

Effectiveness of a Walk to Read Program
on Second Grade DIBELS Reading Scores

A Special Project

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Dr. Audrian Huff

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Tammy L. Johnson

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Effectiveness of a Walk to Read Program
on Second Grade DIBELS Reading Scores

Approved for the Faculty

_____, Faculty Advisor

_____, Date

ABSTRACT

This project was started as a way to find if second grade DIBELS test scores would increase if a Walk to Read implementation of ability grouping was used. The study took place during the 2008-2009 school year in a rural Eastern Washington town. The students were grouped according to the present level of ability. Curriculum that was used included Harcourt Trophies and Read Well. The researcher found ability grouping to be an effective way of teaching students at the level that was needed for student success. The non-independent *t*-tests performed concluded that indeed students made greater than expected gains in reading.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

One of the major concerns for parents and teachers alike was the decline in reading scores across grade levels. The National Institute for Literacy in the pamphlet, *Put Reading First*, stated unless a student was able to read fluently and with comprehension by the end of third grade, the child would not succeed in school (2000). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 signed by President George W. Bush based findings on the premise that all children should be provided with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education (Fact Sheet on No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Included in the No Child Left Behind acts were programs teachers were to implement if student scores dropped below a certain level. The Reading First program that was part of the No Child Left Behind act included the purpose to ensure that all children in American learned to read by the end of third grade (Fact Sheet on No Child Left Behind, 2002).

A heavy workload was given to teachers to improve student reading ability even though half of the students came into second grade a year or more behind. Teachers had discussed what was best for students to make growth in reading. Researchers had found that students grouped by ability were able to receive differentiated instruction at a level needed to reach benchmark thus decreasing student disparity. Teachers taught to a group of students with similar abilities and focused on specific areas that needed intervention (Hollifield, 1987).

Second grade students in a rural town in Eastern Washington were not completing second grade as fluent readers. Teachers at the elementary school worked on ways to make all students successful. A Walk to Read model of instruction was implemented in order to help students make greater growth in reading. The teachers voted to implement the program in order to increase test scores in reading. The program allowed students to be grouped according to the present level of performance. All grades (K-5) throughout the school participated in the Walk to Read program.

The school's Washington Assessment of Student Learning scores were disappointing in the year 2007-2008. School year 2007-2008 was the first year since the beginning of the No Child Left Behind Act that Adequate Yearly Progress had not been made in the writer's school. The author was disappointed with the low scores and decided to track and determine if the implementation of a Walk to Read program raised test scores.

The ethnic mix at the school was not as big an issue as poverty. Over 80% of students were on free or reduced lunches. The percentage of white students was 58% while the percentage of Hispanics was 37%. The migrant rate was 4.4 % (Washington State Report Card, 2007). The author assumed that poverty and the lack of parent involvement also played a role in low student scores.

Statement of the Problem

The question the researcher looked to answer was, "Can student's academic Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores be raised through implementing a Walk to Read program?" The previous year the school did not use a Walk to Read

program and the researcher believed students would be positively affected by instruction received in homogeneous ability groups.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the study investigated the effects of reading accomplishments of second grade students in a Walk to Read program using the pre/post scores of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The author asserted that Walk to Read did indeed raise student achievement when combined with instruction at the student's present level of need. The author also had the goal of having second grade students gain a greater fluency rate, overall reading ability, and ability to reach grade level by the end of the school year.

Delimitations

The school started the Walk to Read program for grades second through fifth in September, 2008. The reading scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning for fourth grade were down 22% from the year before and the Walk to Read program was introduced as a way to help educators focus on smaller groups of students with similar learning needs.

The author used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy test scores for the year the study was conducted. The test was given in the Title 1 teacher's classroom with two educational assistants. The teacher sent four students at a time to take the test. Students would sometimes skew the data because the test was not taken seriously. The same individual did not always give the test.

The study took place from September 2008 to May 2009 in a small rural community with a population of approximately 18,000. The school where the research

was conducted had approximately 359 students. Eighty percent of the students were on the free and reduced lunch program which indicated a high population of low income families. All second graders that took the test at the beginning, middle, and end of the year were included in the study. If a student came in the middle of the year, the score did not count in the study.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed all teachers involved in the procedure were highly qualified. The teachers understood how to teach the curriculums required from the district. The writer assumed time required to fulfill the requirements of the curriculum were followed.

