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Accountability and Literacy/Reading Interventions for Middles School Students

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Accountability and Literacy/Reading Interventions for Middles School Students

A Thesis Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

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Accountability and Literacy/Reading Interventions

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Abstract

We have found that the students who reach the expectations for the independent work, Student Application and independent reading are the individuals whose Lexile scores have increased the most. With that being said, we are also finding that many students are not taking personal ownership in their independent work. They were not meeting the expectations for Student Application and independent reading. In hopes to increase students Lexile scores, I would have like students to be held accountable for reaching the class expectations for Student Application and independent reading. To achieve this, I would have used a tiered system that would have been used within the classroom to check students Student Application minutes and the progress they would have made on their independent reading book. Due to Covid-19, and the closing of schools, I was not able to collect the data needed to complete this research. Instead, I journaled throughout my time teaching from home and found common themes throughout that data collection.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

General Problem/Issue

We have found that the students who reach the expectations for the independent work, Student Application, and independent reading, are the individuals whose Lexile scores have increased the most. With that being said, we are also finding that many students are not taking personal ownership in their independent work at the middle school level. Many students are not meeting the expectations for Student Application and independent reading, their grades and Lexile scores are showing it.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research would have been to increase student's accountability when completing reading intervention independent work, which then would have increased their Lexile scores. The independent work for the reading intervention class I teach is independent reading and Student Application. Throughout this research, I would have been looking to see if a tiered behavior system will increase the student's accountability to reach the expectations of completing independent work. In return, the students that would have met these expectations, I would have looked to see if that increased their Reading Inventory and Lexile scores.

Subject and Setting

Description of Subjects

To see if there is a positive effect of student's Lexile growth and their accountability in with their independent work in reading intervention, I would have my period 4 students as my

participants. This group was made up of one seventh grader and nine eighth graders. This group of students was not motivated to complete their independent work. They were not taking personal accountability in completing their independent work and their scores and data are reflecting. I would have used the data from the first two quarters and compared them to the data that I would have gathered during quarter four, after the interventions were put into place.

Selection Criteria

To complete this research, the students would have all need books within their Lexile range, which is 100 points above and 50 points below their latest Lexile score. The students would have needed a computer and headphones, to complete their Student Application. I would have also been giving the students a survey to have a better understanding of why they are not meeting the expectations and what would have motivated them to have more accountability with their independent work. Throughout the research, I would have be tracking their minutes on Student Application and the progress they were making on their independent reading book on a data record sheet. Also, would have used a template to help the students come up with a plan to improve their accountability when they were not meeting the expectations and a form to help them format an email to their parents.

Research Ethics

The ethical issues would have been very limited with this study. If any of the students would have expressed concerns or anxiety with the tiered behavior system I would have dealt with those ethical issues as they would have arisen, accordingly. The expectations throughout this study are expectations that the students have had all school year, minus the tiered behavior system. One of the only ethical issues that would have played a part is my one other class period

who would have not taken part of the study. Although, I do, do individual check ins with all my students in each of my classes, the class participating in my study would have had check ins that looked a little different than those in the other classes. If this would have arisen an issue, I would have dealt with it accordingly to make sure there were no ethical issues with collecting data for my research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Independent Reading

There is a lot that goes into teaching students to be able to independent read. As a teacher, we do not want to only teach them how to read but also to help them find the love for reading. Habits of independent reading are strong indicators of school and reading success. Studies have found that students who achieved high scores on reading assessments, among other indicators of literacy learning, appeared to have high intrinsic motivation to read (Knoester, p. 1, 2010). Reading is so important in many aspects of life. Students who find the love for reading at a young age, are found to achieve higher scores on assessments throughout their schooling. Reading is important in school, but it is important to remember that it exists outside of the four walls of the classroom too (Flowers, 2017, p. 20).

A history of low confidence and ability are said to be linked to difficulty with getting students to read. Almost all students and parents spoke fondly about reading aloud, and even though the students were in middle school, they still loved being read to (Knoester, 2010, p. 6). When students are struggling readers, by the time they get to middle school, it is important to have specific approach to enhance classroom instruction and systematic implementation for intensive interventions to be sure to meet the instructional needs of the struggling learner. This is known as, response to intervention (RTI). The goal of any RTI approach is to raise the achievement levels of all students, which requires a multi-tiered approach beginning in general education setting that provides increasingly intense and differentiated interventions for students who struggle with reading and learning from text (Vaughn et al., 2010, p.338).

