# THE EFFECT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS' BEHAVIORS USING
## WHOLE LANGUAGE/LITERATURE BASED INSTRUCTION
### VERSUS
### SKILL BASED INSTRUCTION

Thesis

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Deborah M. Edwards

State University of New York
Brockport, New York
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Submitted by:

_Deborah M. Edwards_ Date:_7/1995_

Advisor:

_Gerald L. Begg_ Date:_8/11/95_

Second Thesis Reader:

_Arthur E Smith_ Date:_8/15/95_

Director fo Graduate Studies:

_Patricia E. Baker_ Date:_8/15/95_

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how a particular approach to reading instruction affects students' behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for this study.

Seven separate paired two sample $t$ tests were used to investigate the research questions presented in this study: (1) will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive/negative behaviors than the other approach? (2) will one area of behavior be affected more than another in regards to the instructional approaches? (3) will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive behaviors in either the high or low reading group?

The results found no significant statistical differences in any of the tests of the research questions. The literature based approach had a higher mean score when compared to the skill based approach. It produced a higher total mean score in the four goal areas. Each behavioral goal showed a higher mean score in the literature based approach except when comparing the two ability groups. The low ability group did slightly better with the skill based approach. Each approach was equally effective.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Research has shown a definite cause and effect relationship between school achievement and student behavior. Much of the research looking at achievement and student behavior has been focused on the learning disabled (LD) population, and the negative affective characteristics associated with learning disabilities. Rogers and Saklofske (1985) have noted in an article on self-concepts, locus of control and performance expectations of learning disabled children that prolonged failure experiences have a profound effect on their affective development. It has also been cited that children with LD held lower self-perceptions of behavioral conduct (Clever, Bear & Juvonen, 1992). Instructional methods can affect student achievement and student behavior. Continued poor achievement could cause low self-esteem, which in turn could lead to poor behavioral conduct.

Yetta Goodman (1989) paraphrases John Amos Comenius

saying that, in order to learn, children need to enjoy their learning experiences. Children in special education have failed at learning so many times that it is not enjoyable anymore. It may never have been enjoyable for them. Learning needs to become enjoyable and successful for these children.

In special education each child comes into the classroom with a wide variety of academic needs and behavioral problems. They are referred for special education with many labels and descriptors for their behaviors. Several commonly used terms are: disruptive, impulsive, quick-tempered, oppositional, defiant, withdrawn, low self-esteem, inattentive, poor social skills, and unmotivated. Often the bottom line in working with these challenging students is, "If they don't want to, they won't." So the question for educators becomes "How do you reach them, to teach them?"

This study is looking at two paradigms of reading instruction and special education students' behaviors. On one side is the traditional view. This view takes the stance for learning basic skills in a sequential and systematic way. Basals are often used with this type of instruction. The teacher follows

a manual with lesson plans, and pre-and-post tests are all predetermined. Students read from basal readers and follow along in accompanying workbooks. This instructional approach to reading has been well supported and has dominated the classrooms for decades. Flood and Lapp (1986) estimated 98% of all the teachers in the United Stated use a basal series. It has also been reported that teachers relied on the recently published basal reading programs of the 1990's more than they relied on previously used basals (Barksdale-Ladd, Thomas, & Jones, 1990).

On the other side is the conceptual view of whole-language, literature based instruction, or the holistic approach to reading. This approach has given a renewed attention to the individual learner. This type of instruction uses children's literature for reading instruction. It is meaning based as opposed to skill based. It is child-centered. The children are active participants in their education. They are allowed choices, and take on ownership for their learning. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are not isolated for instruction but rather are integrated throughout lessons in all subject areas.

## Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how a particular approach to reading instruction affects students' behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for this study.

## Research Questions

[1]    Will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive/negative behaviors than the other approach?

[2]    Will one area of behavior be affected more than another in regards to the instructional approaches?

[3]    Will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive behaviors in either the high or low reading group as a whole?

Null Hypothesis

There will be no statistically significant differences in the behavior rating scales for the literature-based reading group and the skills-based reading group, the behaviors, and between the high and low group, with the special education children in this present study.

Definitions

Literature-Based Instruction/Whole Language:

An approach in which reading and language skills are taught through literature in a whole and meaningful manner. Skills are not isolated but rather taught within the context of literature and students' written work. Reading and writing are integrated into the reading process by using a variety of extended- literature activities.

Skills-Based Instruction:

An approach in which reading is broken down into separate components or subskills and these subskills are taught in a sequenced and drill manner. (Holland & Hall, 1989).

Behavior Rating Scale:

A point chart based on students behavior in four categories, for three, 30 minute instructional reading periods daily.

Categories:
1. Following Directions
2. Appropriate Social Skills
3. Complete Assignments
4. On Task Behavior
   ( See Appendix A)

<u>Special Education Students:</u>

Students are identified as having difficulties in three general aspects of conflict:

1. Environmental conflict refers to aggressivedisruptive, hyperactive, and social maladjust- ment problems
2. Personal disturbance includes anxiety and social withdrawal problems
3. Learning disorders/ academic difficulties

## Need for the Study

The literature and empirical evidence has shown that learning disabled children have lower, or more negative self-concepts, are less motivated, and perceive themselves to be less scholastically competent than normally achieving children (Cooley & Ayres, 1988; Kistner & Osborne,1987; Rogers & Saklofske,1985). It is also documented that self-concepts and feelings of failure can directly affect classroom behavior and the child's approach to academic material, as well as influence motivation and persistence on academic tasks (Cooley & Ayres, 1988).

