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THE EFFECTS OF WILSON READING SYSTEM AND GUIDED READING ON THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

by
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A Thesis
Submitted to the Department of Special Education
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In partial fulfillment of the requirement
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At
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Thesis Chair: Jay Kuder, Ph.D.

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Abstract

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THE EFFECTS OF WILSON READING SYSTEM AND GUIDED READING ON THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
2010/11
Jay Kuder, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose for this study was based on Millville Public School's need for students to meet annual yearly progress in language arts literacy according to state standards. This study evaluated the results of the use of the Wilson Reading System compared to a Guided Reading program on the reading achievement of students with learning and reading disabilities using the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) first grade assessment data. DIBELS was used to assess the students on nonsense word fluency, whole words read and oral reading fluency. Combining all of the DIBELS skill areas assessed, the students in guided reading made an average increase of 1.5 points from pre to post- test results. Students in Wilson reading made an average increase of 4 points from pre-test to post-test results. Wilson Reading, therefore, had an average increase of 2.5 points over guided reading when compared to all assessed skill areas.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 with the intent of having all children reading on target by grade three. The NCLB also requires all states to create their own high academic standards for what a child should know and be able to do in language arts literacy. The New Jersey Department of Education annually reviews the performance of a school district for the identification of adequate yearly progress in the standards of language arts literacy and mathematics. School districts and their personnel are responsible for meeting these requirements. Therefore, it is essential that school districts use the most effective instructional materials and approaches.

The study presented in this paper will focus on language arts literacy improvement in the areas of word identification, decoding and fluency. The current reading curriculum in my school includes a daily phonics lesson, a computer based reading program, and guided reading center three times a week. The school district has decided to utilize the Wilson Reading System for students in grades two and above who are reading below grade level. This study will evaluate the results of the use of the Wilson Reading System compared to a Guided Reading program on the reading achievement of students with learning and reading disabilities using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy skills (DIBELS) first grade assessment data.

In my classroom I have sixteen students with learning, language and reading disabilities in second and third grade, reading on a first to early second grade range. To

complete this study on the effectiveness of reading programs for children with learning disabilities, half of the class will be instructed with guided reading and the other half will be instructed with Wilson Reading. In addition, all students will be receiving a half hour of daily whole class phonics instruction and will interact with a computer based reading program for beginning readers three times a week.

Purpose

For the school year 2009-2010, Millville Public Schools was identified by the NJDOE as a 'district in need of improvement.' Millville Schools did not meet annual yearly progress for two consecutive years in language arts literacy. As a result, Millville Schools have been pressed for a way to monitor and assess reading, utilize effective reading interventions, and in essence, improve reading skills for future success. As a special education teacher for Millville Schools and of students with learning and reading disabilities in second and third grade with reading levels below grade level, I am invested in providing my students with an effective reading program. I will provide these skills through instruction with the use of a reading program that ultimately provides the best results.

Reading Programs

Barbara Wilson, the author and creator of Wilson products, Fundations and Wilson Reading System, observed that many students disbelieved that English could be made understandable to them. She developed Wilson Reading System to teach students the structure of words in a systematic and cumulative manner. She believes following this system helps students to trust that they can learn English and identify the irregularities of the language. According to Tammy Johnson, M.S. from the Florida Center for Reading

Research (2004), Wilson Reading System utilizes a plan in which students receive instruction in learning to hear sounds by manipulating color coded sound, syllable, and word cards; performing finger-tapping exercises to assist in phonemic awareness; and through read alouds.

Guided reading instruction will use decodable, leveled texts to provide reading instruction. Small groups of students are placed in reading groups that will meet their varied instructional needs and reading levels. Teachers are able to explicitly teach skills and strategies at students' individual levels. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2000), guided reading is an instructional setting that enables you (the teacher) to work with a small group of students to help them learn effective strategies for processing text with understanding. The purpose of guided reading is to meet the varying instructional needs of all the students in your class, enabling them to greatly expand their reading powers (p.189 - 191).