When books are tied to social interactions, I noticed students seemed to love to talk about enjoyable reading material and made connections to what they read (Knoester, 2010, p. 6). It is important to involve literature circles, so students can talk about the books they are reading. Literature circles allow students to discuss books in small groups and engage in social interaction around a book. When helping a student pick a book, it is important for teachers to ask themselves, "What are kids interested in?" "What do kids identify with?" "Is there literature available that fit each child's emerging identity?" "Are there groups of students who will find particular books and topics to be socially acceptable?" (Knoester, 2010, p. 7). Students like to read about topics that they can discuss with their friends, peers, and siblings. When other students are excited about books, that turns students onto a book and gets them excited to read the book.

Tiered Reading

In a perfect world, few students would emerge with reading difficulties in middle school. If schools successfully implement early intervention programs, not only should the number of struggling readers be reducing, but also schools should be able to readily identify these students. The demands of secondary school for increasingly difficult vocabulary and comprehension will cause some students who had not previously demonstrated reading problems to struggle (Vaughn et all., 2010, p.343). Schools should have a multi-tiered approach, that is anchored in an RTI model. The RTI model should include a screening, progress monitoring, and increasingly intense instruction for those struggling. The result of the RTI models in middle school, will establish efficacy and illuminate some of the implementation and policy issues related to enhancing literacy outcomes at this level of development. It also needs to include an

instructional framework that addresses the literacy needs of not only struggling readers but all middle school students.

Teaching Independent Reading and Accountability

"I've learned to help students develop strong reading lives by providing guidance, access to books, in-class reading time, and a small measure of motivational accountability" (Flowers, 2017, p. 8). This can look very different for each student, depending on the support and guidance the student may need. Each student many struggles with a different part of reading. The variation in reading-related difficulties is greater in older students. Some students require many of the elements related to reading difficulties in younger students, such as alphabetic principle, word-reading strategies, or fluency. While other students may struggle because of the accumulated negative outcomes associated with low levels of reading (Vaughn et al., 2010, p.338). These factors include limited vocabulary and concept knowledge, lack of knowledge of comprehension strategies for reading diverse text types and low motivation for reading.

Ultimately, as teacher, the most important goal you should have for students, is to enable them, after finishing your class, to walk into a bookstore and be able to find a book they love (Flowers, 2017, p.9). It is important to remember that our students do not just exist inside our four classroom walls, but they have present and past lives that color their approach to learning. Another goal for any middle school teacher is to build student independence. Middle school teachers not only provide foundational content knowledge, but they also provide the foundational skill sets that will help students succeed in high school, postsecondary education, and life (McGlynn, Kelly, 2019, p. 22).

It is so important for students to learn how to become independent readers and learners. This helps that to learn how to take responsibility for their actions and to hold themselves accountable. Middle school is an important time for students to explore strategies that will work for them. During this process of helping students become more independent and accountable, expectations and classroom norms are very important. Small groups can be very beneficial and provide an opportunity to address different learning needs of a variety of learners in a classroom. For small group to be beneficial to all students, the students that you are not working with, need to be working on an independent activity. For the students that are working on independent activities, need to have expectations so you are not interrupted by students who are supposed to be able to complete the task on their own.

You are not only a teacher to these students but also a coach. You should encourage your students to read and develop their stamina and fluency. As their teacher, you should be encouraging students to struggle, struggle is good and where the learning happens (McGlynn, Kelly, 2010, p.26). You should help students identify areas of strengths and areas where they still need to improve. This helps students be self-aware, which is another indispensable life skill that will help build their independence. Middle school is the time when students can develop crucial life skills in a secure environment. For, this to be successful, the classroom needs to have clear expectations and following through consistently, forming a connection between home and school, and implementing strategies that give students ownership of their own education. As their teacher, you will help bridge the gap between elementary and high school and facilitate the personal growth that will someday help students become functional responsible and accountable.

Ethical Issues

A possible ethical issue in this study would have been the fact that one class period has been chosen to participate in this study. The group of students may have received extra support, guidance, and one-on-one interactions with the teacher compared to other students and classes which they could have also benefitted from.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Questions

How would have the implementation of tiered behavior system affect student's independent

performance in the reading intervention setting?

