

Priscila Ferguson

READ180 Action Research Conference Proposal

Florida International University

Abstract

The READ180 program is a program that is designed to address gaps in reading abilities through the use of three main components; direct instruction, differentiated instruction, and computer-assisted instruction within a 90 minute instructional period (IES, 2010). The program has been found to have positive effects on adolescent struggling readers.

Statement of Problem

Within the public school system the focus has turned to learning gains and assigned school grades based on standardized assessment. While this has transcended it seems that along the way, there has been a broken link when pertaining to literacy. It seems that the populations of adolescent students who are struggling readers have increased over time and nothing has occurred as of yet in order to rectify it adequately.

As it pertains to literacy the idea is to provide reading strategies and share best practices to teachers in order to address the five key components of reading known as the Big Five: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension (Goldstein, 2011). The question is, has this been enough to make a long lasting change? Many students enter secondary schooling (i.e. middle and high school) as struggling readers and at times completely illiterate. A struggling reader within our public school classroom struggles with blending, decoding and comprehension.

Purpose/ Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore if direct instruction from a small group setting combined with technology will help struggling readers build their phonics and blending abilities in order to increase comprehension levels by asking the following question: How effective is the READ180 program for struggling adolescent readers with disabilities in middle school?

Literature Review

In 2005, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that 43% of eighth grade students on free or reduced lunch scored below the basic level as compared to their peers who did not qualify (Cobb, 2010). While researchers from other studies show that about 6 million secondary students read far below grade level and have difficulties understanding core subject matter (Slavin, Cheung, Groff, & Lake, 2008). In addition, in the review by Slavin, et.al. (2008), it was noted that in 2006 The American College Test Inc. (ACT) reported that only 51% of students who took the ACT test displayed their readiness for college-level reading demands.

Additionally, adolescents who struggle in one area in reading such as in word recognition, will also struggle in comprehension and spend more time attempting to decode words. As teachers look to improve reading skills they must understand that they are not consecutive, instead they are relational and work at the same time (Brasseur-Hock, Hock, Keiffer, Biancarosa, & Deshler, 2011). Previous studies show that many urban schools prefer direct instruction as their style of teaching struggling readers (Cobb, 2010), but the problem still continues to rise. Due to these statistics across the country, instruction in reading has increased throughout our nation's classrooms by providing reading to all middle and high school students as a part of their coursework (Slavin, et.al. 2008). There are several researched-based strategies that have been utilized with this population, but there are limited reading programs that include a mixed model approach.

Research Methodology

This action research took place in a Miami-Dade County Public Middle School Intensive Reading Plus classroom. Eleven FCAT level 1 students in a varying exceptionalities class, who were identified. Of these eleven minority students eight were male and three were female. The

classroom teacher was responsible for implementing the strategies such as rereading of the selected text, think write pair share, teacher modeling, phonics intervention, used during teacher directed small group instruction. In addition, the use of computer assisted instruction was utilized to monitored bi-weekly by the teacher. The teacher is certified in Reading, ESOL, and Special Education K-12.

In order to ensure that ethical standards are met, school administration and parents were notified and asked to provide consent in order for the students to participate in the research study.

The necessary resources for this action research included, but were not limited to, the Miami-Dade approved Scholastic Read180 curriculum, which includes a technology component that was implemented fifteen to twenty minutes daily at least four times a week. The assessment tools used to monitor progress and outcomes for this study were the iREADY Reading Assessment, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI).

Findings

The findings of this action research were consistent with the research found prior to initiating the intervention. The research supported the need to provide a mixed model curriculum that includes direct instruction, differentiated instruction, and computer assisted instruction within the reading classroom for struggling adolescent readers. By including these various components, the teacher is able to meet the students both grade level and instructional level needs. There was evidence of an increase in decoding, vocabulary, and in comprehension. The placement data revealed the need for differentiated instruction due to the various levels within the target group. The program decreased the student's frustration level and hence created an environment that encouraged independence and active learning opportunities. The use of

manipulatives, graphic organizers, sentence starters, and reflection logs for independent reading allowed students to remain on task and become more reflective of their work.

The research targeted eleven students with Varying Exceptionalities in an Intensive Reading class. The research findings, although not highly significant, revealed that a mixed model approach for struggling adolescent readers can improve their motivation and their reading comprehension scores.

Implications

Based on the data collected, it can be inferred that the READ180 program is able to improve comprehension levels when implemented appropriately. The combined use of CAI, direct, and differentiated instruction would highly address a student's individual deficiencies when implemented during 20-minute daily instructional rotations. The intervention would have shown higher effective results if the suggested time frames were implemented effectively. Additionally, the intervention gathered that the incorporation of CAI, will motivate and encourage students throughout their progress and help increase learning gains in reading comprehension.

References

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