Rogers and Sakloske (1985) state in their article that it is not "ascertained whether these negative variables cause the learning disability, are a consequence of it, are from the same origins as the disability or simply are behaviors which occur concurrently with the disability ( p.273)." Whether learning problems cause affective/behavioral problems, or learning problems are the effect of affective/behavioral problems is not

important. It is of little use to the teacher, the child, or the child's instruction. What is important is that educators stop trying to identify deficiencies and prescribing antidotes for the lack of school achievement or behavioral problems. On the other hand, it is very important to remediate those lacking skills that a child may be deficit in.

Diagnosis is an important aspect of special education. It usually seeks an analysis for the nature and circumstance of the problem. It may often be the driving force of instruction but, does this mean that instructional methodology has to be almost exclusively deficit-driven (Poplin,1988)? Teachers need to remediate the learning disability or behavioral problem. However, is it necessary that special education children spend most of their time on activities which they do not do well? In her article on a discussion of models in the field of learning disabilities, Poplin (1988) wonders if our students' trouble with self-concept is not exacerbated by our deficit-driven methodologies.

There are researchers such as Kronick (1990) who wholeheartedly accept the scaffolding of skills. She feels that

basic literary skills need to be taught. She cautions that skills are not necessarily being learned automatically and states motivation alone is insufficient to ensure mastery. Kronick states, "Good remediation neither is repetitive or boring nor flogs a student's weaknesses and ignores his or her strengths (p.6)." Marie Carbo (1987) cites the 1986 publication of *What Works* , from the Education Department, in siding with phonics instruction for teaching a child to read.

Research has shown a positive correlation between literature based instruction and students with a variety of special behavioral and academic needs. Fuhler (1993) supported the premise that information presented via fiction or nonfiction trade books had a memorable impact on the subjects' attitudes toward learning history and helped them understand the Civil War and World War II. The subjects who had been identified as having learning difficulties, had learned to treat literature as a personal experience, rather than only as a tool to acquire information. They each grew in confidence, and this "confidence began to break down firmly entrenched

negative attitudes toward writing" (p.109). Learning also started to connect with other subject areas. Enjoyment and motivation to learn became a reality.

Fuhler (1993) states that there is a natural affinity between whole language and special education. The theories of whole language respect learners and their diversity, thus encouraging a child-centered, individualized approach to teaching (K. Goodman, 1986; Y. Goodman, 1989; Watson, 1989). Special education does the same. It individualizes education to meet the child's needs. Both special education and whole language realize that learning takes place one child at a time.

Tunnell and Jacobs (1989) cite a study in which Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) concluded that "the use of children's literature to teach children to read had a positive effect upon students' achievement and attitudes toward reading-much greater than the traditional methods used (p. 471)."

Tunnell and Jacobs (1989) also cite studies that identify literature-based instruction in helping children who are: poor readers, high-risk students, stalled/disabled readers, remedial

readers, failed readers, the unmotivated, those with poor attitudes, and those with limited English. In conclusion to their findings on literature based reading instruction Tunnell and Jacobs state, "the affectivity of literature based, Whole Language programs gives meaning and pleasure to the process, thus making skills instruction at last meaningful-empowering both teachers and students (p. 477)."

Recent reports and surveys at the national level do not portray a very encouraging picture about the state of reading achievement (Bader, Veatch, & Eldredge, 1987). Special education continues to grow year after year with students stuck there failing, year after year. Frustration and the stress of lack of success often leads to unacceptable conduct. Marie Carbo, a leading researcher on reading styles, explains that many students prefer to be regarded as "behavior problems" rather than as stupid (p.57, 1987)." Thus, the behavior difficulties of many poor readers are a major concern of reading educators. This is an important issue, especially with the onset of the Regular Education Initiative, which advocates

for inclusion of students with special needs to be educated in regular classrooms. Can they make it? Something must be done to help these students have success in their learning.

This study looked at the effect on students' behavior using literature based reading instruction and skill based reading instruction. When learners are actively involved and engaged in their learning, as shown in literature based,whole language instruction, learning will become meaningful and successful. Could this help students' behavior? Can a particular instructional method help students feel better about themselves, improve their self-worth, thus encouraging better behavior in the classroom?

## Limitations of the Study

[1].    This study was conducted with an small testing population of special education students.

[2].    It was difficult for raters to have complete consistency in the ratings of the students, even though everyone followed the same behavior rating chart. Special Education students' underlying motivation for misbehavior changes from moment to moment, and there are many variables affecting their behavior. Each situation or upset on the part of student had to be assessed with this thought in mind.

[3].    Since the behavior management system incorporates rewards for "good" or "appropriate" behavior, the appropriate behaviors unfortunately may have nothing to do with the instructional approach, and may only indicate motivation for the reward.

Chapter II

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how a particular approach to reading instruction affects students' behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for this study.

Review of the Literature

How should educators teach reading and writing? That question has been asked over and over by educators and researchers. Educators strive to find the best instructional approach for reading and writing. Teachers struggle to understand their students' needs, both behavioral and academic. What is considered the best approach varies historically from decade to decode as research crops up new findings, verifying, supporting or disputing old findings.

