

2014

America reads: A tale of two studies

E. Dodgins

S. Hamilton

K. Herring

J. Hughes

D. Jennings

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/foci>

Recommended Citation

Dodgins, E.; Hamilton, S.; Herring, K.; Hughes, J.; Jennings, D.; Ramey, M. D.; Homer, A.; and Gambrell, L., "America reads: A tale of two studies" (2014). *Focus on Creative Inquiry*. 75.
<https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/foci/75>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Research and Innovation Month at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Focus on Creative Inquiry by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

Authors

E. Dodgins, S. Hamilton, K. Herring, J. Hughes, D. Jennings, M. D. Ramey, A. Homer, and L. Gambrell

America Reads: A Tale of Two Studies

Emily Dodgins, Seirra Hamilton, Jordyn Hughes, Destin Jennings & Kristen Herring

Advisors: Deanna Ramey, Anastasia Homer & Dr. Linda B. Gambrell

America Reads at Clemson University

America Reads is a Federal Work Study program active on the Clemson University campus since 1997. America Reads employs undergraduate students from across majors as tutors for struggling readers, this year serving nearly 70 K-3 students at Clemson Elementary School. Since 2011, the America Reads program has benefited from an association with Creative Inquiry (CI) through service and research. The research generated by the CI teams has been presented at national conferences and informed program practice.

Successful tutoring programs...what does the literature suggest?

America Reads strives to be a better program each year. With that in mind, the research team reviewed the literature to determine what factors positively impact tutoring programs similar to ours. Afterward, each researcher developed an idea for a research-based intervention aimed at improving the reading motivation and achievement of the students in our program. Though none were identical, the 5 ideas presented naturally clustered into 1 of 2 overarching ideas. Rather than voting for, or having the advisors choose one, the team, now divided, embarked on two pilot studies, now in



Group 1's Research-based Idea:

Children engage in richer discussions during tutoring sessions and are more motivated when they are in

Research Question:

"In an after-school tutoring program for struggling readers grades K-3, does interactive discussion with targeted questions during read-alouds between pairs of students and their tutors improve the students' motivation to read?"

Participants:

Participants were tutor-student pairs in the America Reads program. We used convenience sampling to select pairs of tutors that worked on the same days. When multiple pairing options were available we made random assignments.

Procedures:

The participating tutors were given instructions for implementing the intervention, which utilizes a team-approach for one segment of the standard lesson plan. The intervention requires tutor pairs to take turns leading the read-aloud segment. They choose books appropriate for both students, no matter the grades level, and they consider factors that contribute to a "good read-aloud" book (i.e. eye-catching illustrations, rich text, high interest etc.). During the read-aloud, the tutor leading that session reads the book they have chosen and uses a variety of open-ended questions to stimulate discussion about the book. Tutors are encouraged to model rich discussion by talking to his/her fellow tutor during the read-aloud and asking for their input about the book, just as they would ask the children. Deviation from prepared questions is encouraged if tutors feel the questioning will ignite a discussion and/or builds off the responses of their students. Researchers observe and provide feedback to the tutors during the initial 2 sessions, and then on request.

Data Analysis & Next Steps:

This study is ongoing. Upon completion, pre- and post-intervention reading achievement scores (from testing done in the classroom), and results of reading motivation assessments administered by America Reads staff will be compared to those in the control group. Qualitative data such as observation records, and interviews of tutors and students will also be evaluated.

Group 2's Research-based Idea:

Children have better tutoring outcomes when there is improved tutor-teacher communication.

Development of Intervention:

The intervention envisioned would have involved an initial one-on-one meeting followed by ongoing weekly email exchanges between tutors and their student's teacher. This would supplement a handwritten weekly progress report which is designed to inform parents, and to a lesser extent teachers, about a particular students' progress but has also been used as a vehicle for communication from teachers and parents. The team discussed the fact that it was not feasible to accurately test the intervention envisioned because not enough time remained in the school year. They were curious, however, about whether even a single face-to-face meeting between a student's tutor and teacher would increase teachers' use of the progress report to communicate with their students' tutors.

Obstacles to implementation:

Though a sample of tutors had been chosen to test Group 2's theory, there were difficulties regarding setting up meetings with the tutor participants to provide them with information about the intervention. Further, both Clemson University and Clemson Elementary School were going to be on week-long breaks at different times, which was hampering the researchers' ability to set up meetings with teachers.

Challenges Provide New Focus:

With challenges hampering their modified plan, Group 2 decided to take a step back. The focus had been on the tutors' actions and less so on what would be required on the teachers' part. Intent on conducting the original study in the fall, Group 2 decided to turn their focus to collecting data from the teachers geared toward creating a viable intervention. A survey was developed to gauge teachers' interest in having increased communication with their students' tutors, determine the kinds of communication they felt would be most beneficial, and get a sense of the timing and frequency of communication teachers would prefer. A questionnaire was created on Survey Monkey and distributed to all of the K-3 teachers.