Half of the class (eight students), will be receiving guided reading instruction and the other half will be receiving Wilson reading for the purposes of this study. Students will be getting this instruction for half an hour three to four times a week. All students will be receiving a daily, half hour period of whole group phonics instruction using a systematic program named Fundations. Fundations is a subprogram of the Wilson Reading system and has been designed for students in grades kindergarten to third. According to The Florida Center for Reading Research (2003), Fundations primary focus is on phonemic awareness activities, letter recognition, phonics, and studying syllable types and affixes as a part of the decoding process. Vocabulary, comprehension and fluency are all included in the program as well. All students will also be exposed to

Headsprouts Early Reading Program, a supplemental computer based reading program for non to beginning readers, three times a week. In addition, students will participate in reading based centers, on an independent level, including; books on tape, silent reading, file folder games, and phonics review worksheets.

Assessment

The dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills (DIBELS) benchmark data, for grade one, will provide assessment data on initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, oral reading fluency, retell fluency, and word use fluency. These skills are all essential and predictive of reading success. DIBELS will be used to assess the students on these skills so that I am aware of which reading program in conjunction with Fundations is yielding the best decoding and fluency results; Wilson reading system or guided reading. The Peabody Individual Achievement Test will provide pre and post data on word recognition and reading comprehension subtests.

Research Question

In this study I will compare the effectiveness of the Wilson Reading System and the Guided Reading approach when combined with whole class phonics instruction in improving the decoding and reading fluency of second and third grade students with learning disabilities. The research question is whether one approach will be more effective than the other. It is my hypothesis that the Wilson Reading students will score higher on the DIBELS spring assessment as compared to the Guided Reading students. I hypothesize the systematic, progressive nature of Wilson will provide the students with learning disabilities with a more defined understanding of the English language word

structure. I predict students will be stronger in their ability to decode and read unknown words. I foresee all students making reading improvements with both programs; however, I believe Wilson will provide better results when compared to Guided Reading.

Limitations

This study was limited to a single class size of a total of sixteen students. Students were not all on the same reading level, or on the same grade level; however, all students are reading below grade level and are in a self contained special education classroom. Participants have varying degrees of disability and intelligence quotient levels. All students will be instructed in the classroom by the special education teacher and no student will receive additional support through resource room services.

Summary

Despite educators and parents best intentions, there are frustrated children reading below grade level who are in need of a effective reading model. Students with learning and reading disabilities come to school with a disadvantage and are in need of reading instruction using research based practices with high success rates. Guided reading and Wilson reading models have been researched and studies have shown data on the results of their effectiveness in elementary classrooms across the country. There will be a review on the research presented on both reading models and a study will be conducted. This study will compare the effectiveness of the Wilson Reading System and the Guided Reading approach when combined with whole class phonics instruction in improving the decoding and reading fluency of second and third grade students with learning disabilities.

Definitions

No Child Left Behind: NCLB was originally proposed by the administration of President George W. Bush immediately after taking office. NCLB supports standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state.

Assessment: The process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Assessment can focus on the individual learner, the learning community, the institution, or the educational system as a whole.

Wilson Reading System: A reading program designed for students in grades two through adulthood that have difficulty with decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling). It is a complete curriculum with 12 steps, beginning with phoneme segmentation. Its main goal is to teach students language and word structure though a carefully planned program.

Fundations: A subprogram of the Wilson Reading System designed for students kindergarten through grade three. Students receive highly explicit and systematic instruction, and concepts are introduced in small incremenets and practiced and reviewed frequently to ensure mastery.

Guided Reading: A teaching approach used with all readers, struggling or independent, which has three purposes: to meet the varying instructional needs of all the students in the classroom, enabling them to greatly expand their reading powers; to teach students to read increasingly difficult texts; and to construct meaning out of text.

DIBELS: The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills is a formative early literacy assessment. DIBELS can be used to evaluate individual student development, as well as to provide feedback on effectiveness of instruction.

Learning disability: A classification including several disorders in which a person has difficulty learning in a typical manner, usually caused by an unknown factor or factors.

Phonics: A method of teaching English speaking persons how to read and write that language. Phonics involves teaching how to connect the sounds of spoken English to the letters or groups of letters and teaching them to blend the sounds of letters together to produce pronunciations of unknown words.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes, the smallest units of sound that can differentiate meaning.