Teachers were also concerned about the variety of reading levels and wanted to make sure ^{already} proficient readers would be challenged during reading instruction. The teachers therefore needed to adopt a plan to help all students achieve. The researcher also assumed that the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test was administered to the entire second grade student population so fall and spring scores could be compared.

Hypothesis

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to winter as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test.

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to spring as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test.

Null Hypothesis

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will not make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to winter as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test using a .05 level of significance.

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will not make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to spring as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test using a .05 level of significance.

Significance of the Project

The No Child Left Behind legislation emphasized the importance of all students reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Second grade was a pivotal year in the growth process of reading for students. If academic achievement in reading was not gained to the point of benchmark in second grade, benchmark reached in third grade because of the other areas of literacy instruction third grade teachers had to cover would also be difficult. A Walk to Read program was implemented that targeted struggling readers with explicit phonics instruction, middle readers with the basic Harcourt curriculum, and high readers with added extensions of the Harcourt curriculum.

Students in the treatment group were able to be grouped into one of eight levels of instruction. Teachers gave weekly fluency and comprehension tests to determine student placement. Teachers also used district mandated test scores twice a year to determine placement of students. The district mandated test was the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. Teachers were able to Pop and Drop throughout the year when

necessary changes needed to be made. Pop and Drop was a way teachers moved students to different reading groups. Students would pop up or go down depending on the level of progress. Flexibility and motivation for reading achievement was necessary for teachers to actively and routinely meet and assess data in order to make adjustments.

Procedure

Teacher's participating in the Walk to Read program met after students were tested in the fall of 2008 to decide what level of instruction would be most beneficial for each second grade student. All second grade students at the writer's school participated in the study. Data used to determine placements were based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The teachers chose not to use the Measures of Academic Progress tests because not all second graders were eligible to take the test due to low reader skills. The Harcourt Curriculum did not take into account that up to a third of students entering the second grade were not ready to read to learn. The Harcourt curriculum had some phonics instruction but not nearly enough to help the low readers coming into the second grade. So the team decided to add groups that would cover basic phonics with first-grade Read Well curriculum and Harcourt intervention.

Administration of the DIBELS test were only valid if the procedures were followed correctly. All of the measures were one-minute timings and were administered "cold" which meant the student had not seen the passage before. The student did not get practice because the test was intended to test children's reading skills. Practice of the passage would have given the child an unfair advantage (Hall, 2006).

The lowest group of students went to reading in the resource room. Here the students were put into a Read Well group equal to the academic progress of each student.

The next lowest group went to the Title 1 teacher that also used the Read Well program to benefit the students at the current level of academic progress. From there, the three classroom teachers divided up the rest of the students into classrooms using the data compiled from tests mentioned earlier. The instructional time consisted of a 60 minute block of time each day. The students at benchmark went to the high group, the strategic students went to the middle group, and the intensive students went to the low group.

The low group of students went to a classroom with two educational assistants plus a certificated teacher. The teacher grouped the students into even smaller groups homogeneously. One of the groups focused on intervention based on the Harcourt curriculum, another group focused on explicit phonics instruction, and the third group worked on a Read Well unit. The certificated teacher in the room discussed the interventions that were being used with the rest of the second grade team so that all team members were in agreement.

The middle group of students went to the researcher's classroom which consisted of one certificated teacher and one educational assistant. The program the middle group used was the Harcourt Trophies curriculum. The Harcourt Trophies curriculum included phonics, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and a main story of the week. Research into the Harcourt Trophies curriculum found that, "Trophies is a research-based, developmental reading/language arts program. Explicit phonics instruction, direct reading instruction, guided reading strategies: integrated language arts components: and state-of-the-art assessment tools ensure every student successfully learns to read."

(Harcourt Trophies, 2008 p. 1).

The educational assistant worked with a small group of students at the back table to reinforce the teacher's instruction. The assistant also used the time to reinforce the phonics lesson, spelling, vocabulary, and focus skills. The assistant in the room had a behavior student that needed a small group in order to be productive.

The high group of students went to a classroom that had one certificated teacher. The high group also used the basic Harcourt curriculum with added enrichment exercises that challenged the students to think and respond to literature.

