

Reciprocal Peer Tutoring with Immediate Corrective Peer Feedback for Teaching Decoding and Building Fluency in Students with Learning Disabilities

Abstract

This poster depicts the findings of an action research study that occurred this spring within the inclusion setting. Students with Learning Disabilities (LD), demonstrating deficiencies in fluency and decoding abilities, participated in weekly peer-tutoring sessions with immediate corrective feedback that examined whether this intervention effectively increased their reading skills.

Statement of the Problem

Students identified as LD tend to experience more academic hardships than their peers without learning disabilities in a variety of subjects. These students are accountable in high-stakes tests such as the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). More than three-fourths of students with LD demonstrate the most academic deficits in reading (Harwell & Jackson, 2008; Lenz & Deshler, 2004). According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2008), Students identified as LD tend to fall approximately 3 grade levels below their nondisabled peers (Melekoglu, 2011). Many students spend the majority of their academic careers attempting to catch-up. Certain expectations, such as pacing guides, add pressure to teachers in inclusion classrooms. Struggling readers are not provided with the extra practice needed in order to flourish academically.

Achievement expectations for proficiency in reading are heightened upon entering the upper grade levels of elementary school (Melekoglu, 2011). The focus on the fundamentals becomes overshadowed by the more abstract components of the process, such as deciphering figurative language and identifying themes. Students unable to grasp learning vowel patterns and sight words are left far behind peers without LD (Melekoglu, 2011). Many are not ready for what is expected of them in 4th and 5th grade.

Purpose and/or Research Question

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the use of reciprocal peer tutoring with immediate peer corrective feedback improves the ability to decode and recall sight words in students with LD. These skills are critical for success. Thus, the lack of these fundamental skills may hinder prosperity in academic endeavors.

Literature Review

Many research studies support the premise that reciprocal peer tutoring has a positive impact on many students, including students with disabilities, across a wide range of academic content areas such as reading, science and mathematics (e.g., Calhoon, 2005; Calhoon, Otaiba, Cihak, King, & Avalos, 2007; Kourea, Cartledge, & Musti-Rao, 2007; Mackiewicz, Wood, Cooke & Mazzotti, 2011; Sáenz, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). Reciprocal peer tutoring can be a valuable tool to incorporate into any classroom, as it enables students to take ownership of their learning, as well as play a vital role in the education of their peers. Reciprocal peer tutoring has shown to be successful across studies in the inclusive setting within the elementary grades (Kourea et al., 2007; Norman & Wood, 2008).

Instructional feedback that is immediate and accurate has the greatest impact on the level of success of peer tutoring as well as skill acquisition (Mackiewicz et al., 2011; Norman & Wood, 2008). Research of the use of audio prompting in peer tutoring has shown to aid the process when tutoring is conducted with a majority of low achieving students. Audio prompting may help reduce the need for constant teacher monitoring and students reported using devices such as a VoicePod was enjoyable (Mackiewicz et al., 2011; Norman & Wood, 2008). Student level of engagement increased through the use of such devices, thus aiding on task behavior during intervention. In this literature review, the research on the intervention on the components of reading and other content areas were reviewed.

Research Methodology

The action research will take place in a 2nd grade and 3rd grade general education reading class in a Miami-Dade County public charter school. The eight students who will participate in the study have an eligibility of LD and are being taught in the inclusion classroom. The four students in 2nd grade are male and Hispanic. The 3rd grade participants include three Hispanic females and one Hispanic male.

There will be three types of data collection were included in the research plan: curriculum-based assessment, student work samples and a student interview. The curriculum-based assessment measurement assessed fluency of grade level decoded words in grades level probes that incorporated various vowel patterns within a time frame of 60 seconds from www.EasyCBM.com, were used as a pre & posttest. Furthermore, Oral weekly exams as student work samples incorporating studied sight words along with different words exhibiting the vowel

patterns studied were also used. A student interview survey utilizing a Likert scale in order to assess student attitudes of the applied intervention was also utilized.

Results

The findings revealed throughout the course of this study did not pose any contradictions with the research gathered prior to the commencement of the intervention. The research results supported the findings of previously examined studies regarding peer tutoring and the positive influence that it has on students who experience difficulties in reading and other content areas in the inclusive classroom (Calhoon, 2005; Calhoon et al., 2007; Kourea et al., 2007; Mackiewicz et al., 2011; Sáenz et al., 2005).

After collecting data for six weeks on the percent correct high frequency words and vowel pattern specific words read, it is evident reading skills, particularly in the areas of decoding and sight word recognition, had sustained itself at an acceptable percentage by the end of the intervention. Results on the student survey indicated that the intervention had an overall positive impact on reading enthusiasm as well as student perceptions on peer tutoring as a useful teaching strategy. Careful analysis of the pre and posttests showed that peer tutoring assisted in improving reading skills. More than half of the students displayed gains in fluency and a decrease in errors made when examining the performance for each student during the pretest to the posttest.

Implications

Reading accounts for success in all subject areas. Vowel patterns and sight words need to stand out to students with LD. Additionally, repetition and extra time for processing are needed

for skill acquisition as well as building procedural knowledge. Thus, Reciprocal peer tutoring is an evidence-based technique that can be customized by the teacher to suit the needs of the students. Additional skill practice is critical for retention of skills, particularly in students who are LD. Developing self-worth through teaching others may help these students obtain the abilities needed for mastery on assessments, while continuing to pursue future educational ventures.

References

- Calhoon, M. B. (2005). Effects of a peer-mediated phonological skill and reading comprehension program on reading skill acquisition for middle school students with reading disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 38*(5), 424-33.
- Calhoon, M. B., Otaiba, S. A., Cihak, D., King, A., & Avalos, A. (2007). Effects of a peer mediated program on reading skill acquisition for two-way bilingual first-grade classrooms. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 30*(3), 169-184.
- Harwell, J. M., & Jackson, R. W. (2008). *The complete learning disabilities handbook*. San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kourea, L., Cartledge, G., & Musti-Rao, S. (2007). Improving the reading skills of urban elementary students through total class peer tutoring. *Remedial & Special Education, 28*(2), 95-107.
- Lenz, B. K., & Deshler, D. D. (2004). Adolescents with learning disabilities: Revisiting the educator's enigma. In B. Y. L. Wong (Ed.), *Learning about learning disabilities* (pp. 535-564). San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.

- Mackiewicz, S. M., Wood, C. L., Cooke, N. L., & Mazzotti, V. L. (2011). Effects of peer tutoring with audio prompting on vocabulary acquisition for struggling readers. *Remedial and Special Education, 32*(4), 345.
- Melekoglu, M. A. (2011). Impact of motivation to read on reading gains for struggling readers with and without learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 34*(4), 248-261.
- National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (2008). Adolescent literacy and older students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 31*, 211-218.
- Norman, R. K. V., & Wood, C. L. (2008). Effects of prerecorded sight words on the accuracy of tutor feedback. *Remedial and Special Education, 29*(2), 96-107.
- Sáenz, L.,M., Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (2005). Peer-assisted learning strategies for English language learners with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 71*(3), 231-247.