Decodable text: A type of text often used in the beginning of reading instruction. With this type of text, new readers can decipher words using the phonics skills they have been taught.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Reading Instruction

What constitutes effective reading instruction? There are key skills and methods children must learn in order to read well. The National Reading Panel issued a report, *Put Reading First*, by Archer, Gleason & Vachon (2003) that reviewed more than 100,000 studies, regarded as high quality, on reading achievement and approach effectiveness. The studies reviewed described five key areas of skill instruction necessary for reading readiness: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension.

Children who have phonemic awareness skills are more likely to have an easier time learning to read than children who do not. Phonemic awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds in words. Phonemes are the smallest parts of sound in a spoken word. Changing a phoneme in a word changes the word's meaning. For example, changing the /c/ in cat to a /h/ to make hat, changes the word's meaning. According to research in *Put Reading First*, children begin learning phonological awareness skills by identifying and making oral ryhmes and then through working with syllables in spoken words. As children progress with these skills they will then be able to identify onsets and rimes and work with individual phonemes in spoken words. Strategies for use to teach phonological awareness include activities in which children recognize which words in a set begin with the same sound, identify the first or last sound in a word, combining and blending sounds and segmenting words into their separate sounds. Children with phonemic awareness skills understand letters and sounds are related in a particular way,

which, in turn, helps them to learn to read and spell. According to *Put Reading First*, phonemic awareness has been shown to be effective in learning to read, however, it is not a complete reading program and works best when integrated with a comprehensive literacy curriculum. Authors, Denton and Hasbrock (2000) compiled a booklet as a project for the Federation for Children with Special Needs to give parents information on phonological awareness. The booklet was designed to make parents familiar with effective reading strategies for students with disabilities. One essential skill for students with disabilities to acquire for reading ability is phonological awareness. A student's disability may impact his or her ability to read and acquire phonological awareness, a precursor to reading in which you are able to hear and play with sounds in words. Importantly, students having difficulty learning to read can be taught and learn phonological awareness skills regardless of age or grade level. Acquirement of phonological awareness has a powerful connection to the ability to read and understand written words.

Phonics instruction is the second key component for learning to read. Phonics instruction, in essence, teaches the alphabetic principle: the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words. As students learn the patterns and relationships in words, they will be able to recognize familiar words and decode unfamiliar ones. In order to effectively teach phonics, skills must be taught systematically, in a clearly defined sequence. Research on phonics instruction, provided by the National Reading Panel (2000), concluded that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics and is particularly beneficial for children having difficulty learning to read.

The third component for effective reading instruction is fluency instruction. Fluency is defined as the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Students who are more fluent have the ability to focus their attention on ideas in a text, therefore increasing comprehension, as compared to less fluent readers who have to focus more attention on decoding individual words. Students who repeat readings and whose readings are monitored improve their reading fluency and reading achievement. Activities to support repeated readings include choral, partner, and tape assisted readings.

Vocabulary instruction is the fourth element necessary for successful reading. Students have an easier time reading words that are already part of their oral vocabulary. Comprehension is also linked to vocabulary instruction, because readers cannot understand what they are reading if they do not know what a lot of the words mean. Specific word instruction can be taught using word learning strategies, dictionaries, word parts and context clues.

The last element, comprehension, is the reason for reading. If a child does not understand what he is reading, then he is not really reading. Comprehension instruction helps students to understand, remember and communicate with others what they read. Questioning strategies, graphic organizers and summaries are all strategies for teaching and reinforcing comprehension.

Research has proven that these five components; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension are necessary for effective reading instruction. So, how does this relate to students with learning and reading disabilities? What components have proven the most or least successful with students who are struggling with learning to read?

Learning and Reading Disabilities

Phonological awareness, the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in language, occurs before school begins. Children hear rhyming words and sound associations when listening to books and nursery rhymes at home. Then, as they become students and enter school, they learn the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. As students progress, they will be able to write letters and associate them with the sounds they make. Eventually students will associate the sounds of the words they use when speaking to the letters of the alphabet and will be on their way to reading! Children lacking reading skills, due to a lack of exposure to literacy or having a disability, enter school at a great disadvantage. According to research on reading and phonological awareness for students with learning disabilities, obtained by the ERIC development team (1995), many children with disabilities have deficiencies in their ability to process phonological information, and therefore have difficulty relating letters of the alphabet to the sounds of the language.