Research on literature based reading instruction challenging the basal tradition, reports an amazing amount of success with all types of students and particularly with disabled and uninterested readers (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989). The use of "real" books in the classroom for curricula is gaining momentum. The literature based, Whole Language approach is

bridging literacy skills with the enjoyment of learning for many special needs children. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (1990) writes that as many as 10 percent of children nationwide have special needs. It is clear that the traditional method of skill mastery may not be the way for many of these special needs children.

## Skill Based Instruction and Whole Language

In many elementary schools across the United States, promotion and nonpromotion depends on successful progress through a single basal series. Schools need to show verifiable evidence that students are learning and since constituent skills of the basal program are easily tested, the basal is the preferred method for teaching reading. Students are often held back on the basis of skills mastery. Estes and Johnston (1977) suggests that students who are held back on the basis of skill mastery may resent reading and avoid it whenever possible. The primary focus on remedial reading is correcting skill

deficits. Low achievers and special education students who are lacking skills are often drilled again and again, while high achievers receive more comprehension and less skill instruction (Holland & Hall,1989). Success is dependent on a test score and not actual reading ability.

Much of the research comparing Whole Language instruction with a skills-based (basal) instruction focuses primarily on test scores as well. Holland and Hall (1989) looked at reading achievement in a first grade classroom, while comparing a basal and whole language approach to reading. A control group was taught using the *Houghton-Mifflin Reading* program. An experimental group was taught using *Success in Reading and Writing* program. This program has eight distinctive characteristics which are representative of a whole language approach. Using mean scores from the *California Achievement Test* as a proxy pretest during students' kindergarten year, and mean scores from the *Georgia Criterion Referenced Test* during the spring of students' first grade year, Holland and Hall found no statistically significant differences in reading achievement between the two classes. The mean

score for the control group was 59.86 and the mean score of the experimental group was 58.86. A qualitative analysis of this study by the researchers indicated that students who were taught reading using a whole language approach appeared to enjoy reading and reading class more, and appeared to participate more fully than the students using the basal approach.

Another look at first graders and the comparison of whole language and traditional instruction was conducted by Klesuis, Griffith and Zielonka (1991). The main purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of whole language. A total of 112 students participated in two schools. There were three classes in the traditional school which implemented a skills-emphasis reading and language arts program. There were also three classes for the experimental school which implemented a whole language program. A large number of pretests and posttests were administered and quantitatively scored. The first question asked whether there would be significantly different effects on student achievement during the first year of the implementation of the two approaches. The

results indicated no significant differences between the two instructional treatments as measured by the end-of-the-year achievement. The second question asked whether there would be differences in end-of-the-year reading, writing, and spelling achievement for children with varying levels of incoming phonemic awareness, reading ability, and writing ability. The results showed no differences in the analysis of the two schools for end-of-the-year achievement on any of the measures except on the writing measure. This measure indicated that children in the whole language classrooms who entered first grade with low writing skills had a small advantage to catching up to their higher skilled counterparts, as compared to the traditional classroom. However, children who were low in incoming ability for reading and phonemic awareness scored significantly lower on the end-of-the- year vocabulary, comprehension, spelling and decoding measures than did their high incoming counterparts, regardless of their instructional program. The results of the phoneme-grapheme relationships (alphabetic principle) proved to have no significant difference between the instructional approaches. The equal effectiveness

of both approaches was apparent. One did not outshine the other.

The Ohio Reading Recovery Program, a program in which all word solving skills are taught in context during real reading, found that 90% of the children whose pretest scores were in the lowest 20% of their class, using this program, catch up to the average of their class or above and never need remediation again (Boehnlein, 1987). This is in contrast to Klesuis, Griffith, and Zielonka's study regarding the low incoming students showing continued low scores at the end of the year measure. The Reading Recovery Program, which also teaches skills in context, confirmed that when compared to control groups the Reading Recovery children not only made greater gains that the other high risk children who received no help, but they also made greater gains than the children who needed no help.

Milligan and Berg (1992) looked at an entire year of whole language instruction and the comprehending abilities of first grade children as a group, at three ability levels, on males and females, and on each of the two genders at three ability levels. The four control classrooms received a conventional

language arts instruction through the *Scott-Foresman Reading Program* . They were heterogeneously grouped except for reading, which was ability grouped. The four experimental classrooms received whole language instruction. A New Zealand Teacher's Guide: *Reading in the Junior Classes* , which is based on whole language principles was used for the experimental classrooms. Five components of this program were specifically used for the language arts curriculum. The classes were divided among three elementary schools.

The results showed no significant difference between the mean scores attained by the high progressing experimental and control subjects on the Cloze Deletion Test (CDT) of the *Degrees of Reading Power* or of the female subjects in either of the groups or ability levels. The control female subjects in the high progressing group did attain a slightly higher mean score on the CDT than did their counterparts. The mean scores of the students in the whole language experimental class, progressing in the middle and low ranges of achievement, were significantly higher than the mean scores of the middle and low progressing students in the control group. This is noteworthy

since the study by Klesius, Griffith, and Zielonka showed the low ability subjects scoring much lower in both instructional approaches. The male subjects in the experimental group attained a significantly higher mean score on CDT, as well as at each of the three ability levels, than did the male control subjects.

