevel instruction in reading or math. Students who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.

Null Hypothesis

ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who receive multilevel instruction in reading or math will score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will not report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.

using Excel Spreadsheets and STAT PAC. Conclusions were shared with the researcher's administrator so they could plan about effective teaching strategies for future multilevel small groups. The analysis of data and findings from this study are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

Chapter 4 has been organized around the following topics: (a) description of environment, (b) hypothesis, (c) results of the study, (d) findings, and (e) summary. This section provides a paraphrased statement of the research concern which the study has addressed.

Description of the Environment

The study took place among seven subjects, being serviced by the Resource Room at Sherwood Forest Elementary School, in Federal Way, WA. All of the students were at least two years behind in reading or math. During September through December the subjects received multilevel instruction in their small groups. They were given the STAR test for reading or math at the beginning and ending of the period. From January through May the subjects received the project

The standardized assessment scores were compiled. Then they were compared for rate of progression during the whole-group instruction period (first half of the research project) and the individualized instruction period (the latter half).

A conclusion was drawn regarding the effectiveness of individualized instruction. The researcher analyzed the results and consulted with her administrator regarding future instruction strategies based upon the research conclusions.

Treatment of Data

Pre and post-post data was gathered. The scale of the survey was pictorial: happy, neutral and frowny faces. Surveys were gathered and compiled. Then the researcher used MS Excel and Spreadsheet to create graphs and to analyze the feedback results. To analyze the standardized testing results for rate of progress, the STAT PAC was used. Finally the research was shared with the Principal at Sherwood Forest Elementary School in Federal Way, WA.

Summary

This chapter was designed to review the methodology and treatment of data related to the effectiveness of using individualized instruction within multilevel small groups. A Quasi Experiment approach was used, and both pre and post-test standardized instruments and surveys were employed. The results were analyzed

During the second half of the research individualized instruction was used. From January 2016 through May 2016 participants received individualized instruction for a portion of each group session time.

A survey was prepared for participants. The questions related directly to the research questions and the instruction the student's received.

Towards the end of the second half of the research project participants received another survey. They were asked about their feelings towards reading or math.

The targeted students were given another assessment towards the end of the study. In May of 2016 they were given the same STAR Math and Reading Assessments they had previously.

All three of the STAR tests were scored. Then they were shared with students, staff and administration.

The surveys were totaled. Then, they were shared with the staff and administration.

The targeted students were given standardized assessments for reading or math, or both, before the study began, in September of 2015. The test used was the STAR Reading and Math Assessments.

A total of three groups were formed for this project. Two reading groups and one math group were used, based primarily on their IEP goals and general education classroom schedule.

A crucial element of this project was the reading and math levels of the participants. In each of the three groups the participants had different levels.

The teacher gave multilevel instruction, using the same content within each group, to the students for the first half of the study. This meant the teacher used whole group instruction.

Participants were given multilevel instruction, using the same content within each group, during the first half of the study. Again, whole group instruction was used.

In January of 2016 the participants received a second assessment. As happened on the first occasion, the STAR Math and Reading Assessments was employed.

well-recognized, widely-used standardized testing device. The survey questions and the instrument's delivery method were vetted by a subject matter expert in educational research, thus assuring the maximum validity possible, given the limited scope of the research. The scale of the survey was happy, neutral and frowny face.

Design

The researcher of this study used the pre and post-test design in addition to a survey design. . The scale of the survey was pictorial: happy, neutral and frowny faces. The purpose of the survey was to determine if students who received individualized instruction in reading or math would report that taking the STAR test felt easier than during previous times.

Procedure

Permission for the research project was granted by Alisa DeSart. She was the principal of Sherwood Forest Elementary School, in the Federal Way Public Schools district, in Federal Way, Washington.

A review of literature was conducted for this project using four sources. These were the Federal Way Public Schools district, Highline College, Heritage University, and by employing internet search engines.