A meta-analysis was reviewed by Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Willows, D. M., Schuster, B. V., Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z., & Shanahan, T. (2001) on phonemic awareness (PA) and its effect on learning to read. The quantitative meta-analysis on phonological awareness instruction on learning to read and spell was conducted by the National Reading Panel. Fifty two studies on PA in peer reviewed journals and 96 controlled experiments were conducted and reviewed for statistical evidence of effectiveness. Evidence gathered from the experiments was given in effect sizes. An effect size of .80 or higher was considered large, a size of .50 was considered moderate and a size of .20 was considered small. Based on 72 comparisons, the overall effect size of PA on the

acquisition of PA skills was .86, which was considered large. The effect size of PA on reading was a moderate effect size of .53 which was based on 90 comparisons. PA instruction delivered to small groups of children enhanced reading and spelling performance by a large effect size of .83 and, in contrast, whole class PA instruction had a lower, moderate effect size of .30 to .45. According to the data gathered from the meta-analysis, a lack of phonological awareness affects early reading ability. The effectiveness of PA instruction on school aged children showed the greatest impact on the youngest students. Phonological awareness acquisition on preschool students had an effect size of 2.37, kindergarten .95, first grade .48 and second to sixth grade .70. The transfer of PA skills to reading showed a large effect size of .86 for students considered 'at risk' as compared to a moderate gain in students not considered at risk with an effect size of .47.

Results from the meta-analysis produced evidence that students having difficulty learning to read and who lack phonological awareness skills, benefit from systematic, small group instruction in sound associations and relationships. Since effect sizes were largest at the pre-school level, this suggests the benefit of incorporating age appropriate activities to the preschool curriculum. Findings from the meta-analysis also indicated that a moderate amount of time, rather than a huge amount was sufficient in teaching PA. The aforementioned large effect size of .86 on students considered 'at risk', meaning the students are of low socioeconomic status or are learning disabled, benefited from PA instruction. In summary, according to the data gathered from the meta- analysis, phonemic awareness should be taught, in small groups, to young children, especially those with reading difficulties, in a systematic manner for the greatest results and highest effect sizes in regards to reading.

Unfortunately, as students with reading difficulties progress through grade levels, subjects, other than reading, will become increasingly difficult as text readings become more and more frequent and challenging. Students with reading and learning disabilities will slip behind peers in academics and will find school a place where they are unable to succeed. Does this have to be the case? Are there specific strategies, or instructional programs that work for students with learning and reading disabilities? According to the research supported by the National Reading Panel, there are five key skills necessary for reading. I will be reviewing the research on the literature, observations and comprehensive studies completed on areas of reading need, instructional techniques and program models necessary for students with reading disabilities in comparison to the five skill areas necessary for reading.

According to a comprehensive research topic spanning a period of 25 years, Swanson (2008) synthesized the results for students with learning disabilities in regards to reading skill acquisition, teaching and interventions. The studies reviewed in Swanson's synthesis included 12 that observed reading instruction in the general education setting and 13 resource room observations. Explicit instruction and practice spent on phonological awareness was found to be between 10 to 15 percent of class time in regular education, and in contrast, little to no phonological awareness instruction was found for students with learning disabilities. The meta-analysis previously discussed showed a large effect size for the impact of phonological awareness instruction and students with learning disabilities in regards to reading, however Swanson's study showed little evidence of this practice in the special education classroom. Data from the meta- analysis showed a large effect size for reading instruction in small groups.

Instructional grouping with non- learning disabled and learning disabled students, as observed in Swanson's study, showed that half of the reading time was spent in small groups. This observation reflects the data that supports the effectiveness of time spent on small group reading instruction. Resource room instruction, however, spent more than half of their instructional allotted reading time engaged in undifferentiated seat work.