Definition of Terms

benchmark. - The term benchmark referred to a level of test results from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills that showed the student was at grade level.

fluency. - Fluency referred to the rate of speed and accuracy at which a passage was read.

homogeneous. - The term homogeneous referred to a group of students that had a similar background in reading capability.

intensive. - The term intensive referred to a level of test results from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills that required additional instruction (above the 90-minute core) in order for students to succeed.

phonics instruction. - The term phonics instruction was a part of learning to read that put sounds to letters and letter blends.

Read Well. - The term Read Well was the curriculum used in kindergarten and first grade to teach reading.

strategic.- The term referred to a level of test results from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills that required some additional instruction in order for students to succeed.

Walk to Read.-The term Walk to Read indicated that students were homogeneously grouped and moved to different rooms if necessary.

Acronyms

AYP. Adequate Yearly Progress

DIBELS. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

MAP. Measures of Academic Progress

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

OSPI. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

NWEA. Northwest Educational Assessment

NIFL. National Institute for Literacy

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

The programs the researcher examined consisted of Harcourt Trophies, Walk to Read, DIBELS, fluency assessments, and interventions for student support and achievement. The writer researched the areas and compiled the information found in the chapter. The research went back to the basics of what a student needed in order to achieve benchmark in reading by the end of second grade. The author found all of the programs valid, reliable, and successful based on research.

The Five Basic Components of Reading

According to the research from the National Institute for Literacy in an article titled, Put Reading First, there were five basic components to reading. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension were the components. When students had understood all of the components, successful readers emerged (2000).

The National Institute for Literacy defined phonemic awareness as “The ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds in spoken words” (NIFL,2008 p.1). Phonemic awareness usually occurred in preschool as students realized letters had speech sounds, or phonemes. Phonemes were the smallest parts of sounds in a spoken word. When a student was given a list of words such as bike, boy, hat, bat and could pick out the words that started with the same sound, that indicated phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness was also shown when students could sound out each part of a word

such as /h/, /a/, /t/ for the word hat. Students needed to understand letters made up sounds and sounds made up words in order to read text (NIFL).

In the article, *Research into Practice*, the writer found students aware of more than educators realized. Young readers began to understand that print had to do with the real world, print and drawings were different, print had directionality, print stood for spoken language, print occurred in different places and print was made up of letters. Readers gradually began to link letters with sounds as each developmental stage was learned (1998).

Phonics instruction was the next level of instruction. After readers understood the importance of phonemic awareness and sounds letters made, students were able to start transferring sounds to written words. Phonics instruction taught children the relationship between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language. When young readers understood the concept, phonics instruction became meaningful (NIFL).

In the article, *Research into Practice*, researchers told teachers systematic and explicit phonics instruction was the most effective way to teach phonics. Therefore, school districts needed to look for systematic curriculums for kindergarten and first grade students in order to achieve success. The Read Well program used in the writer's district for kindergarten and first grade was one of the curriculums that taught phonics systematically and explicitly (NIFL).

Fluent readers recognized words automatically. Fluent readers read quickly and accurately. Fluency was a tool teachers could use to tell if students needed more phonics instruction. Fluency was important and provided a much needed bridge between word

recognition and comprehension. Students engaged in reading a text needed to be able to read quickly enough to be able to remember what was read at the beginning of the passage. If a reader was able to read quickly but could not remember what was read, the purpose of the passage would be lost (NIFL). Students that read fluently could focus on what the text was trying to convey and connections being made with the ideas presented.

Vocabulary instruction was another basic component of good readers. Put Reading First stated, “Vocabulary refers to words that we must know to communicate effectively.” (NIFL 2008, p. 29). In order for young readers to comprehend what was being read, vocabulary understanding needed to be evident.

Scientific research on vocabulary revealed two main ideas about vocabulary. Most vocabulary was taught indirectly and some needed to be taught directly. Indirect vocabulary instruction included daily oral language especially with adults, listening to adults read, and reading independently. Direct instruction included specific word instruction that enabled students to deepen understanding of words through passages being read weekly (NIFL).

Ability Grouping

Ability grouping, in theory, increased student achievement by putting students together with similar education needs. Teachers were able to focus instruction, increase the pace of instruction, and provide more individual attention, repetition, and review for low achievers (Hollifield). Ability grouping and Walk to Read were similar. Each one placed students in a group at the student’s present level of ability. Ability grouping took place in a classroom without a Walk to Read program. Students were divided up into four different groups of readers in one classroom and the teacher would be responsible

for all groups of students academically. Educators had a hard time teaching four ability groups in one classroom. There were always students working independently in order to allow time for the teacher to work with small groups of students. Walk to Read allowed teachers to group students according to ability and lessons taught focused on one or two groups of students as opposed to four or five.