As a result, the experiment was labeled Quasi-Experimental. (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2012). The researcher employed Action Research because the desired experiment was a systematic inquiry, conducted by a teacher, meant to gather information about two different approaches to teaching diverse-ability small groups. Thus, the effort fits the definition for Action Research.

Participants

The researcher utilized two reading groups and one math group, in a resource room setting, at Sherwood Forest Elementary School, in the Federal Way Public Schools District, located in Federal way, Washington. The project was conducted during the 2015-2016 school year. In the beginning of the research eight students participated in the study and seven remained through the end of the study. The study analyzed the seven students who remained for the research project cycle. Three female and four male students were in the group. Students who participated in this study were in grades third, fourth and fifth.

Instruments

The data devices that were used were STAR reading and math pretest and posttest, and a survey. The instruments used were a STAT PAC (used to determine the significance of data results) and Microsoft Excel (used to create a spreadsheet, graphs and charts). The STAR tests were valid because they are a

given the repeated academic, practical, and legal recommendations for individual accommodation, the proposal of this paper that teachers would have done well to infuse small group instruction with a 1:1 component seemed to be affirmed.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of the Data

Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topics: (a) Methodology, (b) Participants, (c) Instruments, (d) Design, (e) Procedure, (f) Treatment of the Data, (g) Summary.

Methodology

The researcher determined that the best approach to the experiment was to employ Action Research, and the method available for this study was the Quasi-Experimental Method. The True Experimental Method called for the use of random subjects in each test group. However, the setting of this experiment was within a specific educational setting, and the subjects were the researcher's students. The pool of potential participants was so small that there was no way to assign the groups randomly. The difficulty was compounded by the configuration of the researcher's subjects in small groups, as opposed to large classroom groups.

following up by assuring that the student received instruction appropriate to his/her individual needs. One size has not fit all, the site insisted.

For math instruction, Kulik insisted that students did best in ability groups, matched to their levels (2001). Buamgardner reiterated that learning math concepts was difficult enough for typically-developed adults. It would have been so how much more challenging for those with SPED designations. The recommendation was for a high level of instruction and direction in the earlier stages of learning new math concepts.

Finally, for individualized instruction, there were several authors who pointed towards 1:1 instruction as a solution for those students who may have been performing above or below their groups. Kulik referenced Vlygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, saying each child ought to have been taught at a level just above their current level. Price and Cole insisted that instruction for students with LD ought to have been especially intensive, with much opportunity for individualized learning. To conclude, VanderHeyden urged that for those few students who were at the most remedial level 1:1 instruction was called for. Throughout the various categories the need for individualization has been highlighted. Resource Rooms have not been staffed to offer 100% 1:1 instruction and tutoring. Their standard environment has been the small group. However,

SPED small group instruction with some individualized teaching could have made the case for a SPED designation more compelling.

Once a student has been designated for SPED instruction, many teachers have relied on available standardized tests used for typically developing students, such as the STAR test. Jefferson School District (Tracy, CA, nd) reminded its teachers to adjust goals individually, rather than accepting default settings. This simple example of common practice highlighted, yet again, the need for individualization in SPED instruction. The University of Chicago (nd) confirmed the need for individual and specialized instruction, in part, in that it suggested the use of pre-teaching to prepare SPED students for their standardized testing.

In reading groups teachers were encouraged to make their small groups flexible and creative—so students could feel more confident. (Worthy & Hoffman, 1996) Further, students with LD learned best when given individualized, rather than group, instruction. (Brady & Moats, 1997) Similarly, Concordia University (2016) recommended that small groups blend the basics—delivered to the whole group—with specialized instruction, tailored to each participant. Wrightslaw.com drove this point home when it stated that districts have gotten in trouble for assigning students to a SPED environment, but not

There was an important caution for those who taught multilevel groups. Teachers should have been alert, so they did not settle for more rudimentary work than their students were able to produce. (Peterson, Hittie, and Tamor 2002) It was easy to be relieved at the success of the weakest student. However, the student who was more capable may not have been given the optimal challenge.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to address the available evidence for the topics of a) ELL and SPED Law and Requirement, (b) Star Testing and ELL Students, (c) Best Practices for Reading Group, (d) Best Practices for Math Group, (e) Individualized Instruction , (f) Multilevel Instruction and Small Group Composition. Repeatedly the research indicated the legal necessity, instructional effectiveness, and positive results of building into small group instruction time for individualized teaching, when there was a student significantly ahead or behind the rest of the group.

