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How Young Can You Write?

Application of Kid Writing in Combination Pre-K/ Kindergarten Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study tested the effects of the Kid Writing method on the ability of kindergarten students to express themselves through writing. Kid writing is an instructional method that incorporates journaling, meaningful educational activities, phonetic spelling, and teacher scaffolding to teach correct spelling, sentence structure, and writing conventions. Feldgus and Cardonick (2000) brought these pre-existing elements together and published a book detailing their methodology. In addition to incorporating the Kid Writing method into the kindergarten curriculum, I also partnered it with fine motor training activities such as beading, weaving, and parquetry to support the physical aspect of writing development.

I applied the Kid Writing method in a low-socioeconomic status Kindergarten/ Pre-Kindergarten combination classroom of 30 students with the following needs: four students receiving speech therapy, six students receiving ESOL intervention, one student newly diagnosed with diabetes, and one student with an IEP which included Speech services, PT and OT services, and counseling.

Students' progress in fine motor development and journaling were assessed using rubrics. Students' oral language and early literacy skills in terms of letter knowledge, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and phonological awareness were assessed using a computer-based, standardized assessment and intervention program called Istation (istation, 2009). Student progress in letter knowledge was tested by both the Istation program and via a rubric. Student interest surveys were administered at the beginning and end of the study. Data

were also gathered through double entry journals, observations, and interviews and conferences with the head teacher, the students, and their parents. Parents completed a questionnaire given verbally during parent-teacher conferences throughout the study to elicit children's home literacy experiences. Parents were given the opportunity to request clarification and a translator was provided during all conferences.

Student data were analyzed for improvement in written communication, and its correlation to age, language background (English proficient vs. English support), and home literacy experiences. Although all of the children demonstrated an increase in all skills (e.g., PA, written expression) over time, I found that student achievement was most effected by their chronological age, with older children whose fifth birthday occurred before September 1st 2016, performing better overall and making greater gains throughout the study than their younger peers whose fifth birthday occurred on or after September 1st 2016. The younger children also showed more gradual gains in ability across all forms of testing following Thanksgiving break in comparison to their older peers.

Students with home literacy support achieved marginally higher scores than their peers. English proficient students performed slightly higher on average than their English support peers. Both English support and English proficient students performed comparably to one another, with the English proficient group gradually exceeding the gains of the English support group, leaving a slight achievement gap at the end of the study.

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