There has been significant advantages in the areas of writing achievement when using a whole language approach (Fisher & Hiebert, 1990; Gambrell & Palmer, 1992; Varble, 1990)). This writing achievement has been evaluated in the areas of metacognitive awareness/critical thinking differences and in the quality of content of writing assignments.

Eldredge and Butterfield (1986) compared a traditional basal approach to five other experimental methods, including two which used variations of a literature based program. They found that 14 of 20 significant differences among the instructional methods favored the literature approach teamed with a series of special decoding lessons taking no more than 15 minutes daily. This merits the combination of both approaches.

A primary focus of the whole language philosophy is in using trade books for reading instruction. Bader, Veatch, and Eldredge (1987) cite a finding by Cohen (1966), that second graders, when read to from trade books, made significantly greater gains in both reading and vocabulary than those in a control group who did not have a literature program. Both experimental and control groups had used an identical basal reading programs, but the experimental group was read to.

Bader et al. cited several reports which compared the use of trade books and the basal reader programs. One report was by Vite (1963) who summarized several studies available at that time:

Studies favoring Ability Grouping (i.e., basal programs) = 5, Studies neutral = 13, Studies favoring Individualized Reading Programs (i.e. trade books ) = 58.

Bader et al. cited Seeber (1969) who summarized studies which were available from 1950-1964: Controlled studies: Favoring Individualized Reading = 21, neutral =15, favoring Basals =4, Uncontrolled studies: Favoring Individualized Reading = 41, neutral = 3, favoring Basals = 0.

There are studies which indicated that children who are exposed only to basal reading programs tend to have negative ideas of what reading is all about. In a study on children's perceptions (Cairney, 1988), meaning was not seen as important when reading basal readers, nor did children find basal reading material intrinsically interesting. The children focused on decoding, vocabulary, and accuracy.

Gambrell and Palmer (1992) interviewed 157 first and second graders, on their responses to several questions regarding reading and writing. On the first grade reading interview there was a statistically significant difference between the literature based group and the conventional group on one item. This item was in response to a strategy question, "What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?" In the literature based group 69% answered under the category phonetic decoding, and in the conventional group 21% answered decoding. The conventional group scored highest under the category of *ask* for help. The writing interview responses of the first grade children in the literature based group for indicated a greater awareness of sound/symbol

(77%), than in the conventional group (21%). This would indicate that children receiving reading instruction through literature are learning decoding/phonetic skills.

The children in the second grade literature based group were more aware of strategy, task and person variables for both reading and writing, than were children in the conventional group. Several interesting results were indicated. When asked "Why do people read?", children in the literature based group reported: pleasure (41%), knowledge (37%), and utility (19%). The conventional group results to the same question were overwhelmingly 77% in the category of knowledge. In regards to the meaning-oriented strategies the results were: literature based scored 63%, and the conventional scored 26%. When asked the question, "What kind of reader are you?", the literature based group reported 74% as a good reader, and conventional reported 48% as a good reader.

There continues to be a debate over student choice and the use of literature. Reading is more than workbooks and skill sheets. Basal skills test results can be misleading for some children and for teachers. Often a child can read at a higher

level than his test scores indicate. This is especially true for special education students. Skills obtained in a meaningful context are most likely to be retained. Reading should be a pleasure and, not simply another worksheet to complete. Reading should inspire children to become lifelong readers. "Children must come to see reading as something they do, rather than as a task imposed on them," Estes and Johnstone (p.897,1977) report.

## WHOLE LANGUAGE/LITERATURE-BASED INSTRUCTION

There is so much more to whole language than students' test scores. Cambourne and Turbill (1990) suggest that traditional measurement-based approaches to evaluation are theoretically inappropriate in whole language classrooms. Interpreting and evaluating students' daily progress as a part of a more responsive and naturalistic data collection will tell teachers more about students' development than simply test scores would. White, Vaughan, and Rorie (1986) report on a study

with first grade children from a small, economically depressed rural community, that the children understood far more about the reading process than could ever be measured by a pencil and paper test, making academic gains in reading and writing by not using a basal.

Literature based reading instruction encompasses a wide range of materials and practices. It is based on the whole language philosophy that the whole is more than the sum of its parts ( K. Goodman, Y. Goodman, & Hood, 1989). It is also based on the involvement of children making their own decisions. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than as a dictator of knowledge. Literature is the primary, if not the total, reading material used in reading programs. The methods of reading instruction in the classroom are ones in which help students embrace the reading behaviors of good readers. Interest, purpose and choice are important in the behavior of good readers (Rasiniski, 1988). Whole language encourages meaningful learning  on the part of the student. In an article titled the "Roots of the Whole Language Movement," Yetta Goodman (1989) recognizes John Amos Comenius, an early

seventeenth century educator, as being an advocate for the whole language movement. Goodman states Comenius believed that unless learning is meaningful to students it has no place in school. This is not to say that practice, drill and skills are not important. They are, but the benefits of skills are received better when taught in the context of language using real books.

Language skills are learned and should be taught with all its systems intact (Watson, 1989). The systems of language--semantics, syntax, and graphophonemics (or phonics), are maintained and supported by pragmatics (language in natural use). In whole language skills are learned naturally without being separated into isolated skills (Watson, 1989).Language is symbiotic. Teaching and learning go hand and hand, but what teachers teach is not always what students learn. The way in which we teach reading has an effect on how students feel about reading. Language is social. It is sharing experiences and process oriented. Whole language and literature based programs do not reduce the experience of learning language to only the direct instruction of reading through letter-sound relationships. Rather, it is holistic.