Under ELL and SPED law and requirements the importance of preventing misdiagnosis for SPED qualification—especially when the real issue was limited English proficiency—was highlighted. (Capell 2011) Additionally, when determining need, assessors should have weighed the advantages of SPED instruction against the loss of exposure to general education instruction. Infusing

intervention math deficits were often made up. However, the warning was that without this support, since math has tended to be so procedural, and skills have been built on one another, the results of delaying assistance would have been devastating. Therefore, if a student in a Resource Room small group, who already had an IEP, was struggling, the need for individualized and intensive instruction would have seemed self-evident. (VanderHeyden and Alsopp, nd)

Hanover Research determined that early intervention to remediate math difficulties could have prevented future difficulties that would have only compounded. Additionally, the paper recommended instruction that was systematic. This combination of findings suggested that having struggling students who continued with the systematic group instruction, and then supplemented the learning with added instruction that further broke down instruction, only made sense. (Hanover Research, August 2014)

Multilevel Instruction and Small Group Composition

According to Peterson, Hittie and Tamor (2002) authentic multilevel instruction has meant that students' lessons were such that they worked right at their ability level. At the same time, they were pushed at their zone of proximal development, so they achieved optimal learning.

could then scaffold the lesson for the students until they operated independently. How could they do this if a student was in a small group that was significantly ahead or behind his/her level? One method of ensuring that this zone of proximal development was met would have been to build some individualized instruction into each lesson—at least for the student who was out of step with the others.

Price and Cole (2009) made two recommendations relevant to this project. First, effective instruction with LD was intensive instruction, which referred to the amount of time and opportunity for individualized learning. Specifically, they suggested that, in severe cases, the student may have needed an hour a day of instruction, or more. Also, they argued that instruction should fit the individual needs of each student. There was not “one size fits all” approach. Again, if so, when a small group had a student who was significantly behind, or ahead, of the group, that student may have needed individualized instruction. If the student was ahead, s/he would have needed added enrichment or challenge. If the student was struggling, then added instruction, with the steps to learning broken down, or scaffolded, would have seemed appropriate. (Price and Cole, 2009)

VanderHeyden and Alsopp (n.d.) argued that when there were only a small number of students who were working at the most remedial level 1:1 instruction would have been called for. She further offered the hope that with early

that 58% could not calculate a 10% tip on a lunch bill. If typically developing adults could not complete these everyday math tasks, imagine the struggles that students with special education designations have faced. Baumgardner pointed out that those students who had learning disabilities had more retention difficulties, tended to gain skills in a broken sequence, and found great difficulty when they first encountered algebraic problems. So, it has been crucial to math learning that, early on, the teacher provided a high level of instruction and direction. Only towards the master level of acquisition did students experience greater responsibility, as the teacher pulled back, to let the student gain independence. (Baumgardner, nd)

Once again, how would a special education teacher deliver the high level of instruction and direction needed, if a student in a small group was significantly behind (or ahead) of his/her group? If individualized instruction, within the small group context, were a standard feature of each session, then students could regularly have expected to experience the intensity of instruction they so needed.

Individualized Instruction

Kulik (2001) referenced Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, saying it was a solid reference for teachers of literacy. Successful teachers discerned the children's development and molded their lessons slightly beyond it. Teachers

a special education environment—be it a resource room, a self-contained room, or simply a general education classroom, with some extra staff assistance—was not be enough.

