

Reciprocal Teaching

Abstract

Reciprocal teaching is a research-based approach that teachers utilize to model the four comprehension strategies while leading a dialogue (IES WWC, 2013; Vaca, et al., 2011). The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the use of the reciprocal teaching will improve students with specific learning disabilities' scores on reading comprehension assessments.

Statement of Problem

It is critical that all children, including children with disabilities, be provided with a solid foundation in literacy as early as possible so that they develop skills that allow them to become self reliant, independent, and employable. The five critical components of literacy are: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension (Goldstein, 2011). Many teachers are experiencing the literacy crisis first hand and are concerned with the amount of children that have difficulty with reading comprehension (Kelly & Campbell, n.d). Due to difficulty in reading, “struggling readers experience negative consequences: grade retention, assignment to special education classrooms, or participation in long-term remedial services” (Kelly & Campbell, n.d., para. 1).

Given that reading is a complex continuum process, many students struggle with reading comprehension because they have a crack in their foundations of literacy. In these scenarios, educators must provide differentiated instruction for emergent readers to help them keep up with the aligned curriculum. One evidence-based strategy that teachers can implement into the learning is the use of the reciprocal teaching strategy to model the cognitive process of reading comprehension.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching is a research-based approach that targets comprehension skills and encourages active student participation (Stricklin, 2011). During reciprocal teaching, the teacher models how to use four comprehension strategies while leading a dialogue: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (IES WWC, 2013; Vaca, Vaca, & Mraz, 2011).

Purpose and/or Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the use of the reciprocal teaching will improve students with specific learning disabilities' scores on reading comprehension assessments.

Literature Review

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the educational gap that exists between students with reading difficulties and those of their peers who read successfully appears to be increasing (Hagaman, Luschen, & Reid, 2010). As a result, more and more teachers are encountering students with reading difficulties (Hagaman, et al., 2010). Hagaman et al. found that a great emphasis is placed on early intervention programs, such as Response to Intervention, in an attempt to improve students' reading difficulties; however, these programs mainly focus on foundational skills and sometimes "overlook reading comprehension" (Hagaman, et al., 2010, p. 22).

Rosenshine and Meister (1994) conducted a review of literature of sixteen studies on the reciprocal teaching model. All the studies included in this review were quantitative in methodology. All 16 studies meet specific criteria related to reciprocal teaching. The researchers found that the overall summary for all results found that "when standardized tests were used, the reciprocal teaching treatment was significantly superior to the control treatment"

(Rosenshine et al., 1994, p. 505). Additionally, the research findings found “when experimenter-developed comprehension tests were used, students in the reciprocal teaching treatment had scores that were significantly superior to those of the control group” ”

(Rosenshine et al., 1994, p. 505).

Additionally, Lederer (2000) conducted a study and examined the effectiveness of reciprocal teaching during social studies instruction with several students with learning disabilities in fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade inclusive classrooms. The research concluded that although there is not one technique itself that can meet the needs of all students, the results of the study “lend support to the notion that scaffold approaches to learning, such as reciprocal teaching, help to improve some measure of comprehension for students with learning disabilities” (Lederer, 2000, p. 101).

Research Methodology

This action research took place in a Miami-Dade Public elementary school in a fourth grade Language Arts/Reading resource class. The six students who participated in the study have been identified as students with specific learning disabilities. The six students are currently reading below grade level and have difficulty with reading comprehension. The researched-based reciprocal teaching intervention targeted comprehension skills and encouraged active student participation. During reciprocal teaching, the teacher modeled how to use four comprehension strategies while leading a dialogue: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting (IES WWC, 2013; Vaca, et al., 2011). This research-based teaching approach was implemented during the instructional time in teacher- and student-led cooperative learning groups of two through the use of visual and hands-on tools, such as visual posters, bookmarks, sentence starters, sequencing strips, and graphic organizers.

Data was collected before, during, and after the reciprocal teaching strategy had been implemented. The necessary resources for conducting this action research included, but were not limited to; Miami-Dade County's fourth grade language arts/reading curriculum, fourth grade language arts/reading Florida State Standards, i-Ready Diagnostic Tests' results, pre-and post-ReadWorks, Inc. reading comprehension assessments, and rubrics.

Findings or Results

The findings of this action research were consistent with the research found prior to initiating the intervention. The research supported the need to spend instructional time teaching specific reading comprehension skills to students with learning disabilities. This particular intervention focused on teaching students the four comprehension strategies while leading a dialogue: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting.

Based on the data, it appeared that the reciprocal teaching strategy to model the cognitive process of reading comprehension did improve most of the students with specific learning disabilities' scores on reading comprehension tests in this study. Improvement in students' average reading comprehension scores increased. By providing the students with visual and hands-on tools, such as visual posters, bookmarks, sentence starters, sequencing strips, and graphic organizers the students were more independent and on-task. Moreover, by providing the students with Reciprocal Teaching Student Self-Evaluation, it allowed them to monitor their (a) preparedness; (b) participation; (c) on-task behavior; and (d) improvement.

These finding revealed that most students reading below grade level can improve their reading comprehension scores through the use of an effective teaching instruction. Most students' focus increased as well as their reading comprehension test scores. These findings

support the research that metacognitive awareness significantly increases students' scores (Block and Israel, 2012).

Implications for the Field

Liang and Dole (2006) claim that although reading comprehension has been a “hot topic” and “research of interest” for influential publications, the National Reading Panel, and the Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement “ many teachers are still not sure about how to teach comprehension” (p. 742 & 743). Reciprocal Teaching can provide an opportunity for students with specific learning disabilities to develop a solid foundation in literacy so that they can develop skills that allow them to become self-reliant, independent, and employable. Additionally, the Reciprocal Teaching technique can provide teachers with a blue print to teach student teaching reading comprehension skills.

References

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