There are researchers such as Kronick (1990) who strongly oppose accepting this holistic viewpoint. She states "the less clear-cut that educational approaches are, the greater the possibility that intensive assistance will not be forthcoming" (p.6). Pace (1991) cautions that children's school learning experiences will not improve unless literature based activities are consistent with principles of language development and learning, suggesting that some teachers are jumping in before they know what they are jumping into. Teachers changing over from the mechanistic paradigm need to actively strive in understanding and applying the holistic, learner-centered, constructivist view to make lasting changes in classroom practices. Pace agrees with Kronick in the idea that holism in the classroom has a greater probability of being misapplied than appropriately applied. Chall's (1967,1983) research, as reported by Giddings (1992), supports a code-emphasis with systematic phonics instruction for beginning readers. This tends to result in both better word recognition and comprehension achievement. She also maintains that written text has both form and function, and there should not

be so much divisiveness over code-emphasis and meaning-emphasis in reading instruction. Trachtenburg (1990) supports combining the two approaches by stating that "the whole-part-whole instructional framework integrates learning to read with real reading, and its objective is to produce learners who not only can read but who also choose to read for pleasure and self-satisfaction" (p.652).

However many researchers feel that authentic language experiences, learning-by-doing, and personalizing learning can help students to grow academically and improve self-concepts, which will ultimately improve behavior and the enjoyment of reading.

## WHOLE LANGUAGE/LITERATURE BASED INSTRUCTION
## AND THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CHILD

The fear of continued failure inhibits special education students ability to take risks; failure which may have

been faced in a skills in-isolation approach. Whole language and literature-based instruction suit the needs of the special education child. It views the child as an individual; it is child-centered. It values the differences among children and differences in objectives and the outcomes. It capitalizes on strengths, offers empowerment, develops ownership and actively involves them in their own learning. This is an important aspect for special education children, who especially after so many failures feel powerless over their learning. Their self-concept and motivation to learn is very poor.

As reported by Tunnell and Jacobs (1989), Fader, Duggins, Finn, and McNeil (1976) immersed students at the Maxey Boys' Training School in Lake Whitmore, Michigan with hundred of paperback books. These students had experienced failure for years. They were given time to read without the usual assignments of book reports or summaries. There were significant gains made over the control group on measures of self esteem, literacy attitudes, anxiety, verbal proficiency, and reading comprehension. Some students from the control group even decreased in scores from the year before.

Salvage and Brazee (1991) state, "teachers do not realize that the use of teaching strategies consistent with whole language philosophy requires considerable modification and extended periods of time for experimentation when working with special education students (p.356)." Because their progress is slower and more laborious, the results will be slower in actualizing. In this same study, special education students identified as manipulative, non-compliant, and aggressive responded extremely well to whole language teaching over a three year period of time. It was found best to start with informational/expository reading and writing which was less personally threatening.

Fuhler (1993) also found whole language helpful to special education students. Initially the learning disabled subjects in her study at first just reported what was happening in response to literature. However as their active involvement increased with the literature, responses became more personal. Later in the study, results from literature response journal entries, post reading interviews, class discussions, and extensive field notes, indicated a strong preference for learning

via the more familiar narrative format rather then from the expository format of a textbook. Their interests and involvement around reading increased.


# WHOLE LANGUAGE/LITERATURE BASED INSTRUCTION AND STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR


Research has suggested that learning and behavioral problems in children tend to co-occur. Much of the research concerning student behavior is focused on the learning disabled. The research suggests that learning disabled children have lower, or more negative, self-concepts than normally achieving children (Clever, Bear & Juvonen, 1992; Cooley & Ayres, 1988; Grolnick & Ryan, 1990; Rogers & Saklofske, 1985). The differences are most significant on measures of academic self-concept. The research looks at students' behavior in regards to: self-worth perceptions/concept, motivation, perceived competence, success-failure, and locus of control. Educators should be concerned with students self-concepts for

their general mental health and happiness. The repercussion of poor sef-concept will be determined by whether the deficits are global or limited to school related aspects of the child's self-perceptions (Cooley and Ayres, 1988).

Students negative feelings should not be overlooked nor should they be passed on to the next teacher in hope that they will grow out of it, as with normal stages of childhood growth and development. Teachers should be assessing teaching strategies and instructions as a means to counteract these feelings of low self-worth. Discounting the importance of scholastic achievement is not helpful. These students recognize that importance as well as recognize their own academic difficulties (Clever, Bear, & Juvonen, 1992). Students who may lack a feeling of autonomy, likely do not have a sense of personal value for scholastic endeavor. Provide them with activities where they are being successful and build their confidence. The external controls placed on them are greatly interfering with developing intrinsic interest for learning. Feelings of self-concept can directly affect classroom behavior and the child's approach to academic material. Self-concept

affects students expectations and self-efficacy when faced with academic tasks (Schunk,1984). As reported by Weiner (1979) the child's attributions in explaining academic successes and failures will also be influenced by and will, in turn, influence motivation and persistence on academic tasks.

