

Determining the Need for a New Reading Curriculum

A Survey Study

A Special Project

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Determining the Need for a New Reading Curriculum

A Survey Study

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

To examine whether or not the teachers at a small parochial school in Washington State believe that there is a need for a new Reading curriculum. Teachers were given a survey discussing components of the current curriculum, how assessment and materials were used and what was missing. Research was obtained on how Reading curriculums have changed in the last five years, Open Court Reading, and Houghton Mifflin Reading.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

Teachers in a small elementary parochial school located in the Mid-Columbia Valley of Washington State had used a standard basal reading series for over 10 years. Several members of the staff, including the principal, questioned the value of the reading series as being potentially outdated.

Many changes had come about with regard to appropriate reading curriculum since the adoption of the reading series. Some of the biggest changes in reading instruction came with the whole-language movement. The arguments between whole-language and phonics-based learning continued to flare up throughout the educational world and were not lost on the teachers in the parochial school. Some experts believed that the whole-language method of teaching reading was preferable to the phonics-based approach and gave children a less stressful method to learn to read.

The meaning-based, or whole language, approach is a top-down method that emphasizes reading comprehension, or deciphering meanings of words based on context. Supporters of whole language instruction assert that children learn to read similar to the way they learn to speak and the whole language approach complements this learning process. Just as their desire to communicate orally prompted them to master vocabulary and

learn to piece whole sentences together, children will be so motivated to learn to communicate in written form. (“Reading,” 2003, p. 1)

However, other reading experts believed that the phonics-based approach gave students the ability to sound out and decode words.

Phonics, or skills-based instruction, is a bottom-up approach, that starts with the basic parts of words and moves towards reading as a whole....

Proponents of skills-based or phonics instruction maintain that children are better able to decode words on their own only after learning how to decode letters, sounds, and letter groupings. (“Reading,” 2003, p. 1)

Over time the focus changed with regard to which educational approach was the best. Reading educators stopped defending one method over the other and compromised by combining the best of both methods. “The combination of the two approaches, known as Balanced Literacy, has continued to evolve over the last few years as new research has revealed the benefits of both phonics and authentic reading” (Pearson, 2004).

The methods used to teach reading had not changed in the private school to meet new state standards. Curriculum, firmly in place, had not been examined in light of new state standards. While the existing reading program contained pieces of both whole-language and phonics instruction, updated versions had not been critically reviewed.

Statement of the Problem

The question that the researcher looked to answer was whether or not the reading curriculum at the parochial school was out dated and needed to be changed. If the program no longer met the state standards for reading should a new curriculum be adopted?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project investigated whether or not there was a need for a new reading curriculum. The current program was examined and compared with research on reading from the last five years. Surveys were given to members of the elementary staff. Samples of different reading curricula that met the current standards were used to compare with the parochial school's current reading curriculum.

Delimitations

This study was performed using the elementary staff of a parochial school. The study consisted of a survey given to each of the nine elementary staff members. The staff survey consisted of nineteen questions that focused on assessment, materials, and the building reading plan for the school.

The study also looked at research on two of the new reading curricular adoption possibilities. The two curricular examined were the Open Court Reading series and Houghton Mifflin Reading series.

The researcher used the surveys given as a means to determine whether or not the teachers at the parochial school believed there was a need for a new reading curriculum.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that all of the teachers surveyed taught at the elementary level and had used some form of the reading curriculum being examined. The researcher assumed that all students had access to the reading curriculum and used the curriculum during the current year. The researcher also assumed that each person given the survey had ample time to complete the survey and that the questions were completely understood.

Research Question

Did the teachers at the parochial school believe that students would make higher achievement gains in reading if a new reading curriculum was put into place?

Significance of the Project

The requirements for reading and the standards that were upheld by the State of Washington had changed over the past years. As these changes occurred throughout the state, area schools were required to make those changes also. The parochial school needed to examine its reading program to determine if the program was meeting the needs of its students and the requirements of the state.

If the needs were not being met, the parochial school's reading program needed to change.

With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) the need for a quality reading curriculum took on an even bigger role in education. With the new law there was more responsibility put on teachers to take students to the level of reading that was required for graduation. Washington State mandated all high school graduates must pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). According to the Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) website page on the WASL, student must meet the requirements in reading and writing in order to graduate beginning in 2008 (OSPI, 2007). Standards had to be met in both the upper and lower grades. Due to the change, the importance of examining the current reading curriculum was a focal point among the teachers at the parochial school.