Ability grouping students was one of the most controversial issues in education. John Hollifield stated that one argument against ability grouping was that the practice “creates classes or groups of low achievers who are deprived of the example and stimulation provided by high achievers.” (Hollifield 1987, p 1). Homogeneous grouping had created a group of academic elites which went against democratic ideals. The smarter kids got smarter and the lower achieving students stayed the same without the example of higher achievers. (Hollifield).

In 1986, Robert Slavin did a comprehensive review of research on the different types of ability grouping in elementary schools. The purpose of the study was to identify grouping practices that promoted student achievement. The five comprehensive ability grouping plans in elementary school at the time were ability grouped class assignment, regrouping for reading or mathematics, the Joplin Plan, non-graded plan, and within-class ability grouping.

Ability grouped class assignments placed students in one self-contained class on the basis of ability for the whole school year. Students were unable to change classrooms during the course of the entire school year.

The regrouping for reading or mathematics plan assigned students to heterogeneous homeroom classes for most of the day, but regrouped for one or two

subjects a day. Results indicated that regrouping for reading and mathematics influenced student achievement positively.

The Joplin Plan assigned students to heterogeneous classes for most of the day and regrouped across grade levels for reading instruction. Strong evidence was found that showed the Joplin plan increased reading achievement.

The non-graded plan included a variety of related grouping plans that placed students in flexible groups according to performance rather than age. Grade level designations were eliminated.

Within-class ability grouping was generally used for reading or mathematics. The groups used different learning materials unique to student needs and ability. Not many studies had been conducted on the use of within-class ability grouping because researchers could not find a control group not using the practice at the same building in order to validate the study (Hollifield).

Overall, Slavin concluded schools should use the method most effective for student achievement. Slavin recommended students be identified with a heterogeneous group for most of the day, but moved to a homogeneous group for reading and mathematics since most studies showed student achievement growth in those two areas.. Slavin also stated that teachers needed to meet together regularly to reassess student growth in order to reassign students if necessary (Hollifield).

Spears, in 1994, did a qualitative study focused on understanding how and why teachers used ability grouping. The study found teachers wanting to keep ability grouping were more subject oriented and teachers wanting to eliminate ability grouping

were more student oriented. The study also verified parents played a role in determining whether to use ability grouping (Mills, 1999).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills

The researcher along with the other second grade teachers based placement of students into ability groups using DIBELS test scores. Started nearly 18 years ago, DIBELS had primarily been used in Oregon State. Assessment requirements of Reading First caused exponential growth in the use of DIBELS. The research from Hall stated that the oral reading fluency in DIBELS was highly correlated with the Oregon State Assessment Test in reading (Hall, 2006).

The validity and reliability of the DIBELS test were important. According to Good, Gruba, and Kaminski, “evidence of reliability, validity, and sensitivity for DIBELS has been investigated in a series of studies. Alternate form of reliability of the DIBELS measures is generally considered adequate ranging from .72 to .94 for the various indicators.” (Hall, 2006 pp 283-284). For oral reading fluency measure, the median alternate form reliability was .94 on a second grade passage. Concurrent validity was .95 on a second grade passage (Hall, 2006).

Hall stated there were seven indicators in the DIBELS test to assess reading,

The seven indicators that were used to assess reading were: initial sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency, nonsense word fluency, oral reading fluency, retell fluency and word use fluency. All of the indicators were tied to one of the five essential components of reading (Hall, 2006, p.40).

The sections of the DIBELS tests the author’s schools choose to use for second grade were the nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency. The nonsense word fluency test was measured at the beginning of the year in the fall and not retested if students did not pass the portion. The oral reading fluency was tested in the fall, winter,

and spring. The researcher decided to focus on only the oral reading fluency portion since the tests were given three times a year and given to all second grade students.

