

Educating Parents on the Accelerated Reading Program

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Purpose of the Study

The Accelerated Reader Program was developed by Paul, VanderZee, Rue and Swanson at the Institute for Academic Excellence. The intention was to provide a computer-based reading program that would be recreational for students and that would provide information to teachers about the students. The majority of the research conducted to date targets the use of the program within the classroom. Results of the program only mention the participation of parents in the program as merely being informed of its existence. Parents are not necessarily included as active players in the daily routines. In fact, it is the lack of research found on the relationship between parent participation and student reading success and reading motivation that fueled the direction of this research. Thus, it created the perfect scenario to investigate the possible connection between parental involvement practices and the success of the Accelerated Reader Program.

Theoretical Framework

Vollands, Topping and Evans (1994) state that a lack of time may be a notable downfall of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program. Therefore, the opportunity to integrate further parent involvement into the AR program provides students with more possibilities for reading time. This component could generate increases in the success rate and reading motivation that the program has set out to accomplish. Johnson and Howard (2003) argue for the importance of recreational reading programs as a means of encouraging the development of a reading habit. Thus, the alignment between parents and schools may produce the reinforcement needed. Hence, it is only fair to say that a home environment conducive to reading and the A.R. program can only foster, not hinder, children's reading habits. Moreover, the research reveals that teachers recognize that parents and family members are the children's first literacy teachers and that they can provide valuable continuing support of their children's literacy development throughout the school years (Sturtevant & Linek, 1999).

Method

This action research study aims at investigating the relationship between student reading success in the Accelerated Reader Program and parental involvement practices. The intervention will target the 3rd grade student population of an elementary school and their parents. The program will be available to all 3rd graders and their parents. An experimental and control group will be employed in the research. A survey will be administered on a pre/post basis to determine children's level of reading motivation. In addition, the students will be pre/post tested with the STAR reading test to determine changes in reading levels. Finally, the on-going monitoring of student progress within the Accelerated Reader Program will measure the success of the relationship between the program and parental involvement. The expectation of this investigation is to support the positive reinforcement created by parent participation in their child's Reading Program and the students' success rate in increasing reading scores and motivation to read.

References

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