

Closing the Reading Gap

Abstract

Changes in federal regulations regarding phonics instruction show that there is an ongoing problem concerning early reading difficulties. This research looks at how the Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons reading program can benefit phonics skills and phonemic awareness of first graders who are not yet reading.

Statement of the Problem

According to the US Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy (2013), 32 million adults in the US cannot read, 21% of adults read below a 5th grade level, and 19% of high school graduates cannot read. Needless to say, learning to read continues to be a struggle for many.

Early intervention is the key in closing the reading gap between struggling readers and their peers. As cited by Balsiger (n.d.), according to the National Institute of Health (NIH), 95% of children who have trouble learning to read can reach grade level if they receive specialized help early on. First grade has been shown to be a significant indicator of eleventh grade reading levels (Balsiger, n.d.). According to research, children who read below grade level in the 3rd grade are seldom able to succeed in reaching the level of their achieving peers in later grades (Balsiger, n.d.). Most struggling readers spend the majority of their school day in classrooms with lessons structured on a grade level they have not yet reached. According to Allington (2008), struggling readers continue to struggle because they get far less appropriate instruction every day than the achieving students do.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons (Engelmann, Haddox, & Bruner, 1986) reading program will benefit phonemic awareness and phonics skills of first grade students who are not yet reading.

Literature Review

Students who struggle with learning to read in the 1st grade tend to experience difficulties in other areas of school and are less likely than their achieving peers to graduate high school or pursue post-secondary education (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014).

In a synthesis by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (2014) in which the IES reviewed the results of the first eight years of IES-funded research that focused on ways to prevent reading difficulties in students with or at risk for reading disabilities, it was revealed that minority students, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency are more susceptible to reading difficulties.

The Teaching Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons (Engelmann et al., 1986) reading program is consistent with the Direct Instruction (DI) principles of design. According to research, DI has been documented as the most effective strategy to teach reading to children from low-income families and children with disabilities (McCollough, Weber, Derby & McLaughlin, 2008). Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons highlights the significance of the explicit teaching of phonemic awareness along with 44 sound correspondences. These selected correspondences allow for the decoding of 95% of the sounds in the students' typically available reading texts, and close approximations for 98% (Teach Your Child to Read, n.d.).

Research Methodology

The action research will take place in a Miami-Dade County public school. First grade students who have been identified as non-readers will participate in the study. The 1st grade teacher will designate a pull-out period within the general school day. The students will be given a daily 20-minute lesson. The teacher will be responsible for implementing the reading program and the collection of data.

Data will be collected on the following variables: (a) alphabet skills (letter names, consonant sounds, long vowel sounds, short vowel sounds), (b) reading and decoding skills (short vowels in CVC words, digraphs, and -tch words, consonant blends with short vowels, long vowel spelling words, variant vowels and diphthongs, r- and l- controlled vowels, multisyllabic words), (c) spelling skills (initial consonants, final consonants, CVC words, long vowel spellings), (d) number of correct responses on correlating student assignments, and (e) number of words correct.

Findings/ Results

Research findings will be available in time for the conference and will be presented.

Implications

Findings from this action research project may be beneficial for elementary school teachers who work with struggling readers. In addition, this research has implications for teachers who work with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities.

References

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