Curriculum

The curriculum used during the time of the study included: Harcourt Trophies reading curriculum, Harcourt Trophies intervention, and Read Well. The curriculum had been researched and approved by the district for teachers to use in the classroom. The report, *Effective Beginning Reading Programs*, stated that both Harcourt Trophies and Read Well were on the list of programs that had no qualifying studies to back up the curriculum (Slavin, June, 2009).

The Harcourt Trophies Reading Curriculum was created by Harcourt School Publishers. Harcourt School Publishers was founded in New York City in 1919. Harcourt School Publishing was a basal elementary school publishing unit. The company developed, published, and marketed textbooks for students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. (Harcourt online).

Harcourt intervention was intended for small group instruction. The goal of the Trophies intervention program was to provide the scaffolding, extra support, and extra reading practice that below-level readers needed to succeed. The components of the program included skill cards to pre-teach and re-teach the focus skill for each lesson, an intervention practice book with practice pages for each lesson, an intervention reader to provide reading material at students' instructional reading level, vocabulary game boards, and intervention assessment book (Harcourt Intervention Guide).

Read Well was a curriculum used in the lower group of students struggling with phonics. One study conducted in three elementary schools in Mississippi over a 13-week

period concluded that first graders that began the study 1.3-1.6 standard deviations below the national average on vocabulary and comprehension showed .5 standard deviations improvement in vocabulary and .25 standard deviations improvement in comprehension (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2007). Second grade students placed in a Read Well group did not pass all 38 units in first grade. Explicit phonics instruction, new sounds, comprehension, and repeated readings were all part of the program. Students moved to a new unit each week when the test was passed. Read Well was a valid and reliable curriculum adopted by the Reading First panel.

Fluency

Current research on reading suggested fluency and reading went hand and hand. A fluent reader had the ability to read a text quickly and accurately. When a reader could read fluently, the ability to read to learn had been established (Fluency Instruction, 2006).

For success in reading to occur, students performed certain skills automatically and without conscience thought. Automaticity occurred when students read fluently. Automaticity gave a way for readers to devote time toward making meaning out of the text (Hall, 2006).

According to the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress Report, 44% of fourth graders were not fluent in reading. Fluency therefore received more attention than ever before and was tested more frequently. Interventions were made to improve fluency in readers and teachers were making sure fluency was being measured and taught (The Nations Report Card, 2007).

Fluency has been taught in many ways. There were two top ways educators could help student fluency rates. According to research found in “*Fluency Instruction*”, the most effective ways were repeated oral readings and independent silent reading (p. 2).

Repeated oral readings happened when educators had students read a passage more than one time. Educators had students read a passage at the students’ present grade level for one minute. After the reading, the teacher would count up the words the student read correctly, a cold timing. After the first timing, educators had students reread the same passage at least two more times and counted the words read correctly each time, a hot timing. Rereading the passage gave students more success in fluency.

Independent silent reading was also a good way for students to gain fluency. Students would pick out a book at an appropriate independent level. The educator would allow students time to read silently and take tests on the books selected. Students taking tests on the computer allowed the educator to check student comprehension (National Institute for Learning, 2008).

Summary

In conclusion, reading research on ability grouping varied. Some researchers concluded students should be ability grouped. Some researchers wanted students to stay heterogeneously grouped. What did not change in the research was the need to teach reading effectively and efficiently. The basic five components remained the same.

Walk to Read was a good strategy for teaching reading if done fairly and if students were able to be mobile between groups. Assessments played a big role in determining where to place students in reading groups. The two assessments used the most were DIBELS and fluency since all second graders were able to take the tests at the

beginning and end of the year. As the researcher examined the data and looked at the studies done on Walk to Read, the researcher concluded ability grouping was necessary for higher student growth. According to research, ability grouping had shown growth with student's achievement.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

Walk to Read had become a reality for many schools to achieve a recommended growth benchmark set by the state and district. Students not able to Walk to Read would have fewer options on what reading group would best fit the need. Walk to Read students had the opportunity to work with a group that were at approximately the same level. The instructor took a directed academic path to reach all students involved with Walk to Read.

Methodology

The author used a quasi-experimental approach to this study. The experimental group was made up of 52 second grade students. Walk to Read was attempted to show significant growth over time using the DIBELS data. The test was given in the fall, winter, and spring to each student. The purpose of the experiment was to see if growth occurred from fall to winter and from fall to spring. The scores were taken and a statistical non-independent *t*-test was given in order to see if significance had occurred.