Rogers and Saklofske (1985) examined general and academic self-concepts, general and academic locus of control beliefs and academic performance expectations among 45 learning disabled (LD) and 45 normally achieving(NA) children aged 7 - 12 years. Five affective scales were administered to small groups of students in their schools over three separate testing sessions. The resource room teacher completed the academic success questionnaires. They found significant differences between the LD and NA children on number of affective variables indicating a lower general and academic self-concept, and were more external on the measures of general and academic locus of control and had lower expectations for future academic performance. Rogers and Saklofske suggest "when working with children who have exhibited characteristics of learned helplessness, an effort

should be made to help them realize that there is a relationship between their efforts and successes and failures in school" (p.277).

Students labeled 'behavior disordered' or 'learning disabled' are reluctant to make decisions and need to be carefully nurtured (Salvage & Brazee, 1991). Provide positive reinforcement and focus on the students' efforts, rather than only on the final outcome or grade. Literature based programs have a definite affective approach to reading instruction. Tunnell and Jacobs' (1986) research findings on literature based reading instruction showed an improvement of student attitudes, and enjoyment of reading. Children's perception of themselves affects their motivation and subsequent behavior (Dweck,1988). Feelings of self worth cross over into all areas of a child's life. Scholastic achievement and behavioral conduct are affected by self worth.

In a study on characteristics of a skills-oriented approach toward tasks and literature-based approach toward tasks it was found that the management problems were considerably lower in the literature-based classrooms (Fisher& Hiebert,

1990). With increased ownership over their work tasks it was thought to have empowered students with more responsibility for their own conduct, again indicating the importance of the locus of control being placed in the student's hands. It is important to structure learning experiences in which students can demonstrate that they have more ability and skills than they may have otherwise believed.

Special education children come to school with, or develop in school, emotional scars which are then compounded by school difficulties. They share a common approach to learning characterized by an underlying lack of confidence in their own abilities (Bender & Golden, 1989). This lack of confidence can add up to a sense of powerlessness, and this leads to behavior problems in attempts to compensate for the powerlessness and poor self-concepts. Learning to make positive decisions for themselves in their learning and a willingness to take risks will empower these students again. Using an instructional approach which motivates learning and increases self worth while encouraging enjoyment of reading could better focus students' attention, help them to follow

directions, increase positive social interactions, and encourage them to do their work.

# Chapter III

# The Research Design

## Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how a particular approach to reading instruction affected students' behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for this study.

## Null Hypothesis

There will be no statistically significant differences in the behavior rating scales for the literature-based reading group and the skills-based reading group, the behaviors, and between the high and low group, with the special education children in the present study.

## METHODOLOGY

## Subjects

Subjects were eight students from a self contained, special education class through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, in a public elementary school in western New York State.

## Materials

Students were scored daily on a behavior rating chart for reading and writing class (see Appendix).

## Procedures

During reading and writing class students received points according to their behavior. The behaviors identified were: (1) following directions, (2) social skills {on the students' chart this area was written as interacting appropriately}, (3) complete work and (4) attentive behavior {on the students chart this area was written as "stay on task"}. When these behaviors or goals were reached a plus sign (+) was given in that area. When these behaviors were not reached a negative sign (-) was given.

Two, full time classroom teacher aides were the raters to prevent any bias coming from the teacher/researcher. Each rater followed the same criteria in scoring the students.

Students have been aware of classroom rules from the beginning of the school year, as to how they earn their points on their daily behavior chart. The behavior rating chart for this study was kept from the students and they were not aware of it. It will be entirely separate from their daily point chart.

The class was divided into two reading groups of four students each. The low functioning groups' mean reading level was 3.5. The high functioning groups' mean reading level was 5.2.

The teacher/researcher designed lessons for each of the two groups. Each group received instruction for two weeks with a literature-based approach. The lessons for the literature based instruction were focused on the book *Stone Fox* by John Reynolds Gardiner. The lessons consisted of: independent reading (or being read to), a response log for prepared questions, oral discussion time, and extended activities. An example of some of the extended activities were: drawing/designing an scarecrow of Grandfather and writing how he made Little Willy laugh; making potato prints; coloring a dog sled picture and writing about their own

accomplishments; and designing a winter scene using soap flakes.

The lessons for the skills based instruction were different for each of the two groups due to their ability level and skill needs. The focus of the lessons for the low functioning group during the skills based instruction was vowels. Each student received a packet with skills drills for long and short vowel (i) and (o). Each day the teacher/researcher began the lesson with a review of the worksheets to be completed on that day. The students worked independently at their own pace. They received assistance as necessary. The worksheets contained a variety of activities. An example of some of the activities were: coloring pictures with the same vowel sound; matching words with the same vowel sound; cutting out pictures to match the vowel sound; and writing a small story using words with the vowel sound being learned. A long and short vowel game was played once the worksheets were completed.

The higher functioning group received a packet with activities focused on grammar. Instruction in parts of speech included: common nouns; proper nouns; singular, possessive

and plural nouns; pronouns; verbs (action, helping, present, past, future); adverbs; and subject and predicate. They also completed Mad Libs (Cloze Stories) for fun, sharing them with the class.

Each group received two weeks instruction in each approach. The lessons occured at the same time, with one group receiving skills based instruction and the other group receiving literature based instruction. There was one teacher, and three teacher aides present to assist with instructional needs.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Data

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to determine how a particular approach to reading instruction affects students' behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated:

[1]    Will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive/negative behaviors than the other approach?

[2]    Will one area of behavior be affected more than another in regards to the instructional approaches?