Along the same lines, if a student with an IEP was in a Resource Room small group that proved to be a difficult match, due to differing reading levels, for example, then that student would need individualized support. If the court rooms have understood the meaning of “individualized” in IEPs, then special education professionals should have, as well. (Peter Wright & Pamela Wright April 6, 2009)

Best Practices for Math Group

A key to successful instruction of small groups in a resource room setting has been to match up the groups by ability. Then they used the appropriate level of curriculum. According to Kulik (2001) bright, average, and slow youngsters profited from grouping programs that adjusted the curriculum to the aptitude levels of the groups. Schools would have done well to try to use ability grouping in this way.

Learning math concepts has proved difficult for most students. Baumgardner (n.d.) reports that 78% of adults could not explain how to calculate interest payments on a mortgage, 71% could not calculate miles per gallon on a trip, and

some general concepts that could be relevant, individual students could benefit from this, no matter what their level of proficiency was. Reading comprehension strategies were an example of general concepts that could be taught to support what each student was learning. Students could then apply this knowledge to his or her individual assignments. (Concordia University 2016, January 6)

Zavatkey (n.d.) made two important points about individualized instruction. First, it did not always require 1:1 tutoring. Instead, it recognized that each student was unique, and sometimes a child's particular skill set was significantly different than his or her peers within the small group. The group might still have received instruction together. However, there would be times when this student would need one to one instruction, to bolster any areas of weakness. Again, there was no shame in this, since every student was unique, and those with IEPs were recognized as generally needing some individualized support, anyway.

According to the wrightslaw.com (2009) districts often found themselves in trouble, when it came to special education provision and accommodation. They set up special education programs that were systems, meant to serve as one-size-fits-all. The Wrights said it has not worked that way every time. Many children have been well served, but some were not. Districts have been liable for the individual needs of their special education-qualified students. Sticking a child in

Beyond having achieved generalized help for reading students, through effective grouping, teachers helped their students feel more competent. When teachers made small groups that were flexible and creative all students felt competent. (Hoffman and Worth, 1996, p. 656)

One study that examined reading instruction and groupings, in a resource room setting, found that even though students' ability levels vary, whole-group instruction was given, without differentiation, or individualized instruction. (Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm and Klingner, 1998). According to Brady & Moats, students with LD learned best when the individualized instruction was given, rather than a whole group instruction approach.

According to Concordia University, one key to teaching Special Education was to form small groups of two or three students within the class, grouped according to their level. Of course, this was the typical protocol for Resource Room Instruction. Sometimes, though, the groups got larger, and often those small groups had a wider-than-optimal range of abilities. Thus, a second strategy—one that aligned well with the research project of this paper—was to blend 'the basics' with more specialized instruction. In other words the general concepts were taught to the whole group, while pairing it with individual instruction, tailored to each student in the group. Since every school subject had

The University of Chicago's Resource Information Center created a list of recommendations for accommodating Special Education Students. Two recommendations relevant to this research were the use of pre-teaching and of pulling below-grade-level students for instruction, while grade-level performers worked on their own. It was easy to extrapolate from that counsel that a student who performed below the level of his or her small group could be pulled aside for instruction, while the others worked independently. Additionally, pre-teaching was a form of specialized—or individualized—instruction. It strengthened the schema of struggling students, and thus helped them to handle material others in the group may have found less challenging. (University of Chicago. n.d.)

Best Practices for Reading Group

Resource rooms typically have relied on small groups, established by subject matter ability. Some have questioned such an approach, since it went against the idea of an inclusive learning community, where everyone could achieve their personal best, without ability segregation. Indeed, some school programs that grouped children by ability had only small effects. Nevertheless, according to Kulick, other grouping programs greatly supported students. Therefore, schools should have rejected efforts to do away with all ability grouping.

STAR testing and SPED/ELL Students

According to the Renaissance Learning STAR manual the goal types they used were calculated based on a diverse sample of students. They may not have been appropriate for ELL and Special Education serviced students. Users were told to just make their best guess when setting goals for them. Experience was supposed to be a help for users in learning to define moderate and ambitious goals for such students. Therefore, those who taught ELL and Special Education students needed to be careful to have used the STAR data to establish their own appropriate goals for each student. They should not have relied on the automated goal setting that the testing program offered.

