

Fall 2017

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Choice and Its Effects on Motivation to Read

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December 2017

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to determine if there is a connection between the implementation of choice in the classroom and students' motivation to read. Research-based literacy framework and a choice model were used over an eight week period of time. Qualitative data was collected at the beginning and the end of the study in the form of surveys. Analysis of the data concluded that kindergarten students when given opportunities for choice in the classroom their motivation to read increased.

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

Choice and Its Effects on Motivation to Read

For students in kindergarten, learning foundational reading skills is crucial to their future academic success. These skills will be used and built upon for the rest of their schooling and the rest of their lives. This can be a challenging and frustrating time for many students. Many students at this young age already have a perception of themselves as readers and learners in general. Additionally in many elementary classrooms, choice is not an option. Students are given directions and told what and how to complete tasks and centers throughout their days in school. The Daily 5 framework changes this way of teaching and learning.

The Daily 5 framework is being used in many classrooms around the country. This framework allows students choice over their learning. This choice has been linked to many success stories for students who are struggling to find the motivation and engagement to learn to read. Choice can look different in every classroom setting. For the purpose of this study choice is described as five options students are given to select from in order to complete reading practice. This action research study will go deeper into the effects of choice on students' motivation to read in a kindergarten classroom. The overarching guiding question is how does choice effect students' motivation to read? If proven to be beneficial, choice structures can be implemented in different areas of the classroom to continue to increase motivation to learn.

Literature Review

During this study the Daily 5 framework was used to promote choice in the classroom during the reading block. More information about this topic will help clarify the choice element in this study. The Daily 5 literacy framework provides students with choice during literacy small group instruction. The framework created by Boushey and Moser (2006) allows for a student-

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

driven management structure that engages students in various activities in reading and writing. The Daily 5 uses research based practices that allows teachers to conference and meet with individual students as well as small groups of students. According to Boushey and Moser (2006), the following five components have a positive impact on students reading and writing: read to self, read to someone, work on writing, listen to reading and word work. Students are allowed and encouraged to choose one of the above five choices during Daily 5 time. The students are engaging in a reading or writing related task regardless of the choice they make. The program “is about developing shared awareness and instructional routines with students, through specific focused teaching, while balancing students’ needs for choice and independence” (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 14).

According to a study completed by Pressley, Dolezal, Raphael, Mohan, Roehrig, and Bogner (2003), “choice is one of the biggest motivators for young children” (p.109). Allowing for student choice is a fundamental element of student motivation. Pressley et al., (2003) also found that “encouraging the child’s autonomy, sending the message that it is expected that the child be self-regulated and making sure to resist taking over when a child experiences difficulties, in favor of providing just enough support so the child can carry on” (p. 134). Building a connection between choice and self-regulation has a direct impact on student motivation to learn and be successful in the classroom.

An article written by Susan Kind Fullerton (2006) focuses on the role of motivation and its effects on a struggling student’s progress in reading. She states, “Motivation has an important, multidimensional role in the complex and integrated mind-body system. It modulates and influences behavior and, in turn, learning, in complex and varied ways” (Fullerton, 2006, p. 50). She goes on to discuss the different components of motivations and how emotions and cognition

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

are interconnected. During her study, she found that it becomes increasingly more difficult to separate “skill and will” as children become older (Fullerton, 2006, p. 65). Fullerton (2006) explains that students who believe they are able to complete a task are more likely to have the desire and effort to do so thus having the motivation to complete the task. Students who believe the task is unachievable do not have the same desire or effort which shows a lack of motivation to attempt the task at hand. “Learning involves both skill (ability) and will (the desire, effort, and persistence to perform cognitive tasks), so the role that motivation and attributions play in relation to skill and will are quite critical to learning” (Fullerton, 2006, p. 54).

In a similar article, Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) explore the connection between cognitive and motivational variables and their influence on reading and writing. The two key cognitive and motivational variables they focused on were self-efficacy and self-regulation. Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) defined these terms as, “self-efficacy refers to learners’ perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels, while self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are systematically designed to affect one’s learning of knowledge and skill” (p. 7). In their study, they looked for how self-efficacy and self-regulation could be fostered in students. They found that “students with high self-efficacy for acquiring a skill or performing a task participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, and achieve at higher levels” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 10). While students who doubt their learning capabilities are more likely to give up or not attempt a task. In the end, Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) suggest “that to build students’ self-efficacy teachers should ensure that students experience learning progress and success, expose them to successful models, and provide encouraging feedback substantiated by

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

success” (p. 23). Students who feel like they have the ability to learn are more likely to succeed due to their motivation.