[3]    Will one of the instructional reading approaches produce more positive behaviors in either the high or low reading group as a whole?

## Research Results

The behavior rating scales for each child in both instructional approaches were totalled. A paired two sample t-test for means was used for analysis.

Research Question #1

The first research question investigated whether or not one of the instructional reading approaches would produce more positive or negative behaviors than the other approach? The total mean score for the class during the literature based instruction was 93.4. The total mean score for the class during the skills based instruction was 88.7. The paired two sample t-test measure was used to find a statistical significant difference between the two approaches.  A t-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variables, and

would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained $t$-test value for these two variables was -0.92. This indicates that there was no statistical significant difference between the two instructional reading approaches in producing more positive or negative behaviors.

Table 1

The paired two sample t test between the mean raw scores of the literature based instruction approach and the skills based instruction approach.

|                     | df | mean | t-obtained |
|---------------------|----|------|------------|
| Skills Based        | 7  | 88.7 |            |
| Literature Based    | 7  | 93.4 | -0.92      |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

Research Question #2

    The second research question investigated whether or not one area of behavior will be affected more than another in regards to the instructional approaches? The means were calculated for the class in each individual goal area with each instructional approach. Following directions was goal one. During the literature based instruction the mean was 92.5. During the skills based instruction the mean was 88.5.

    The paired two sample t-test measure was used to find a statistical difference between the mean raw scores of the two instructional approaches for goal one. A t-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variables, and would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained t-test value for goal one was -0.72. These data revealed that there was no statistical significant difference in the two instructional approaches for following directions.

Tables 2

The paired two sample t-tests difference between the mean raw scores of goal #1 (following directions) on the behavior rating scale, between the Skills Based Ins truction Group and the Literature Based Instruction Group.

GOAL 1

|  | df | mean | t-obtained |
|---|---|---|---|
| Skills Based | 7 | 88.54 | |
| Literature Based | 7 | 92.50 | -0.725 |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

Research Question #2 continued

Interacting appropriately was goal two. The mean score for the literature based instruction was 92.8. The mean score for the skills based instruction was 85.8. The paired two sample $t$-test measure was used to find a statistical difference between the two instructional approaches for goal two. A $t$-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variables, and would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained $t$-test value for goal two was -1.26. These data revealed that there was no statistical significant difference in the two instructional approaches for interacting appropriately.

Table 3

The paired two sample t test difference between the mean raw scores of goal # 2 (interacting appropriately) on the behavior rating scale, between the Skills Based Instruction Group and the Literature Based Instruction Group.

GOAL 2

|                    | df | mean | t-obtained |
|--------------------|----|------|------------|
| Skills Based       | 7  | 85.8 |            |
| Literature Based   | 7  | 92.8 | -1.26      |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

Completing work was goal three. The mean score for the literature based instruction was 95.2. The mean score for the skills based instruction was 92.7. The paired two sample t-test measure was used to find a statistical difference between the mean raw scores of the two instructional approaches for goal three. A t-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variable, and would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained t-test value for goal three was -0.56. The data revealed that there was no statistical significant difference in the two instructional approaches for completing ones work.

Table 4

The paired two sample t test difference between the mean raw scores of goal #3 (completing work) on the behavior rating scale, between the Skills Based Instruction Group and the Literature Based Literature Group.

GOAL 3

|                    | df | mean | t-obtained |
|--------------------|----|------|------------|
| Skills Based       | 7  | 92.7 |            |
| Literature Based   | 7  | 95.2 | -0.56      |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

Staying on task was goal four. The mean score for the literature based instruction was 93.2. The mean score for the skills based instruction was 88. The paired two sample $t$-test measure was used to find a statistical significant difference between the mean raw scores of the two instructional approaches for goal four. A $t$-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variables, and would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained $t$-test value for goal four was -0.82. These data indicate that there was no statistical significant difference in the two instructional approaches for staying on task.

Table 5

The paired two sample t test difference between the mean raw scores of goal #4 (staying on task) on the behavior rating scale, between the Skills Based Instruction Group and the Literature Based Instruction Group.

GOAL 4

|  | df | mean | t-obtained |
|---|---|---|---|
| Skills Based | 7 | 88 | |
| Literature Based | 7 | 93.2 | -0.82 |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

Research Question #3

The third research question asked if one of the instructional reading approaches would produce more positive behaviors in either the high or low reading group? The mean score for the high ability group during literature based instruction group was 94.3. The mean score for the high ability group during skills based instruction group was 84.6. The paired two sample $t$-test measure was used to find the statistical significant difference between the two instructional approaches in the high ability group. A $t$-test value of +/- 2.00 declares a significant difference between the two variables, and would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained $t$ test for these variables was -1.17. This indicates that there was no statistical significant difference between the two instructional approaches in the high ability group.

Table 6

The paired two sample t test between the mean raw
scores of the high ability in the two instructional approaches.

|  | df | mean | t-obtained |
|---|---|---|---|
| Skills Based | 3 | 84.6 | |
| Literature Based | 3 | 94.3 | -1.17 |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

The mean score for the low ability group during
literature based instruction was 92.6. The mean score for the
low ability group during skills based instruction was 92.9. The
paired two sample t-test measure was used to find the
statistical significant difference between the two instructional
approaches in the low ability group. A t-test value of +/- 2.00
declares a significant difference between the two variables, and
would suggest additional statistical analysis. The obtained t-test

value for these variables was -0.05. This indicates that there was no statistical significant difference between the low ability group during literature based reading instruction and skills based reading instruction.