The Jefferson School District (Tracy, CA) stated in its policy that students with IEPs were allowed to take STAR testing, but that accommodation and preparation should have been based on their individual situations—which would have allowed each student to show the best of what s/he knew. Such instruction to teachers seemed to have implied that some individualized instruction would occur. In other words, districts, like Jefferson, expected teachers—especially those charged with supporting students with IEPs—to have offered their students individualized instruction and targeted learning. (Jefferson School District, Tracy, CA. 2016)

As an example, it might have been that if the student was placed in a morning group, there would be fewer losses in general education instruction. It might also have been that general education specialists had more instructional periods that time of the day. On the other hand, that placement was with a group that was learning at a higher or lower level than the student. In contrast, an afternoon placement might have been a better level match, but would result in greater general education exposure losses. Since the law repeatedly called for students to receive instruction that was individualized, the need to consider setting aside a portion of small group time for individualized instruction seemed valid. Given that educational professionals may not have determined accommodation based on delivery system availability, administrative convenience, nor a student's category of disability (wrightslaw.com 2009) it seemed even more essential to consider individualization within the small group context, if one of the students was significantly lower or higher than the others. Through offering individualized tailoring of the small group instruction, teachers could verify that they were providing individualized instruction, despite difficulties with ideal group placement.

instruction into the small group sessions would mitigate that out-of-step student's struggle was addressed.

ELL and SPED law and requirements

IDEA 2004 provided important protections to ELL students, to prevent them from being misdiagnosed as needing Special Education. It said that a Special Education designation could not come as the result of the student not being provided appropriate instruction in math or reading—especially if the designation was based on limited English proficiency. Furthermore, assessments must not have discriminated, or have weighed against certain races or cultures. (CAPELL, 2011)

A key factor related to this paper's topic was what the law had to say about whether a student should be designated as needing Special Education service, and what that service should look like. Some scholars argue that Special Education has been over-sold, and that all students perform better in an inclusive, general education classroom (Kings 2015). The dominant view, however, is that the key factor is that teachers individualize instruction for those with special needs—and that generally does not happen in general education classrooms (Hocutt 1996). Even in this author's few years of special education instruction the question of when a given student's small group session should take place has caused friction.

ELL means English Language Learner.

IEP means Individualized Education Program.

LD means Learning Disability.

MSP means Measure of Student Progress.

OSPI means Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

SBA means Smarter Balanced Assessment.

SpEd means Special Education.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topics: (a) ELL and SpEd Law and Requirement, (b) Star Testing and ELL Students, (c) Best Practices for Reading Group, (d) Best Practices for Math Group, (e) Individualized Instruction, (f) Multilevel Instruction and Small Group Composition, and (g) summary. In each section research was reviewed related to the question of how to accommodate a student with special education designation who was placed in a Resource Room small group, in which the other participants were significantly behind or ahead. Specifically, the question of whether building individualized

8. The teacher gave individualized instruction to the students for the second half of the study (from mid-January through May, 2016). This meant the teacher instructed the individual students one on one for a portion of each group session.
9. A 10-question survey was written by the teacher. (see appendix)
10. After 6 weeks of individualized instruction all students were given a survey to see how they felt about reading or math.
11. Targeted students were given the STAR Math and Reading and Reading Assessments at the end of study. (May, 2016)
12. All three of the STAR tests were scored and shared with students, staff and administration.
13. Surveys were totaled and shared with the staff and administration.
14. Scores were compared between the rate of progress during the multilevel period of instruction (September through January, 2016) and the individualized instruction period (January through May. 2016).
15. A conclusion was drawn regarding the effectiveness of individualized instruction.

Definition of Acronym Terms

AYP means Annual Yearly Progress.

ELA means English Language Arts

reserved for use on a more case by case basis, likely only when the difference between a student and his or her peers was extreme.