Participants

The sample of students at this rural school consisted of 52 second graders from three second grade classrooms at one Eastern Washington elementary school. According to data found on the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instructions website, 37% were Hispanic, 58% were white, 4.4 % migrant and .6% where other. Eighty percent of the students at the school were on free or reduced lunch. In addition, each classroom was

a regular second grade class and was self-contained with the teacher for the major portion of the typical school day.

The group of students used in this study started and ended the year at this school. The authors chose not to include students that transferred in after the beginning of the year or transferred out before the winter or spring tests were given.

Instruments

Data collected for the study was taken from a fall, winter, and spring DIBELS test. The validity and reliability of the test were important. According to Good, Gruba, and Kaminski,

Evidence of reliability, validity, and sensitivity for DIBELS has been investigated in a series of studies. Alternate form of reliability of the DIBELS measures is generally considered adequate ranging from .72 to .94 for the various indicators. For the oral reading fluency measure the researcher is using, the median alternate form reliability is .94 on a second grade passage. Concurrent validity is .95 on a second grade passage (Hall, 2006 pp 283-284).

Design

In this experiment, the author used a quasi-experimental design based on fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores. Administration of the DIBELS test was only valid if the procedures were followed correctly. All of the measures were one-minute timings and are administered “cold” which means the student had not seen the passage before. The students did not get practice because the test was intended to test children’s reading skills. Practice of the passage would have given the children an unfair advantage (Hall, 2006). The DIBELS test was given in a room that was not the homeroom classroom and was administered by three individuals trained to administer the test. Students would walk over to the classroom three or four at a time, take the test, and return back to the

homeroom. The author understood that all students were given an equal chance of explanations and time for the test.

Procedure

Teacher's participating in the Walk to Read program met after students were tested in the fall of 2008 to decide what level of instruction would be most beneficial for each second grade student. All second grade students at the writer's school participated in the study. Data used to determine placements were based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The teachers chose not to use the Measures of Academic Progress tests because not all second graders were eligible to take the test due to low reader skills. The Harcourt Curriculum did not take into account that up to a third of students entering the second grade were not ready to read to learn. The Harcourt curriculum had some phonics instruction but not nearly enough to help the low readers coming into the second grades. So the team decided to add groups that would cover basic phonics with first-grade Read Well curriculum and Harcourt intervention.

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The lowest group of students went to reading in the resource room. Here the students were put into a Read Well group equal to the academic progress of each student. The next lowest group went to the Title 1 teacher that also used the Read Well program to benefit the students at the current level of academic progress. From there, the three

classroom teachers divided up the rest of the students into classrooms using the data compiled from tests mentioned earlier. The instructional time consisted of a 60 minute block each day. The students at benchmark went to the high group, the strategic students went to the middle group, and the intensive students went to the low group.

The low group of students went to a classroom with two educational assistants plus a certificated teacher. The teacher grouped the students into even smaller groups homogeneously. One of the groups focused on intervention based on the Harcourt curriculum, another group focused on explicit phonics instruction, and the third group worked on a Read Well unit. The certificated teacher in the room discussed the interventions that were being used with the rest of the second grade team so that all team members were in agreement.

The middle group of students went to the researcher's classroom which consisted of one certificated teacher and one educational assistant. The program the middle group used was the Harcourt Trophies curriculum. The Harcourt Trophies curriculum included phonics, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and a main story of the week. Research into the Harcourt Trophies curriculum found that, "Trophies is a research-based, developmental reading/language arts program. Explicit phonics instruction, direct reading instruction, guided reading strategies: integrated language arts components: and state-of-the-art assessment tools ensure every student successfully learns to read." (Harcourt Trophies, 2008 p. 1).

The educational assistant worked with a small group of students at the back table to reinforce the teacher's instruction. The assistant also used the time to reinforce the

phonics lesson, spelling, vocabulary, and focus skills. The assistant in the room had a behavior student that needed a small group in order to be productive.

The high group of students went to a classroom that had one certificated teacher. The high group also used the basic Harcourt curriculum with added enrichment exercises that challenged the students to think and respond to literature.

Treatment of the Data

The data for analysis comprised of the scores obtained by the DIBELS assessment. Fall, winter, and spring, students' scores were used in the experiment.