Procedure

The researcher used a survey that had been previously given to the staff by the principal. The survey was used to determine whether or not the elementary faculty at the parochial school believed the curriculum met the reading needs and goals of the school community. The survey focused on whether each teacher believed the materials within the reading program were effective for the grade level taught. The surveys were examined, data was collected and organized, and conclusions were drawn.

Definition of Terms

Open Court Reading. A program developed from a research-based curriculum grounded in systematic, explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics and word knowledge, comprehension skills and strategies, inquiry skills and writing and language arts skills and strategies.

Houghton Mifflin Reading. A program based on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills.

Acronyms

WASL. Washington Assessment of Student Learning

OSPI. Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

NPR. National Reading Panel

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

Over the past few years the demand for higher quality reading curricula had intensified. The focus was more on content area and what was taught than how the curriculum was taught. Legislation implemented under NCLB mandated that all students met standards in reading. The WASL had already been implemented in the state, but assessment results showed that many students had not reached mastery in reading. Over the past decade reading teachers had been changing their curriculum and instruction to accommodate the expectations set by NCLB.

Margaret Taylor Stewart said (2004):

The No Child Left Behind Act focuses reading instruction on the following five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It is essential to include, in addition to those five, emphasis on oral language and literacy experiences, as well as connections between reading and writing. (p. 732)

Each component of reading provided the student with a sound base for reading. When the curriculum lacked one of these components, the reading instruction was not as strong.

When the staff at the parochial school began to take a look at new reading curricula, those five components of reading came into play. Each of the five was crucial to a good reading program and when one was left out the program was not as strong. At the time the researcher began the study, the parochial school had looked at two different reading programs as a way to evaluate its existing program. The first was Open Court and the second, Houghton Mifflin. Both programs displayed aspects of the five components of reading. For the purpose of this study, research on the five components of reading, Open Court Reading, and Houghton Mifflin Reading were reviewed.

Five Components of Good Reading

As stated before, “The No Child Left Behind Act focuses reading instruction on the following five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension” (Stewart, 2004, p. 732). Each of the components was necessary for a program to be complete. When the new requirements for reading came about many schools began to look for a new program that met all of the components. As Stewart (2004) noted according to NCLB:

The term “reading” means a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following: (a) The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print. (b) The ability to decode unfamiliar words. (c) The ability to read fluently. (d)

Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension. (e) The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print. (f) The development and maintenance of motivation to read. (Pub. L. 107-110, 1208, 115 Stat, 1550-1551, 2002) (p. 733)

Each reading component played a specific part in reading as a whole. The first section was phonemic awareness or word study. “Word study integrates instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, high frequency word recognition, and vocabulary” (Stewart, 2004, p. 735). While some teachers believed that phonics was not an important aspect to reading, the researcher discovered that it was. According to a National Reading Panel report (2000):

Systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read. The ability to read and spell words was enhanced in kindergarteners who received systematic phonics instruction. First graders who were taught phonics systematically were better able to decode and spell, and they showed significant improvement in their ability to comprehend text. Older children receiving phonics instruction were better able to decode and spell words and to read text orally, but their comprehension of text was not significantly improved. (p. 9)

All of language was built upon the phoneme. When reading was taught with the absence of phonemes, the process took a much longer time. Much of the time teachers were able to come up with many different ways to teach phonemic awareness.

Another component of reading was vocabulary. “Vocabulary development is an outgrowth of wide reading, especially nonfiction reading; observation and discussion; and explicit and thoughtful instruction. Students build an ever-expanding vocabulary through continual daily attention to--and talk about--words” (Stewart, 2004, p. 737). The more a student was exposed to words in print, the more the vocabulary was increased. Vocabulary was also attainable through the spoken word. Parents that read and conversed with children increased the active vocabulary of that child. In her article titled “Language Acquisition in Children: Talk Your Child Clever,” Susan Du Plessis (2000) stated:

Parents should start talking to their little baby from the day he is born. Some mothers are by nature quiet and reserved. Others have the unfortunate idea that it is foolish to talk to their babies, knowing that they do not understand. The mother, who does not talk continually while feeding, bathing and dressing her baby, is laying the foundation for a late talker. The baby learns language in one way only, and that is by hearing language as the parents talk and talk to it. The more a parent can talk to a

child, often repeating the same words, the same phrases, the same structures over and over, the sooner the child will learn language. (p. 1)