Procedure

1. Permission to conduct research at Sherwood Forest Elementary, in Federal Way, Washington, was granted by Principal Alisa DeSart (see appendix A)
2. A review of selected literature was conducted at Federal Way School District, Highline College, Heritage University, and internet search engines.
3. Targeted students were given the STAR Math and Reading Assessments before the study began (September, 2015).
4. Two reading groups and one math group were formed primarily based on their IEPs goals and general education classroom schedule.
5. The students in each of these groups have different reading and math levels.
6. The teacher gave multilevel instruction, using the same content within each group, to the students for the first half of the study. This meant the teacher instructed the groups all together.
7. Students were given the STAR Math and Reading Assessments at the end of the multilevel instruction period (January, 2016).

instruction in reading or math will not report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.

Significance of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding the problem of students within small groups who have been significantly ahead or behind their peers in the same group. Most Special Education Resource Rooms in the Federal Way Public School District deliver instruction in pull-out small groups. Thus, the problem of having a student in groups who cannot be placed in a group that fits his/her performance level has been fairly common. The proposal of this project was to determine if infusing small group instruction with an individualized component (1:1) would improve students' STAR scores. If the result is positive then the author's future small groups would be composed and prepared for such that 1:1 instruction would be used for students who perform significantly below or above the peers in their groups. Furthermore, a report of the findings would be given to the school's administrator for consideration in other settings within the building. If the administrator finds the results especially compelling, she may choose to pass the findings up to the district level. On the other hand, if the results are negative or neutral, then 1:1 individualized instruction, within a particular group, would be

Assumptions

Students attended the group sessions on a regular basis. They payed attention, asked clarifying questions, and did their best work during reading and math groups. While the teacher worked with a student one on one (individualized instruction) the rest of the students engaged in their independent work. Also students tried their best on their STAR reading and STAR math tests. Finally, students were honest on their survey questions.

Hypothesis

ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who receive multilevel instruction in reading or math. Students who receive individualized instruction in reading or math will report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.

Null Hypothesis

ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who receive multilevel instruction in reading or math will score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who receive individualized

Delimitations

This project was delimited to two groups of reading and one math group, in a resource room setting, at Sherwood Forest Elementary School in the Federal Way School District, located in Federal way, Washington. The project was conducted during the 2015-1016 school year, with 470 students. There were 4 girls in the study group and 3 boys. 46.2% of 3rd grade students had passed SBA ELA and 50.5% passed the SBA Math. 50.0% 4th grade students had passed SBA ELA and 51.3% of students had passed the SBA Math. 69.6% of 5th grade students had passed SBA ELA and 50.0% of 5th grade students had passed the SBA Math. 62.5% of fifth graders passed science MSP. Sherwood Forest Elementary had an enrollment of 470 students in the fall count of 2014. The ethnicity of Sherwood Forest Elementary was White: 37.4 %, Hispanic: 23.0%, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 14%, Black/African American: 7.4%, Asian: 14.9% and Multi-racial: 14.3%. Free and reduced lunch was 51.8%. Special Education: 12.0%. Bilingual ELL: 25.5%. There were 28 classroom teachers, of which 67.9% had their master's degree. Finally 96.3% of the teachers were highly qualified. (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2014-2015)

Statement of the Problem

The resource room program at Sherwood Forest Elementary, in Federal Way, Washington, contained several math and reading small groups. Based upon their teacher's formative assessments and progress monitoring, there are four students in her case load who were not ideally matched, by ability, with their peers. As a result those who were more advanced experience slower growth than the might in a more challenging group. On the other hand, those who were significantly behind their peers face the frustration of not understanding their lessons well. Additionally, their peers see less growth, as the teacher takes time to support these students who were behind, reducing the pace of their lessons.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to examine whether ELL students and students with IEPs, in a Resource Room setting, who received individualized instruction in reading or math, would score higher on STAR testing than ELL students and students with IEPs who received multilevel instruction in reading or math. Additionally, the project would consider whether or not students who received individualized instruction in reading or math would report that taking the STAR test felt easier than previous times.

