Struggling Male Readers in First Grade

EDT 6050

Action Plan

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Background

I teach in a first grade classroom full of nineteen unique tiny humans. Although my students are all either six, or seven years old, they are all very different. I chose to look at ethnicity, sex, reading levels as scored using the Fontas & Pinnell Benchmarking series, and reading scores from AIMSweb. The first chart shows the percentages of each ethnicity present in my classroom.

There is almost an even split of female to male students, which has never happened before in my four years of teaching.

That being said, when it is viewed through a pivot table, it seems that male students have made a larger and more positive growth in their reading levels. It becomes increasingly clearer when the data from the pivot table is broken up into charts separated by gender. The graphs illustrate that while both female and male Hispanic students are excelling, the other males in the class need some extra assistance. It is important to point out that these graphs are showing the sum of the differences in reading levels. While it appears that males have a higher success rate, it is a different story when the scores are broken up. The Hispanic males carry all of the weight and the other males need better instruction in reading.

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| **Sum of Difference in F&P** |  |
| Row Labels | Total |
| F | 36 |
| 1 | 14 |
| 3 | 15 |
| 4 | 7 |
| M | 49 |
| 1 | 39 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 7 |
| **Grand Total** | **85** |
|  |  |

Below is the plotted difference in reading levels from the winter to the spring. I wanted to show how all over the board the scores are. For the most part, I am extremely proud of the progress the students have made. There is always room for improvement and that includes the teaching that I am responsible for.

Next, it was important to look at the differences of the class versus the variety of services the students receive. The blue represents the winter testing with AIMSweb and the red represents the spring testing. All areas show a positive growth from winter to spring, but there is a large gap when looking at the students who receive Title One services. These are students who have been flagged as an academic concern and have intense interventions already set in place.

To delve further into this data, I wanted to compare students who receive language services versus those who do not. This graph represents the growth of the AIMSweb CBM (Curriculum Based Measurement) probe from the winter and spring testing. Series One is indicating the line of growth for students who do not receive ESL (English as a Second Language) and Series Two show the growth of students who are pulled out for ESL services.

All of these different charts give a view of the unique qualities in this first grade room. Now that the data is available, we can move forward to identify some instructional strategies that may be appropriate to try so that the data continues to show growth in all reading areas.

Instructional Strategies

After compiling the data, I see a need for better instruction to my male students. Therefore, I spent some time researching males in reading. I found many interesting articles and studies. The first study looked at reading tutors and their affect on male students. The article concluded that there was no difference in academic success of male students in regards to a male or female reading tutor (Soka, 2009). This made me realize that even though I am a female, the instruction is the important aspect that I have control over and has the most affect on the students.

The next article made me think about how I group my students for guided reading. This whole year I have been forming groups based on reading levels when I do guided reading. It made me realize I have neglected to group my students in any other way such as interest or learning style. The article described a classroom of all boys through interviews and observations. It was an extremely interesting concept and the author went into reading since historically males have scored lower in reading. The teacher of the boys-only class did lots of hands-on instruction and proved to have soaring reading scores (Price, 2011).

Then I found an article that really hit home to me. Although the main idea was for African American males who struggle in reading, I do believe the meat of the article would work for all students. This article covers five strategies to improve reading (Jenkins, 2009). Jenkins stresses that schools need to work as a team, so if a student or group of students in your classroom is receiving services outside your room, you need to be in good communication about what is happening with that student. They also suggest looping with a teacher in which the student has had success with if possible. If not, their idea was to figure out which teacher the student will have and then set up a parent-teacher conference with the future teacher before the end of the school year so that communication is set up early. Jenkins also suggests connecting the book the student is reading to their world as much as possible, which allows them to use their schema and continue building on what they know. This also excites them and entices them to read. Students should be allowed to occasionally choose their own book, or at least the topic. This idea connected me to the group of students in reading groups and is something I’d like to implement in my room before the end of the year. Lastly, students should be exposed to a variety of texts about the same topic to expand their understand. All of Jenkin’s ideas make sense and push for better instruction.

Implementation Plan

Since this specific action plan is only for my classroom, the plan is simple to follow. I did not give each of the following tasks dates, because I am not sure how long to give each one yet. I need these to be completed within three weeks time and I believe that is an attainable goal. I believe the students will become engaged in this project and will enjoy the new groups, topic focus, the added technology piece and sharing.

My overall objective is to modify the groupings of guided reading to allow males to read about their interests through a variety of texts. I have created an organized table with the strategies that I will perform as the teacher, what I expect from the students, and what will be seen in the classroom. I plan on sharing this with the students so they can see that we are all accountable for learning.

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| Teacher | -Form student groups by gender  -Survey students on topics they would like to read about  -Select a variety of topics for groups to choose from  -Provide a variety of books including fiction, non-fiction, news print, internet sites, and so on for each topic  -Plan lessons that cover each topic thoroughly  -Share lessons with parents and school staff that work with given students |
| Students | -Read a variety of books about chosen topic  -Create a connection page via Glogster on how your topic pertains to you/school/community/world  -Share your Glogster with your family and any staff at school |
| Classroom | -Post Glogsters to the class website  -Allow time for students to share within their guided reading groups, and with other groups |

Conclusion

By combining the ideas in Price’s article and Jenkin’s article, I came up with improved instruction to hopefully increase both the reading desire and ability of my male students. Although this is to increase the data of the male population in my first grade class, I believe it will also benefit the females in the class.

My main goals are to form gender specific groups, allow the groups to pick a topic to read about, provide a variety of texts about that topic, and allow the students to share their connections to their world via Glogster. While this is going on in the classroom, I will be keeping all staff that work with the students up to date on what we are doing as well as updating the parents through our newsletter and class website.

I will be observing students, listening to them read and discuss, and viewing their progress on Glogster to see if there are in fact improvements for males in reading. This seems like a fun, yet academic way to end our year.

References

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