Methods

Participants

This action research project was conducted in a kindergarten general education classroom in northwest Ohio. There are twenty students, ten females and ten males and their ages range from 5 to 6 years old. The students’ demographics show a class that is predominately Caucasian and half meet the requirements of free and reduced lunch socio-economics status. Of the twenty students in the class, three receive special education and speech and language services.

Data Collection

The focus of the action research project was to determine if choice in classroom would affect student motivation in reading. Qualitative data was collected to determine if choice increased student motivation. A survey was administered to the kindergarten students prior to the implementation of the Daily 5 program which was the intervention of choice. A survey was also given after the intervention of the Daily 5 choice centers to see if there was any affect on student motivation towards reading. These surveys served as source of qualitative data. The researcher used a variety of questions to gather information about the participants’ feelings and thoughts about reading. For a detailed look at the questions asked see Appendix A. The process began during the first weeks of the school year, early September 2017 and ended in late October 2017.

Following the administration of the first survey the Daily 5 program was implemented. During this implementation participants were exposed to the Daily 5 framework which includes five different areas: read to self, read to someone, work on writing, listen to reading, and word work. The philosophy of the program allows the students to choose which of the five areas they

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

would like to spend their time during small group that day. The participants were explicitly taught how to complete each activity and were given several days to practice each and build stamina. During the two week implementation, anchor charts were made as reminders for expected behaviors and expected learning during each activity. After implementing the Daily 5 framework for six weeks, the post intervention survey was given.

The data from both was then collected in a qualitative approach and then compiled in a quantitative manner in order to see the change from before the intervention to the post intervention data. The researcher assigned point values for the possible answers choices available on the surveys. The participants' answers were then tallied based on the point system. Each question had four choices describing the participants' interest. Points were weighted from zero to three points. Zero for the lowest interest choice and three points for the highest interest choice. For example, in question number three participants were asked to describe themselves as a reader. The choices were a poor reader (0 points), an OK reader (1 point), a good reader (2 points) and a great reader (3 points). There were no points given for the question one where participants were asked their gender. The pre-intervention survey was out of a possible twenty-one points. The points were then organized into percentages. The post intervention survey had twenty-seven possible points that were then converted to percentages. The percentages were compared from before and after the intervention to see the change in motivation due to the implementation of the Daily 5 framework.

Findings

Data Analysis

A minimal amount of researcher bias was included during the data collection and intervention period of this research. The researcher's hypothesis that choice does improve

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

student motivation in the classroom played an important part in the framework that was chosen during the intervention period. Despite the minimal researcher bias, specific measures were put in place to provide unbiased qualitative data. This qualitative data was collected before the intervention was introduced and again after the intervention was in place. The data from the surveys (both before and after the intervention) were formulated into points and averages.

Table 1

Before and after intervention data

student	before intervention (out of 21)	percentage	after intervention (out of 27)	percentage	change from before and after
1	17	81%	23	85%	4% +
2	19	90%	25	93%	3% +
3	16	76%	24	89%	13% +
4	14	67%	19	70%	3% +
5	7	33%	16	59%	26% +
6	12	57%	25	93%	36% +
7	16	76%	21	78%	2% +
8	16	76%	22	81%	5% +
9	11	52%	19	70%	18% +
10	11	52%	14	52%	no change
11	16	76%	26	96%	20% +
12	14	67%	21	78%	11% +
13	15	71%	18	67%	4% -
14	20	95%	27	100%	5% +
15	14	67%	20	74%	7% +
16	14	67%	22	81%	14% +
17	18	86%	26	96%	10% +
18	10	48%	19	70%	22% +
19	14	67%	20	74%	7% +
20	13	62%	21	78%	16% +
class average	14	67%	21	78%	11% +

The initial data shows scores ranging from 7-20 out of a possible 21 points. The class average of the before intervention data was 14 or 67% on the motivation to read survey. The qualitative data reveals that 70% of the participants' survey results were at or above the average of 14. The final data shows scores ranging from 14-27 out of a possible 27 points from the survey provided after the intervention was implemented. The class average data indicated that 78% was the mean for the class on the post intervention survey. The data shows that 90% of the

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

participants' motivation increased during the intervention period. The class as a whole made an improvement of 11% in motivation to read over the course of the implementation.