The research for math groups provided the same emphasis. Students did well in small groups, but need individualized tailoring, if they were to experience the best results. This need was compounded if an individual placement was not ability-level ideal.

In the section on Individualized Instruction, the theme continued. SPED and ELL qualified students had a legal right to tailored instruction, and they did best when they got it.

Finally, considering Multilevel Instruction and Small Group Composition, the literature stressed that ability grouping works, but individualization was always helpful. When a student was placed in a group that was ahead or behind, that tailored instruction became a crucial support.

Thus, the reading done in preparation for this project affirmed the thesis of this research—that students placed in small groups, whether in SPED or ELL, who were significantly ahead or behind their peers, required tailored instruction. The proposal of this project was that such teaching could be done within the small group time, as an end segment, while the peers worked on assignments, independently.

times, they were at a more rudimentary level. When such students struggled to learn, according to Wrightslaw.com (2009) schools and districts have faced legal trouble. Thus, how Resource Room and ELL Teachers could have mitigated the disadvantages of their students being placed in such small groups was the topic of this research project.

As literature was reviewed, to gain background for the project, the first area considered was ELL and SPED Law Requirements. Individualization kept coming up as a basic requirement. Teachers, schools, and districts needed to provide for each ELL and SPED-qualified student's specific and particular concerns.

The second topic was Star Testing and ELL Students. Here the research indicated that the test could be used as an assessment instrument. However, goal-setting had to be done individually—not based on the automated programming of the test.

Concerning Best Practices for Reading Groups, the literature again highlighted the need for individualized instruction. Students who learned at too high of a level would be frustrated, whereas those who were given overly rudimentary material would not progress sufficiently.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Resource Room Special Education teachers, and those in ELL rooms who made extensive use of ability-level groups, have struggled to schedule them. Ideally, each student would be placed in a subject group with peers of equal or near-equal performance levels. In this way teachers could give a single lesson to the small group, and then would help individual students as they worked on independent assignments. The difficulty in scheduling small groups by ability has been that there were other concerns that competed with performance-level placement. General Education teachers often asked Resource Room and ELL teachers to avoid time periods that were academic-instruction intensive. Furthermore, most of them tried to avoid groups during “specials,” such as physical education, library, or music. Occasionally students needed to be separated due to serious personality conflicts, as well.

Due to the competing interests that have pulled at Resource Room Teachers, as they composed their small group instruction schedules, it was common for individual students to have found themselves in groups that did not quite match their performance level. Sometimes the group was ahead of him/her. Other

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PERMISSION TO STORE

I, Oksu Ellis, hereby irrevocably consent and authorize Heritage University Library to file the attached Special Project entitled, *Does 1:1 Instruction Have a Place in Resource Room Small Groups*, and make such Project and Compact Disk (CD) available for the use, circulation and/or reproduction by the Library. The Project and CD may be used at Heritage University Library and all site locations.

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Oksu Ellis, Author
7/16/2016, Date

ABSTRACT

Title

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The project followed seven subjects, served by the Resource Room, at Sherwood Forest Elementary School, in Federal Way, WA, to see whether or not infusing 1:1 instruction time into their small groups, to help students who were significantly above or below their peers, would prove effective. The STAR testing results proved inconclusive. Based upon the survey results, the students showed moderately greater satisfaction with multilevel instruction. This format gave the groups greater cohesion, thus 1:1 time within small groups was not recommended.

FACULTY APPROVAL

Does One to One Instruction Have a Place in Resource Room Small Groups?

A Master's Special Project

by

Oksu Ellis

Approved for the Faculty

Robert P. Kraig, Faculty Advisor

Dr. Robert P. Kraig

7/21/2016, Date

Does One to One Instruction Have a Place in Resource Room Small Groups?

A Special Project

Presented to

Dr. Robert P. Kraig

Heritage University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters in Educational Leadership

Oksu Ellis

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