1. How would have a one to one meeting with the student affect the student's

   accountability when working independently on reading intervention task?

2. How would have the involvement of parent contact through email exchange affect the

   student's accountability when working independently on reading intervention tasks?

3. How would have the involvement of parent contact through phone-call affect the

   student's accountability when working independently on reading intervention tasks?

Methods

Data Collection

Data would have been collected through student surveys, observations, progress notes

and curriculum-based assessments. Surveys would have been gathered at the beginning of the

quarter, in the middle of the quarter and during the last week of the quarter. The survey would

have asked the students how they feel their motivation is related to reading independent work,

independent reading, and student software. The first survey would have asked them, what would

have motivated them to be accountable and how the teacher could have helped them be

successful in this area of the reading intervention class. There responses would have been

analyzed and revised to collect the desired data as set out in the research design.

Observations data would have been gathered through the progress notes and record log

by the classroom teacher. This would have provided the weekly progress of the student's

progress in their independent books and the week average of minutes they are receiving on student software. The observations would have also noted, if the teacher and student had a conversation about the students' progress, if the student had to email home or if a call home was made.

The curriculum-based assessment that would have been used is the Reading Inventory to show students growth over the school year and quarter. The students' scores from the Reading Inventory from the beginning of the school year and eight weeks later would have been used as a starting point. The students will be retaking the Reading Inventory every eight weeks, those scores would have been graphed to show the students growth over the school year. The Reading Inventory score is given through the students Lexile score, our goal is to have the student increase their score over the school year.

What an Auto-Ethnography is

An auto-ethnography is a research method that allows the author to write a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding of the experience. The intent of auto-ethnography is to acknowledge the inextricable link between the person and the cultural and for nontraditional inquiries and expressions (Wall, 2013, p. 6). Also, auto-ethnography uses a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and context to gain a between understanding of the connectivity between self and the others within the same context. This research method is distinctive from others in three ways, it is qualitative, self-focused, and context conscious. Auto-ethnography is self-focused, meaning the researcher is at the center of the investigation as a, the researcher who performs the investigation and the participant who is investigated (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, Chang, 2010, p. 5). Auto-ethnographers vary in their

emphasis on the research process, on the culture, and on the self, all fall at a different place

within these three emphases.

Techniques of Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words,

themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. Using content analysis, researchers can

quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or

concepts. To make sense of literature, we turn to content analysis to examine the trends and

categorize the research. Content analysis provides a collective structure such as values,

intentions, attitudes, and cognitions. Another key strength of content analysis is that it provides

flexibility to the researcher (Duriau, Reger, Pfarrer, 201, p. 8). Content analysis implemented

with care should be of interest for researchers because it includes access to deep structures of

managers, non-intrusiveness, analytical flexibility, and the ability to implement longitudinal

designs.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

I would have looked at the data I gathered through the student survey's, observations, progress notes, and the final Reading Inventory assessment to determine if the tiered behavior system were beneficial to the students. I would have looked to see if the tiered behavior system increased students' accountability to complete independent work of independent reading and Student Application to ultimately increase the students Lexile score from their previous score.

Covid-19 Journaling

Common Themes

Common Themes Found in Covid-19 Journaling

Main Themes	Occurrences
Student Engagement/Communication	10 times
Special Education Paperwork/IEP meetings	12 times
Special Education/Read 180/Team Meetings	15 times
Parent Communication	8 times

Table 1

Student Engagement/Communication. The first theme I found within my journaling was student engagement and communication with students. I feel that student engagement was my most challenging task through teaching from home. Many of my students struggle in school and rely on teacher direction, assistance, and to keep focused on tasks. "I had weekly check-ins with KL and JW. KL was a no show, so I sent her a Schoology message to check-in on her to

make sure she is keeping up with her work. JW and I had a great conversation about how his week is going and what he had to finish for the rest of the week." Student engagement was tracked throughout the week by if they were completing their assignments on Schoology and attending live classes through Teams Microsoft.

Special Education Paperwork/IEP meetings. The second theme I found within my journaling was special education paperwork and IEP meetings. With Covid-19 and distance learning, we had to complete contingency plans for all our caseload students to know how we were going to best support these students. "Today, I closed out the week working on paperwork and getting caught up on some of my IEP's and finished my contingency learning plans." I also had six IEP's that I had to complete before the end of the school year. This was very overwhelming for me as it was hard to get parents to connect with me to complete these meetings.