A comparison of the meta- analysis reviewed by Ehri to Swanson's observational studies revealed a disconnect between what occurs during reading instruction for students with learning disabilities to the research based components of effective reading instruction, as described by the National Reading Panel. Swanson observed little time spent on PA instruction for students with learning disabilities, however, a large effect size was found in teaching phonological awareness to children with learning disabilities in Ehri's review. Swanson also observed little phonics instruction in the classroom, another proven, key component to effective reading instruction as supported by the National Reading Panel. Small group instruction targeting specific skill acquisition was identified as an effective instructional measure according to Ehri's review, but Swanson observed that students with learning disabilities were often inappropriately grouped for reading instruction.

Several conclusions can be summarized from the articles and studies reviewed. The first conclusion was taken from data obtained by the National Reading Panel which supports explicit and systematic instruction over nonsystematic instruction in the skill area of phonics. The second conclusion supports foundational skills in phonemic awareness and phonics as essential elements of reading instruction-two of the five key elements addressed by the reading panel. The third conclusion identified the three

remaining skill areas; fluency, comprehension and vocabulary, as essential and important areas to the reading process. The final conclusion reached stated students with reading difficulties benefit from small group instruction with teacher support. As for what is essential for reading, both the studies reviewed agreed that there are five key skill areas necessary for reading, regardless of a disability. The study by Swanson added that small group instruction and complete skill integration from the beginning of reading instruction is beneficial for students with reading difficulties and disabilities.

The components for effective reading instruction have been identified; however, have they been observed in the instruction and interventions studied? Evidence in Swanson's study suggests that methods that teach phonological awareness and phonics skills are effective for learning disabled students, but results indicated note that little instructional time was spent engaging the students in these skill areas. According to the Reading Panel and Swanson's studies, small group instruction has one of the strongest impacts on reading outcomes, but inappropriate grouping structures were often observed. The final observation noted that learning disabled students do not spend enough time engaging in text to make a difference in their oral reading fluency.

The research is available on effective reading instruction, but many reading and learning disabled students are not receiving adequate instruction in the skill areas necessary for reading. Research on two reading models, Guided Reading and Wilson Reading System, will be reviewed in regards to reading instruction for students with reading difficulties and disabilities. The first model to be discussed is used for students with and without reading difficulties and disabilities. The guided reading approach identifies students' reading levels and uses small group instruction on specific reading

needs to target skills needed for reading improvement. Frequent assessments and grouping placements accompany the guided reading approach.

Guided Reading

According to research conducted by Iaquinta (2006), guided reading is defined as a teaching approach for struggling or independent readers to meet the varying instructional needs of all students in a classroom. Students are placed in small groups of similar reading development by the teacher. Children within the groups demonstrate similar learning needs and read at approximately the same level. Teachers are able to teach skills necessary to the needs of the students in each group. Ongoing observation and systematic assessment allows the teacher to monitor student placement in groups. As students needs and reading levels change, groups are modified and children are placed in different groups. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) attest that it is a challenge to use a single text that fits the needs of all the students in the classroom. For some, the text will be too difficult, while for others, too easy. Using texts for a particular group with similar needs creates a context that supports learning. Teacher observation and assessment is critical to the flexible nature of guided reading groups in order to support the different learning paths of the reader. As children take turns reading a leveled text, the teacher prompts the student with skills and strategies for meaning, language structure and visual information. Expected student outcomes include reading increasingly difficult texts, problem solving skill acquirement, and comprehension and fluency improvement. Guided reading instruction provides the opportunity for the teacher to explicitly teach individualized reading skills, reinforce problem solving skills, comprehension and decoding. The success of guided reading depends on skillful teaching of effective strategies, needs

driven grouping of students and systematic observation and assessment. There is no formal training necessary for implementing guided reading in the classroom. School districts may decide to have guided reading workshops for new teachers that teach reading. The teacher is responsible for learning the language structure patterns and irregularities, knowing of and instructing reading skills and strategies and continuously monitoring and assessing individual students.

Does guided reading effectively address the needs of students with reading disabilities and challenges in combination with a direct instruction approach? A study by Bruse, Snodgrass and Salzman (1999) was reviewed on the benefit of guided reading and Project Read reading intervention strategies for at risk first grade students. The study's purpose was to find out if the two reading models complemented each other as effective strategies at developing reading skills in students in an inclusive classroom. Students were assessed prior to the study on reading abilities and all fell below the fourth stanine on literacy skills and were considered "at- risk" for reading development. Project Read, a systematic and multisensory program for teaching phonemic awareness used a direct instruction approach to reading and was intended for use for students having difficulty learning to read. Guided reading, the other program studied in conjunction with Project Read, was used to support children's early reading through small group instruction with leveled texts.