The third aspect of reading was fluency. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000, p. 3-1) as noted in the article by Stewart said (2004):

Fluent readers can read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency depends upon well developed word recognition skills, but such skills do not inevitably lead to fluency.... There is common agreement that fluency develops from reading practice. What researchers have not yet agreed upon is what form such practice should take to be most effective. (p. 738)

When a child was able to read fluently, the words on the page started to make more sense. Part of fluency in reading was the ability to not have to sound out each individual word, but rather read the word as a whole. Hudson, Lane, and Pullen stated (2005):

In order to accurately decode words, readers need to be able to accurately (a) identify the sounds represented by the letter or letter combinations, (b) blend phonemes, (c) read phonograms (common patterns across words), and (d) use both letter-sound and meaning cues to determine exactly the pronunciation and meaning of the word that is in the text (e.g., knowing

how to correctly pronounce bow in two different sentences: The dog had a bow tied around her neck. The bow of the ship was tall). (p. 703)

Hudson, Lane, and Pullen noted that, “Fluency instruction is not a reading program itself, but it is part of a comprehensive reading program that emphasizes both research-based practices and reading for meaning” (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005, p. 708).

The fifth and final component of reading was comprehension.

Comprehension consisted of parts such as vocabulary instruction, comprehension strategies, and text comprehension. Stewart noted that, “It is generally agreed that comprehension, or understanding, is the goal of reading” (Stewart, 2004, p. 739).

This was what the teacher attempted to impart in the students. Comprehension was a tool that enabled the student to grasp an idea of what was read. The ability to comprehend what was on the page traveled beyond reading to all other content areas.

One section of comprehension was prosody. “Prosody is a linguistic term to describe the rhythmic and tonal aspects of speech: the “music” of oral language” (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005, p. 704). Prosody was determined by different pieces such as whether the child read with expression and phrased each sentence appropriately. In the article, Hudson, Lane, and Pullen stated that, “Prosody in oral reading should signal reading comprehension of the reader and enhance listening comprehension of the listener. That is, prosodic readers

understand what they read and make it easier for others as well” (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005, p. 707).

Another important piece of comprehension was teacher instruction. In the article Stewart listed five components of comprehension instruction that had been previously discussed by Duke (2002) as “a clear vision of effective comprehension; appropriate attention to underlying skills and dispositions; many opportunities to read and be read to (and for compelling reasons); lots of talk, writing, and thinking about text; and explicit instruction in comprehension strategies” (slide 7) (Stewart, 2004, p. 739). If one of these components was dropped when reading instruction took place, the student’s ability to comprehend text was diminished. For example, if the teacher chose not to give students ample time to read, the goal of comprehension took a much longer time to achieve.

Stewart noted, “Knowledgeable, caring teachers are key to implementing NCLB in ways that help children experience learning success and become lifelong learners who choose to read and write in their daily lives” (Stewart, 2004, p. 740). While the components of reading were important, the people that taught the components were just as important.

Open Court Reading

Part of the comparison study done by Bruce Murray, Ph.D., looked at the Open Court Reading Series from 2002. Of that series he had much to say. One of Murray’s comments was, “Open Court has long led the league in explicit phonics,

pioneered the teaching of phoneme awareness before most teachers had ever heard the terms, and was cited for its fully decodable text in *Becoming a Nation of Readers in 1985*” (Murray, 2007, p. 18). In this section the researcher presented facts about the importance of the five components of reading. One of those components was phonemic awareness. Murray stated that (2007):

In line with the best experiment efforts in teaching phoneme identity knowledge, the Open Court program teaches phoneme awareness one phoneme at a time, uses multiple activities to make that phoneme memorable, and provides practice finding the phoneme in spoken word contexts. Open Court pioneered the practice of providing meaningful names and illustrations of phonemes, and continues to be the only major basal series that provides this excellent device for making phonemes familiar to children. (p. 18-19)

In a report provided by McGraw-Hill on the Open Court website the researcher found evidence of use in schools. One school in the study was Lincoln Elementary School in Toppenish, Washington. The report stated that, “When the state of Washington classified Lincoln Elementary School as Low-Performing in 2000, educators implemented Open Court Reading the next year to bring students up to grade level” (www.sra4kids.com, 2007, p. 8). The reading coach at the time, Patty Schmella, spoke to a fellow teacher who said, “Her class had moved into anthologies, and the kids could actually read and comprehend the material.