Non-independent *t*-tests were used to determine if significance occurred in the growth of student achievement using the fall to winter and then fall to spring DIBELS test scores. The data was then put into a table to compare and input the data in order to prove significance and to complete the non-independent *t*-tests.

Summary

The instruments that were used to determine significance were fall, winter, and spring DIBELS test scores. The DIBELS test included several one-minute cold timings given in a controlled classroom with three trained staff. The scores were then put into a stat-pack to test for significance using a non-independent *t*-test. The findings of the tests were included in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The question the researcher looked to answer was, “Can student’s academic Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores be raised through implementing a Walk to Read program?” The previous year the school did not use a Walk to Read program and the researcher believed students would be positively affected by ability grouping. The researcher believed students would benefit from instruction targeted to present level of academic need.

For the results of the study, the researcher displayed the data and provided two tables which could be found later in this chapter. The tables included the students’ pre-test and posttest scores. The first table showed the amount of growth the students made from fall to winter, and the second table showed the amount of growth from fall to spring on the DIBELS measures of oral reading fluency.

Description of the Environment

The school started the Walk to Read program for grades second through fifth in September, 2008. The reading scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning for fourth grade were down 22% from the year before and the Walk to Read program was introduced as a way to help educators focus on smaller groups of students with similar learning needs.

The author used the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy test scores for the year the study was conducted. The test was given in the Title 1 teacher’s classroom with two educational assistants. The teacher sent four students at a time to take the test. Students

would sometimes skew the data because the test was not taken seriously. Also, the test was not always given by the same individual. Scores could vary because of the circumstances.

The study took place from September 2008 to May 2009 in a small rural community with a population of approximately 18,000. The school where the research was conducted had approximately 359 students. Eighty percent of the students were on the free and reduced lunch program which indicated a high population of low income families according to information found on the OSPI website.

Hypothesis

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to winter as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test.

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to spring as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test.

Null Hypothesis

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will not make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to winter as determined by pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test using a .05 level of significance.

Second grade students receiving instruction using a Walk to Read program will not make greater than expected growth in reading from fall to spring as determined by

pre/post Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills assessment as measured by a *t*-test using a .05 level of significance.

Results of the Study

Table 1.

t-test for pre-post Fall to Winter Oral Reading Fluency results

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre	52	46.79	34.94
Post	52	75.12	45.27

df= 51 *t*= 11.70 *p*<.001

After scoring the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency posttest in the winter, a non-independent *t*-test was performed to determine if significant growth had occurred from the fall test scores. The *t*-value was significant beyond the .001 probability level. The amount of growth the second grade students achieved was significant.

The null hypothesis was rejected. The *t*-test for oral reading fluency indicated greater than expected growth based on the scores from fall to winter as measured by the pre-post DIBELS test.

Table 2

t-test for pre-post Fall to Spring Oral Reading Fluency results

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre	52	46.79	34.94
Post	52	97.04	43.35

df= 51 *t*= 20.79 *p*<.001

After scoring the DIBELS oral reading fluency in the spring, a non-independent *t*-test was performed to determine if significant growth had occurred from the fall scores. The *t*-test showed that the *t*-value was 20.79 and the degree of freedom was 51. The *t*-value was significant beyond the .001 probability level. The amount of growth the second grade students made was significant.

The null hypothesis was rejected. The *t*-test for oral reading fluency indicated greater than expected growth in achievement scores from fall to spring as measured by the pre-post DIBELS test scores.

Findings

The results indicate that both hypotheses were supported when the author analyzed the data. The significant growth in both the fall to winter tests and the fall to spring tests indicated that Walk to Read was a significant way to raise test scores. Students receiving instruction at the present level of need, continued to excel throughout the school year.

The author would support the utilization of a Walk to Read program for future years. The more targeted the instruction, the better the student scores. From the educators point of view, ability grouping was easier to teach because students were at the same level.

Discussion

The purpose of the study investigated the effects of reading accomplishments of second grade students in a Walk to Read program using the pre/post scores of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The author asserted that Walk to Read did indeed raise student achievement when combined with instruction at the students present level of need. The author also had the goal of having second grade students gain a greater fluency rate, overall reading ability, and ability to reach grade level by the end of the school year.

In Slavin's study, there was a conclusion schools should use the method most effective for student achievement. Slavin recommended students be identified with a heterogeneous group for most of the day, but moved to a homogeneous group for reading and mathematics since most studies showed low student achievement growth in those two areas.. Slavin also stated that teachers needed to meet together regularly to reassess student growth in order to reassign students if necessary (Hollifield). The findings of Slavin were supported by the researcher.

