

Dissertation Review: *Motivating Struggling Adolescent Readers to Read: An Action Research Study*

Citation

Richardson, E. M. (2014). *Motivating struggling adolescent readers to read: An action research study* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3619997)

Introduction

Richardson (2014) summarizes the purpose of this action research study “was to examine Reader’s Theater as an instructional and motivational strategy for underachieving students (N = 24) in a ninth- and tenth-grade Literacy for Life classroom” (p. iii). Students in the Literacy for Life classroom were reading below the 8th grade level. Participants included 12 boys and 12 girls.

The study included a six-week period where classroom instruction focused on the implementation of Reader’s Theater, using Benchmark Education scripts. According to Richardson, the activities included: discussions about stories being read, the plot, and the characters, as well as the study of difficult vocabulary words within the scripts. Students were given individual scripts to practice, and to perform. An art or writing component was incorporated each week that related to the story being read. (p. 46)

The quantitative outcome measures included the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), the Jerry John’s Basic Reading Inventory (BRI), and the San Diego Quick Assessment. The qualitative data sources included the research journal, group interviews, the Burke Reading Interview to determine the metacognitive reading strategies students use, and student feedback cards. The goal was to determine the “extent to which implementing Reader’s Theater led to improve students’ Lexile levels, vocabulary grade level, oral reading fluency, and to increased overall motivation to read” (Richardson, p. iii).

Results

Richardson reported “data from pre- and post-assessments showed that 58% of the students’ Lexile scores increased, 100% of the students’ fluency scores increased, and 79% of the students’ vocabulary scores increased” (p. 63). Richardson reported “qualitative data showed that students perceived Reader’s Theater as an engaging activity, and that they were motivated to read because they found the stories interesting and enjoyed reading with peers” (p. 63).

Summary

Despite the small sample size, Richardson connects this study to others that recommend using Reader’s Theater as a strategy for increasing students’ reading fluency, using repeated reading, and as well as improving vocabulary. Richardson’s study targeted older students who struggled with reading, showing that high interest, low readability texts can help provide motivation for high school students to read. Richardson also concluded “when implemented in the classroom, Reader’s Theater can change the whole class environment by promoting cooperation among students and improving the individual student’s grade level reading” (p. 108-109).