Now she tells me she would never change from Open Court Reading”

(www.sra4kids.com, 2007, p. 9).

Murray summed it up stating, “Of the basal reading programs I’ve reviewed, Open Court offers the best basal reading series for learning to read given a typical population of elementary school children” (Murray, 2007, p. 19).

Houghton Mifflin Reading

As stated in a report issued by the National Reading Panel (NPR), “Phonemic awareness and letter knowledge have been identified as the two best predictors of how well children will learn to read” (www.eduplace.com, 2007, p. 1). Houghton Mifflin took the key elements of the NPR report and paired each element to the reading series. In regards to phonemic awareness representatives of Houghton Mifflin wrote, “Welcome to School” in Kindergarten and “Back to School,” in first grade, plus daily Opening Routines and the introductions to each phonics lesson provide an abundance of opportunities to engage students in phonemic awareness and letter name activities” (www.eduplace.com, 2007, p. 1).

The NPR also found that, “Synthetic phonics instruction is the most effective approach and effective phonics instruction leads to improved spelling,” to which representatives of Houghton Mifflin stated, “A systematic, synthetic approach is used in all phonics lessons. Only Houghton Mifflin Reading has phonics and spelling instruction that match at all grade levels, from Grades 1 to 6” (www.eduplace.com, 2007, p. 2).

In a comparison study done by Bruce Murray, Ph.D., of Auburn University, both Houghton Mifflin and Open Court were reviewed. Of Houghton Mifflin Murray said, “Houghton Mifflin made a concerted effort only a few years ago to transform its literature-based, analytic approach into an explicit phonics approach. That transformation remains incomplete” (Murray, 2007, p. 18). Murray goes on to say that, “Houghton Mifflin relies on standard alphabetic example words (e.g., a is for apple) and provides lots of practice with minimal instruction on blending” (Murray, 2007, p. 19).

Murray concluded the study by stating, “I found little attention to fluency in the second grade program of Houghton Mifflin, an omission that should be addressed in light of the National Reading Panel’s findings” (Murray, 2007, p. 19). Murray also found, “In the representative lessons I examined, Houghton Mifflin’s program presents minimal instruction and modeling, and then asks students to perform complex summarization tasks” (Murray, 2007, p. 19).

Summary

The presence of a quality reading program was a must in any school. The reading curriculum needed to meet the standards of No Child Left Behind and contain the five components of reading.

Two new reading programs were reviewed, Open Court Reading and Houghton Mifflin Reading, identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Both programs displayed aspects of the five components of reading. The five

components (Duke, 2002) were the benchmarks used to evaluate the district's existing reading program.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The teachers of a small parochial school in Washington State faced deciding whether or not the school needed a new reading curriculum for the upcoming year. Many changes had come about over the past years with regards to the standards used to teach reading. The staff needed to decide whether or not the current reading program met or fell short of those changes and standards. The current program had been in place long before the standards had been changed. If the program no longer met the standards, should a new curriculum be adopted?

A survey, which consisted of eighteen quantitative questions, was given to each elementary teacher at the parochial school. For the purpose of the study, the researcher used only answers to the first eleven questions of the survey, which focused on assessment and materials. The surveys were then analyzed to determine what areas of the current program teachers felt met the standards and also to identify those areas that teachers felt were not up to standard.

Methodology

The researcher used a descriptive design to gather data. The purpose of the study was to gather information concerned with whether or not the teachers of a small parochial school in Washington believed that there was a need for a new reading program at the school based on changes in reading standards. The

researcher focused the survey on the elementary staff at the parochial school for the study. This provided only one group of subjects for the survey.

Participants

Surveys were given to nine elementary teachers in the parochial school in January, 2007. Each participant was the current teacher, grades K-5. All of the teachers who received a survey faced the same decision to be made regarding whether or not the parochial school needed a new reading curriculum. Of the nine surveys given out, all nine (100%) were returned to the principal. Each of the participants in the survey had at least one year of experience using the current reading curriculum. All of the participants in the survey were women ranging in age from late twenties to mid fifties.