Special Education/Read 180/Team Meetings. The third theme I found within my journaling was meetings. With distance learning, I felt that meetings were occurring between staff a lot more often than when at school. We had a weekly special education meeting where we would discuss how we can help each other and new information our SEBLER had from the district office. I also attended two weekly meetings with the other middle school teachers who taught Read 180, where we would talk about what our plans were for the next week. I would meet with the two teams which my caseload students are on. They would update me on how those students were doing and where I could be the most help for those students. Lastly, we had Wednesdays with Weber. "We have started a weekly meeting with our whole school staff, called Wednesdays with Weber. During this meeting, the administration shared with us any new

information they know as of right now." All school staff would come together and listen to any

updates our administration had.

Parent Communication. The fourth theme I found within my journaling was parent

communication. This was very challenging for me. I had some parents who were very involved

and willing to help wherever they could and then I had a handful of parents that would not. "The

mom was very hard to communicate with and felt that I should be talking to AB and not her. I

had a good conversation with AB about the importance of completing her schoolwork, so

hopefully there is an improvement in her work completion." I tried my best to work with all

parents and make sure they knew that my goal was to support their child the best I could. I ways

want the best for my students. During this time of distance learning, it was a change for

everyone, and I wanted to be able to support my parents with helping their children at home the

best I could.

Action Plan

I was very hopeful that the results of my research would have been very motivating for

me, and ultimately my students. While think of ideas of my research, I had many different ideas

of how I can have a been impact on my students, positively impact them, and help motivate them

to complete the reading independent work of, independent reading and student application. I was

very hopeful that this tiered behavior system would increase the student's accountability. Help

motivate them to reach the expectations of completing independent work. In return, of the

students meeting these expectations, they would have had an increase in the Reading Inventory

and Lexile scores.

If I would have had a positive outcome while using this tiered behavior system, I would have continued to improve it and incorporate it in all my classes. I planned to continue to use this tiered system to communicate with my students and as needed have communication with their parents. I would have improved the tiered system as needed to be more beneficial to my students and to see their growth throughout this next year.

In order to continue to carry out my research study, I would have had to also be motivated in finding additional methods or strategies that I can integrate into my teaching style and classroom management to help my students find success and to improve their Lexile. It is my number one goal that each student leaves every day feeling that they have a positive outlook about reading, school, and finds success within their learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

Plan for Sharing

      Throughout the planning of my study, my coworkers who are also reading intervention teachers, were very curious on how the tiered system and increasing student accountability on independent work, Student Application, and independent reading, would impact their Lexile scores. I would have shared my results with them, and our MTSS coach. I would have also discussed my study results at our weekly PLC with all the other middle level reading intervention teachers within the district I work for. I would hope for a positive outcome of this action research so we could implement this tiered system into all our reading intervention classes.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Title of Study: Accountability and Literacy/Reading Interventions

You are invited to participate in a study of how personal accountability and a tier system affects your child's Lexile. I hope to learn how this will affect students independent work and their Lexile score. You were selected as a possible participate in this study because your child is currently in my reading intervention class.

If you decided to participate, I will have your child complete a couple of surveys, participate in a tiered system and a couple of observations of them completing their independent work in class. There are no risks involved in this study and it will not change the day to day schedule of your child's educational experience.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Whether or not you choose to participate will not affect your future relationships with myself or the Liberty Middle School Staff. If you decide to have your child participate, you are free to have them discontinue at any time.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have regarding this study. You may contact me if you have any additional questions at bbucholz@west-fargo.k12.nd.us or Marci Glessner at marci.glessner@mnstate.edu. Any questions about your rights may be directed to Dr. Lisa Karch, the chair of the MSUM Instructional Review Board at 218-477-2699 or by email at irb@mnstate.edu

You are offered to keep a copy of this form.

Please sign below if you would like to patriate in the research of understanding the impact that personal accountability has by having your child participate in this student, complete the survey and allowed to be observed during class by myself.

Name of Student: _____

_____: **I give** my child permission to participate in the study.

_____: **I do not give** my child permission to participate in the study.

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____