

## **Project-Based Learning, Achievement, and Engagement in Second Graders**

Abstract (50 words): Second graders have fertile minds that are constrained by dull curriculums. Teachers fail to foster their interests, students are unengaged and as a result, their achievement suffers. This research will implement Project-Based learning (PBL) with the intention of increasing engagement, which is predicted to also increase achievement.

Statement of the Problem (200 words): Second grade children are much more creative and capable than they are given credit for. This action research project addresses the problem associated with students merely memorizing information and regurgitating it for a weekly test. Too often under these circumstances, students are not engaged or motivated to learn and their achievement suffers. In order to combat these issues, the researcher will implement PBL to investigate whether it is an effective learning model.

Purpose and/or Research Question (50 words): The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of PBL in a second grade Reading and Language Arts classroom. Will PBL increase engagement and achievement in second grade students?

Literature Review (250 words): PBL is a learning model that bases student learning and teacher assessment around projects. It transforms the student from a passive learner to an active learner. According to Thomas (2000), PBL requires students to work on intricate tasks (facilitated by the instructor) that will allow for them to showcase their problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and higher order thinking skills. Other key goals of PBL include authentic content, authentic assessment, teacher facilitation, and explicit educational goals. Teachers must work based on a driving question, enhancing students' inquiry as a whole, and the use of many forms of technology (Zafiroy, 2013). PBL is purported to be a successful learning model because it not only assists the student in achieving more, it also caters to the individual differences between learners that an instructor may have in his or her classroom (Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995).

Research Methodology (200 words): The research will take place at a bilingual K-8 Learning Center located in Miami. The classroom is composed of 25 students, 5 of whom are English Language Learners. It will be a mixed methods study. Quantitative data will be gathered using a behavior checklist to count how many students are on and off task. The researcher will dedicate 7 minutes each day, over a 2 week period, to completing the checklist. Grades will provide additional quantitative data. Qualitative data will be gathered in the form of practitioner's notes. The notes will capture specific data on student behaviors and attitudes. The researcher will include suggestions for herself to enhance the study and will document what methods seem to be working and what methods do not. The study will take place over a four-week period. The first week will be used to gather baseline data. The intervention will be implemented during the second week. The data will be sorted and analyzed during the third week. The fourth week will

consist of the reflection, interpreting, and writing process. In order to determine any impact PBL had on students' learning, the researcher will use a paired *t* test to compare baseline and intervention data.

Findings or Results (200 words): The research will be conducted during early 2015. The researcher anticipates that the implementation of PBL and the increased cognitive challenge presented to students will result in advancement of skills and rich classroom discussions, thus positively influencing the students' overall achievement. Data analysis and interpretation and preparation of the findings for presentation will be completed by early May 2015.

Implications for the Field (100 words): Consistent with the tenets of action research, this study has the potential to improve both teaching and research practices for the practitioner. It will be valuable in guiding future decisions based on how classroom instruction will be carried out. It will also give the practitioner an enhanced understanding of the students, their needs, and what methods better engage them in learning.

#### References

- Bartscher, K., Gould, B., & Nutter, S. (1995). Increasing student motivation through project- based learning (Master's Research Project). Saint Xavier and IRI Skylight (ED 392 549).
- Thomas, J.W. (2000). A review of research on project based learning. Buck Institute of Educational Research.
- Zafirov, C. H. (2013). New challenges for the project based learning in the digital age. *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, 11(3), 298-302.