Instruments

The instrument used in the study was a survey consisting of eighteen questions. The survey was handed out to participants during a faculty in-service in January, 2007. The survey consisted of questions that ranged from topics that included assessment, materials, and the reading plan for the building. Each section was to be marked as it pertained to the grade level taught. Answers were determined using a yes, no, or don't know scale.

Design

The researcher used a descriptive design. "Descriptive data, also referred to as survey research, determines and describes the way things are. It may also

compare how sub-groups (such as males and females or experienced and inexperienced teachers) view issues and topics” (Airasian, Gay, & Mills, 2006, p. 159).

Data was collected using a survey. The research used could further be specified as quantitative research which according to Airasian, Gay, & Mills (2006) meant that, “the researcher predetermines what variables will be surveyed before selecting or observing the research participants; interviews and observations are then used to gather data” (p. 159). Before beginning the research, the author chose a specific topic to be examined and who the participants for the survey would be. A survey was then created to establish a method of answering questions related to that topic. Each participant was given the same questions to answer.

Procedure

The surveys were given out at a faculty in-service in January, 2007. Directions for the survey were given and answers to questions brought up by the staff were given during a whole group discussion. Teachers were then told that if they had any further questions they would be able to contact the principal and ask. The participants were given a two week period of time to complete the survey. Each survey contained a space for the grade level taught, but no name was required. At the end of the allotted time period the participants were asked to return the completed survey to the principal for analysis. Once the principal had a

chance to look over each survey on her own, a copy was given to the researcher who began the evaluation process for this research project.

Treatment of the Data

In order to analyze the data the researcher looked at two of the three sections of the survey and compared the yes, no, and don't know answers. The number of each was tallied by the researcher. This helped to create a better picture of what the teachers at the parochial school believed about the current program in place. The sections chosen for research were assessment and materials. Combined, these sections contained eleven questions.

Summary

The researcher evaluated a previous survey that had been given by the principal to the entire elementary staff of the parochial school. The researcher then analyzed the surveys. The researcher looked at each survey and compared the number of yes, no, and don't know answers to each of the questions given in the survey. For the purpose of the study, the researcher focused specifically on the eleven survey questions that dealt with assessment and materials.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The researcher used a descriptive survey as a way to analyze the data that had been collected. Nine surveys were given out to the elementary staff of a small parochial school in Washington State. All nine surveys were returned in the allotted amount of time. The researcher analyzed the surveys by comparing the amount of yes, no, and don't know answers on each one.

Description of the Environment

Due to the size of the parochial school, staff was limited. This provided a smaller sample of participants for the survey given. The size of the staff also allowed for a much more in depth understanding of what each of the teachers believed was needed to improve the reading program (this understanding was gained from outside discussions and meetings, as well as survey questions). Since the only section of staff that was contemplating the adoption of a new reading series was the elementary staff, they were the only ones included in the research survey.

Research Question

Did the teachers at the parochial school believe that if a new reading curriculum was adopted and put into place the students would make higher achievement gains in reading?

Results of the Study

Assessment Section

The researcher used a descriptive method to analyze the surveys that had been returned from the participants. Answers were compared to find the number of yes, no and don't know questions, and then a table of the total number for each was made.

Question #1 dealt with whether or not an assessment schedule had been established with the program. The question referred to whether or not a specific schedule for testing was set into the program. Of the nine survey answers given, three of the staff marked yes, five staff marked no, and one staff member marked don't know.

The second question on the survey given to the teachers at the parochial school asked whether or not there was a combination of both formal and informal assessments used to track student performance. Some examples of this included mid-year assessment and a beginning and end of the year assessment. Four of the staff surveyed selected yes, four selected no, and one selected don't know.

Question #3 on the survey focused on how the assessment was linked to the instruction and if the staff felt that it was or was not. Seven of the elementary staff members believed that the current reading program's assessment was linked to instruction while two of the teachers did not.

With regard to question #4, which asked if strategies to identify children at risk of learning disabilities had been established in the program, three staff marked yes, four marked no, and two marked don't know.

When asked if assessment data was used to drive the instruction of the current reading program, question #5, five of the elementary staff selected no, two selected yes, and two selected don't know.

The final question in the assessment section, question #6, wanted to know if the staff believed that the current curriculum provided for a means to follow student progress both individually and in a group based on the assessment. One teacher marked yes, six teachers marked no, and two teachers marked don't know.