Summary

The researchers started out the chapter restating the parameters of the study and the environment in which the study took place. The hypotheses and null hypotheses were stated and the results were discussed along with supporting research. The two hypotheses were accepted. Students in second grade classrooms in the rural Eastern Washington elementary school showed improvement in reading DIBELS scores from fall to winter and fall to spring.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The question the researcher looked to answer was, “Can student’s academic Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores be raised through implementing a Walk to Read program?” The previous year the school did not use a Walk to Read program and the researcher believed students would be positively affected by instruction received in homogeneous ability groups.

The purpose of the study investigated the effects of reading accomplishments of second grade students in a Walk to Read program using the pre/post scores of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The author asserted that Walk to Read did indeed raise student achievement when combined with instruction at the student’s present level of need.

Summary

The author researched the effects of a Walk to Read program on second grade students. The students were placed in an ability group that targeted the present level of academic need. The growth of the students was monitored using the fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores.

The Walk to Read program was implemented in the fall of 2008 and scores were tracked for progress. The researcher was the teacher with the middle group of students and used the Harcourt curriculum as a teaching tool.

The author researched the five components of reading, ability grouping, DIBELS, curriculum, and fluency in the literature chapter. The researcher concluded that ability

grouping was a good way to teach the five components of reading to a specific level of learner.

A quasi-experimental research method was used that showed the results of a pre-test and posttest in fall, winter, and spring. The author included 52 students in the study and inputted the data using a *t*-test found on the StatPak software program to prove significance with the data.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the second grade students that were assigned to Walk to Read groups made greater than expected growth in oral reading fluency using the DIBELS test. The results for the non-independent test indicated student growth beyond what was expected.

The researcher also concluded that the teachers involved in the process of implementing the Walk to Read program enjoyed the targeted instruction and had already made plans to continue the program the following year. The instructors would stay the same in each level as would the curriculum which alleviated teachers from learning new concepts and would let the teachers focus on making the curriculum used more effective.

Students showed pride in accomplishments that were made in each classroom as reading growth occurred. Student rewards and teacher affirmation were shown to increase student accomplishments and reading was celebrated.

Recommendations

Based upon the research and the conclusion, the writer suggests the process of Walk to Read to be valuable and effective. The second grade team of teachers that implemented the Walk to Read program want to continue using Walk to Read each year. The team of teachers also concluded meeting regularly to assess student growth was necessary to make the program work. Teachers need to be reviewing and updating information to make the program work effectively.

Future research might include finding the most effective curriculum to use at the second grade level. Second grade is a very pivotal year and if students come into the grade unable to read, teachers must be able to respond and teach a curriculum that focuses more on phonics and learning to read instead of comprehension and reading strategies such as the Harcourt Trophies. Administrators and teachers must work together while gathering data and research to best teach each student adequately.

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APPENDIXES

Figure 1
Second grade DIBELS test scores 2008-2009

Second Grade Students taking DIBELS test	Fall 2008 score 44 wpm is benchmark	Winter 2008 score 66 wpm is benchmark	Spring 2009 score 90 wpm is benchmark
1	15	15	27
2	20	32	56
3	24	39	56
4	26	17	48
5	30	66	106
6	35	45	70
7	36	74	95
8	52	85	96
9	62	119	156
10	77	103	124
11	86	121	148
12	90	167	160
13	93	117	154
14	183	214	208
15	7	31	65
16	8	12	26
17	14	29	61
18	27	42	90
19	27	55	80
20	28	44	71
21	28	34	64
22	33	77	112
23	43	76	100
24	45	80	90
25	48	115	116
26	50	75	104
27	53	80	105
28	59	88	106
29	62	99	122
30	81	113	132
31	83	123	167
32	93	114	175
33	149	208	226
34	7	13	28
35	12	32	57
36	14	31	52
37	17	46	62
38	20	48	71

39	20	51	69
40	20	57	76
41	22	30	47
42	24	47	81
43	27	64	71
44	32	46	81
45	37	79	99
46	39	58	76
47	43	87	110
48	49	79	93
49	53	85	93
50	63	137	115
51	66	76	108
52	101	131	141