The highest improvement in motivation came from student 6 who gained 36% in motivation over the course of the study. This change could be attributed to the challenge this student faced at the beginning of the study. This student struggled to recall letters and letter sounds at the beginning of the study. However, throughout the course of the study the student has gained a lot of confidence in his ability to read.

Student 10's survey results did not show any increase in motivation. This was most likely due to attendance issues. Student 10 missed twelve days throughout the course of the study, missing many lessons about the intervention as well as days to be engaged in the intervention.

Student 13 was the only student in the study to show a decrease in motivation. Over the course of the study, student 13 has presented signs of a possible receptive language disability. He is currently going through the proper testing to pin point the exact area of struggle. This information will be helpful for the researcher to understand if he had difficulty understanding the questions on the surveys.

Discussion

Summary of Major Findings

Throughout this study, the findings indicate that choice in reading resulted in an increase in their motivation to read. The greatest area of improvement came from students' perception of themselves as readers. At the beginning of the study seventeen participants viewed themselves as poor or OK readers. On the post invention survey, fifteen participants viewed themselves as good or great readers. The study also showed that students enjoy having choice over what center they complete in the classroom. On question eight of the post intervention survey; all twenty students

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

reported that having a choice in the classroom makes them feel happy. The data shows that the implementation of the Daily 5 framework which involves choice had a positive effect on the participants' motivation.

Limitations of Study

The limitations in the research included only one approach to offering choice to the participants. If a different intervention was used, there may have been different results. The researcher must also take into consideration other factors may have influenced the findings in the study. Additional reading instruction, lessons, or activities may have influenced the participants' motivation levels.

Further Study

Implications for future research suggest that more research needs to be conducted on other beneficial ways choice can be integrated into the classroom. Also, looking at the data the researcher can collect additional post intervention data at a later point in the school year to determine if there are changes in the data as the intervention period progresses. It would also be beneficial to provide this intervention with a different group of participants to see if there is the same impact on a different group. The researcher would also like to conduct research on how choice of seating effects achievement in the classroom.

Conclusion

The findings compiled from the collected data suggest that choice interventions such as the Daily 5 framework can have a positive effect on students' motivation to read. The qualitative data suggests that this intervention is advantageous for increasing students' motivation to read. The implementation of the Daily 5 framework meets its goal of encouraging choice and

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

increasing motivation to learn. An unexpected finding of positive self-image was also discovered throughout the course of this study. Teachers will want to add more room for choice into their procedures if they want to see an increase in student motivation. This will allow students a feeling of ownership and pride in their learning. This motivation will impact lay the critical foundation for future learning.

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTIVATION

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CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

Appendix A

Pre-intervention Motivation Survey

Student: _____

1. I am a

boy girl

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

Never not very often

sometimes often

3. I am

a poor reader an OK reader

a good reader a very good reader

4. I think libraries are

a great place to spend time an interesting place to spend time

an OK place to spend time a boring place to spend time

5. Knowing how to read well is

not very important sort of important

important very important

6. I think reading is

an OK place to spend time a boring place to spend time

an interesting place to spend time a great place to spend time

7. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class

every day almost every day

once in a while never8. When someone gives me a book for present, I feel

very happy sort of happy

sort of unhappy unhappy

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

___/21 total

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

Appendix B

Post-intervention Motivation Survey

Student: _____

1. Reading a book is something I like to do.

Never	not very often
sometimes	often

2. I am

a poor reader	an OK reader
a good reader	a very good reader

3. Knowing how to read well is

not very important	sort of important
important	very important

4. I think reading is

an OK place to spend time	a boring place to spend time
an interesting place to spend time	a great place to spend time

5. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class

every day	almost every day
once in a while	never

6. During Daily 5, I enjoy

read to self	read to someone else	
word work	teacher	listen to reading

7. Daily 5 makes me feel

happy	sort of happy
sort of unhappy	unhappy

8. Having choice makes me feel

CHOICE AND ITS EFFECT ON MOTVATION

happy sort of happy

sort of unhappy unhappy

9. Choosing my centers for the day makes me

like to read sort of like to read not like to read

10. Does having choice make you like reading more?

yes no

11. I _____ Daily 5 center time.

don't like sort of like

like really like

___/27 total