Table 1 – Breakdown of Yes, No, and Don’t Know Answers for the Assessment Section

Questions	Yes answers	No answers	Don’t know answers
1. Assessment schedule established?	3	5	1
2. Were formal and informal assessments used?	4	4	1
3. Is assessment linked to instruction?	7	2	0
4. Were critical skills and strategies given?	3	4	2
5. Is assessment used to drive instruction?	2	5	2
6. Do assessments provide methods to monitor progress?	1	6	2

Table 1 provides the breakdown of answers to the Assessment section of the survey given to the elementary staff of the parochial school in Washington State. A small overview of each question in this section of the survey is given.

Materials Section

Question #1 asked whether or not the staff believed that the basic materials used throughout the program provided for consistent instructional strategies for the grade level being taught. Of the nine surveys returned, six staff members selected yes, two selected no, and one selected don't know.

The second question in that section of the survey pertained to whether or not the materials allowed for active learning. Eight of the elementary staff checked no, one checked don't know, and none of the staff members checked yes. This was the only question in both sections of the survey where no one checked yes.

In question #3 the teachers were asked if the materials given coincided with the specific grade level or group that had been taught. Three of the teachers surveyed marked yes, two marked no, and four marked don't know.

Question #4 looked at how the materials reflected a balance in both instruction skills and good literature. Two staff members believed that the current program provided a good balance (yes), six of the staff believed that the current program did not provide a good balance (no), and one member selected don't know.

The final question of the materials section, question #6, asked if the materials provided a variety of skill levels. Three staff checked yes and six staff checked no.

Table 2 – Breakdown of Yes, No, and Don’t Know Answers for the Materials Section

Questions	Yes answers	No answers	Don’t know answers
1. Did materials provide instructional strategies?	6	2	1
2. Did materials allowed for active learning?	0	8	1
3. Did materials reflect instructional goals?	3	2	4
4. Did materials provide balance between instruction and literature?	2	6	1
5. Did materials show a variety of skills?	3	6	0

Table 2 provides the breakdown of answers to the Materials section of the survey given to the elementary staff of the parochial school in Washington State.

A small overview of each question in this section of the survey is given.

Findings

Once the surveys were returned to the researcher, the surveys were reviewed and a comparison was drawn from the answers. The researcher noted that many of the teachers felt a similar way about the curriculum in place at the time of the survey. The elementary staff was consistent in agreeing that the assessment that took place during reading was closely linked to instructional activities. Of the nine surveys returned, seven of the staff members believed this to be true while two of the staff disagreed.

The staff agreed that the assessment did not provide a method for follow up on student progress. When the researcher compared the answers given on the survey it was noted that six of the staff saw no follow up, one staff believed that there was follow up, and two said that they didn't know. Of the nine teachers that were surveyed, eight of them noted that the reading materials in the current program did not allow for active learning to take place.

Another question related to material showed that seven of the nine teachers observed that the materials available did not provide a good balance of skills instruction and good literature. Finally, when asked if the material provided for a variety of skill levels, six teachers felt that the reading curriculum did not.

Table 3 – Overall Totals for Survey given to elementary staff

Survey Section	Yes	No	Don't Know
<i>Assessment Section</i>	20	26	8
<i>Materials Section</i>	14	24	7

Table 3 shows the total number of yes, no, and don't know answers given in both sections of the survey.

When the total number of yes, no, and don't know answers was tallied for each category of the survey, there were twenty yes answers, twenty-six no answers, and eight don't know answers given for the assessment section. There were fourteen yes answers, 24 no answers, and seven don't know answers given for the materials section of the survey. The information given in the survey allowed the researcher to conclude that the staff of the parochial school did not believe that the current reading curriculum was meeting standards.

Discussion

By analyzing the survey filled out by the elementary staff at a small parochial in Washington State the conclusion was drawn that the staff believed there was a need for a new reading curriculum at the elementary level. Survey results showed that teachers were not convinced that the current program was meeting changing instructional methods in reading. While much of the staff

acknowledged that there were parts of the program that continued to work, overall the need for change was evident.