Table 7

The paired two sample t test between the mean raw scores of the low ability in the two instructional approaches.

| | df | mean | t-obtained |
|---|---|---|---|
| Skills Based | 3 | 92.9 | |
| Literature Based | 3 | 92.6 | -0.05 |

t-critical = +/- 2.00

## Summary

The statistical analysis shows there was no statistically significant difference between literature based and skills based instructional approach in producing more positive or negative behaviors.

The statistical analysis shows there was no statistically significant difference between the two approaches in regards to the behavioral goals of the students being affected more in one approach than the other.

The statistical analysis shows there was no statistically significant difference between the two instructional approaches in producing more positive behaviors in either the high or low reading group.

This study investigated the use of a literature based instructional reading approach and a skills based instructional reading approach, with eight special education students.

The analysis failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine how a

particular approach to reading instruction affects students

behavior as measured by the behavior rating scale designed for

this study.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate there was no statistical

significant difference between a literature based reading

approach and a skills based reading approach.

A paired two sample $t$ test between the mean raw scores

from the behavior rating scales was used for analysis. The $t$-

test analysis found no statistical significant difference on each

of the three research questions.

Data worth noting include the total mean scores of the

two instructional approaches. When the class received reading

instruction through literature based approach they received a mean score of 93.4. The class received a total mean score of 88.7 when receiving instruction through a skills based approach. The standard deviation for the literature based approach was 5.44, and the standard deviation for the skills based approach was 12.82.

The literature based approach had higher mean scores in all areas except when comparing the low ability group against each approach for the total mean scores. The low ability group had a total mean score of 92.96 during skills based instruction, and a mean score of 92.63 during literature based instruction. This was a small difference. The standard deviation for this analysis during skills instruction was 10.41, and during literature instruction was 7.93. The low ability group had higher mean scores in the goal areas of completing work and staying on task during skills based instruction as well.

When looking at the mean scores in each goal area, the literature based instruction received higher scores on each area compared to the skills based instruction. It was interesting to see each student's mean score in the goal areas. This was helpful in analyzing which area a student may need more

support in. For example during the skills based instruction, student four received mean scores of: Following Directions: 63.0, Interacting Appropriately: 63.0, Completing Work: 67.0, Staying on Task: 58.0, and the Total: 62.75. While during the literature based instruction, student four received mean scores of: Following Directions: 96.0, Interacting Appropriately: 96.0, Completing Work: 96.0, Staying on Task: 96.0, and the Total: 96.0. By looking at the mean scores it would indicate this student performed and behaved better when involved with literature than with skills and drill. Several other students had similar results favoring the literature based approach when looking at their mean scores. Two students had high mean scores for both approaches. It was interesting to note that both of these students generally had fewer behavioral problems in class to begin with.

Research Implications

The results of this study showed how student behavior, in the four goal areas identified, were affected by two reading approaches. The study did not show a statistically significant difference between the two approaches. Both approaches were equally effective. The results indicated some interesting findings when looking at the mean scores and strongly suggested improved behavior during the literature based instruction. The literature based instruction had favorable results overall.

Additional research is suggested in a longitudinal study to show comparisons of student behavior and academic achievement using the two approaches. It would be beneficial to use a larger group of students in a follow up study as well.

Affective measures should be included in further research which could be used to compare the students' enjoyment and attitudes toward reading. Longitudinal studies would be helpful in identifying students who have developed the life-long enjoyment of reading through the use of a literature based reading approach. Research has shown that

instructional methods can affect student achievement and student behavior. For special education students these two factors generally go hand in hand. Further research in how achievement and behavior relate with one another would help special education students have success in school and enjoy it more.

## Classroom Implications

Structuring learning for students' academic success is very important. For special education students who have met failure with academics, this is even more important. Many students with special academic needs also have behavioral problems interfering with academic success. Structuring an environment where the children can demonstrate that they have more ability and skills than they thought they had can help develop motivation for learning, thus improving efforts and behavior. This relationship between efforts and successes and failures in school is critical for a special needs student.

The empirical research in this study has shown that

students with many kinds of special needs have done as well in a literature based classroom as in a skills based classroom. Many times their enjoyment for learning and academic successes have increased. Educators need to focus on what a student puts into a learning situation as much as the final outcome.

By looking at the mean scores in each goal area of this present study, a teacher could identify which behavioral goal he did well in and in which he faltered, for each instructional approach. There were more following directions problems during the skills instruction. A teacher could look at this and ask herself if her instructions were clear, or if the students had a difficult time with the assignment. One of the students in the low ability group excelled in the literature based approach, but then another student in this same group did much better with skills. On observation of both students, the one who did better with the skills felt confident and comfortable with the worksheets, as if there wasn't any pressure on him. The other boy who did better with the literature, showed improved motivation and effort in reading the story as well as overall enjoyment in learning.

Daily observation of students is crucial. Identifying their individual strengths and needs is also crucial for their success in school. Whatever approach used for reading instruction it should promote motivation and enjoyment in learning and positive successful growth in school.

## Summary

This study took a look at how two instructional approaches would affect student behavior. The paired two sample t test used for analysis showed no statistical significant difference in either approach.

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