Summary

By analyzing the surveys, the researcher was able to gain a clearer picture of whether or not the staff at the parochial school believed that there was a great need for a new reading curriculum. This information was necessary to determine whether or not the staff should begin the search for an updated reading program that met the new standards.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Over the past ten years the staff at a small parochial school had been using the same basal reading series. With the adoption of the reading series legislation, OSPI had mandated changes to the standards required for teaching reading. Both the principal and members of the elementary staff were concerned that the reading program currently in use did not meet the new standards. The goal of this project was to determine whether or not the staff believed that there was a need for a new, more up to date, reading curriculum. This information was based on survey questions given by the principal.

Summary

The researcher investigated whether or not there was a need for a new reading program at a small parochial school in the state of Washington based on changes to current reading standards over the past few years. A survey given by the school principal was analyzed to determine if the nine elementary faculty members believed there was a need for a more up to date curriculum in reading. One hundred percent of the nine surveys handed out were returned.

The researcher used descriptive data in the form of the survey to determine if the need for a better reading program was a concern of the staff. Once the surveys were collected, all of the answers from each section were compared and a

data table was constructed. Data was reviewed for both sections of the survey, which included assessment and materials. Both sections were comprised of eleven questions. Once a comparison had been made for each answer given in the chosen section, the researcher charted the overall numbers for both sections looking for the total number of answers given. These answers allowed the researcher to come to a conclusion about whether or not the staff of the parochial school believed there was a need for a new curriculum.

Conclusions

The findings of the research project allowed the researcher to come to a clearer conclusion about whether or not the elementary staff at the small parochial school believed there was a need for a more up to date reading curriculum. By using the surveys given to each faculty member and analyzing the answers given in each section, the researcher determined that the need for a new program was evident.

The answers to the survey questions showed that while some of the staff felt that certain parts of the current program were usable, overall a change needed to be made to the program. As a whole the staff provided twenty-six no answers to the six questions in the assessment section and twenty yes answers. In addition, there were twenty-four no answers to the five questions in the materials section and only fourteen yes answers. Due to the fact that each of the sections of the survey asked questions specifically related to the current reading program, the

researcher concluded, based on the answers given, that the nine elementary staff believed that a new program was needed.

Recommendations

The research was limited to a small sample due to small staff size. Future research could be expanded to include the middle school staff as well as the elementary staff. The survey for the middle school would need to be changed however. Questions for a middle school survey would have to include whether or not the teachers felt that the program used in the elementary school was providing a solid foundation for middle school reading, and what aspects of a reading program should be investigated when adopting a new program.

Another recommendation for the future is that a system of evaluation be set up for whatever program the school intends to adopt. The staff should have a scheduled time at the end of each school year where they come together and evaluate what worked with the program and what did not. By doing this yearly the entire staff would have a better idea of what could be changed or enhanced to aid in the teaching of reading.

A final recommendation is that proper training and education of the new program be given to each teacher when the curriculum is adopted. This would allow for the greatest level of success with the new reading program.

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Table 1 – Breakdown of Yes, No, and Don’t Know Answers for the Assessment Section

Questions	Yes answers	No answers	Don’t know answers
1. Assessment schedule established?	3	5	1
2. Were formal and informal assessments used?	4	4	1
3. Is assessment linked to instruction?	7	2	0
4. Were critical skills and strategies given?	3	4	2
5. Is assessment used to drive instruction?	2	5	2
6. Do assessments provide methods to monitor progress?	1	6	2

Table 1 provides the breakdown of answers to the Assessment section of the survey given to the elementary staff of the parochial school in Washington State. A small overview of each question in this section of the survey is given.

Table 2 – Breakdown of Yes, No, and Don’t Know Answers for the Materials Section

Questions	Yes answers	No answers	Don’t know answers
1. Did materials provide instructional strategies?	6	2	1
2. Did materials allowed for active learning?	0	8	1
3. Did materials reflect instructional goals?	3	2	4
4. Did materials provide balance between instruction and literature?	2	6	1
5. Did materials show a variety of skills?	3	6	0

Table 2 provides the breakdown of answers to the Materials section of the survey given to the elementary staff of the parochial school in Washington State.

A small overview of each question in this section of the survey is given.

Table 3 – Overall Totals for Survey given to elementary staff

Survey Section	Yes	No	Don't Know
<i>Assessment Section</i>	20	26	8
<i>Materials Section</i>	14	24	7

Table 3 shows the total number of yes, no, and don't know answers given in both sections of the survey.

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