The inclusion classroom included 11 students, a general education teacher, and a Title I reading specialist. Students were placed in one of three reading groups based on initial reading assessments and individual reading inventories. The reading specialist conducted each guided reading group in 20 minute sessions. Flexible grouping and

frequent assessment permitted students to move groups throughout the year. Students first reread familiar stories and then were introduced to new text based on their instructional level. The reading specialist listened to the children's reading and based phonemic awareness lessons on the phonetic patterns demonstrated within the text. Students not in engaged in the guided reading group were completing literacy activities at learning centers located in the classroom.

After guided reading groups, the reading specialist broke the class into two Project Read groups. She worked with one group at a time and used multisensory approaches to instruction. Students used a variety of materials and strategies to learn letter-sound correspondence, including tracing letters in sand, skywriting letters, finger spelling and using a dry erase board while making pronunciations of letter sounds. Students were taught discrete foundational literacy skills using a systematic instructional approach. Students learned sound/symbol patterns in consecutive steps, moving on to the next step when the previous step had been mastered. Phonetic stories reinforced sound patterns and accompanied phonics lessons.

The researchers hypothesized that students would make significant reading gains in four areas; word identification, writing vocabulary, sentence dictation and text level comprehension. Results supported the researchers' hypothesis that both strategies, used in connection with each other, evidenced student growth in all four areas assessed. Students demonstrated reading strategies and self correcting techniques during oral readings. Two Project Read strategies, pounding out words and finger spelling sounds proved to be particularly useful, especially with the students having the most reading difficulty.

In regards to educational importance, students were serviced in the classroom with two separate, both successful, reading models and made reading gains. Students did not need to leave the classroom for a pull out remedial program, therefore eliminating alienation feelings for having to leave the primary classroom and educational time loss due to travel time to the basic skills room. Students benefited from the small group instruction with use of leveled text and focused needs instruction during guided reading. Guided reading, in conjunction with a phonics based program, also proved effective and improved reading scores amongst students with reading difficulty. Now, the effects of Wilson Reading System, a phonics based program, will be reviewed in its effectiveness in improving reading for students with learning disabilities.

Wilson Reading System

Barbara Wilson observed that many students disbelieved that English could be made understandable to them. She developed the Wilson Reading System (WRS) to teach students with language based learning disabilities, difficulties with decoding, fluency, poor spelling or who use English as a second language, the structure of words in a systematic and cumulative manner. According to Wilson, following this program helps students to trust that they can learn English within the system, and ultimately, deal with the irregularities of the language. WRS is a highly-structured remedial program that directly teaches the structure of the language to students and adults who have been unable to learn with other teaching strategies, or who may require multisensory language instruction. Wilson Reading System is appropriate for students in grade two and beyond, and has been used with success in public and private schools, clinics, adult education

classes, family literacy programs, and correctional facilities. WRS is a step-by-step program that gives teachers the tools and language based knowledge they need to work with challenged readers. WRS instructor's confidence and expertise grows by attending classes, achieving certification, and accessing of Wilson Academy's extensive online resources and support. The program provides a systematic and cumulative approach to teach total word structure for decoding and encoding. WRS follows a ten-part lesson plan that addresses decoding, encoding, oral reading fluency, and comprehension in a logical fashion. WRS has collections of controlled and decodable texts (word lists, sentences, stories) for students and provides two levels of vocabulary, making this program appropriate for students in elementary, middle, and high school, as well as adults. WRS is a comprehensive, phonics based reading intervention program that requires teacher certification for its program design. School districts would need to train teachers and buy Wilson materials in order to implement the program with integrity.

In order to evaluate this product's credibility, Wilson and O'Connor (1995) conducted a study measuring the effectiveness of Wilson Reading system on a sample group of 220 students with language learning disabilities in grades 3-12. Wilson was concerned with disabled students' low reading abilities and teachers' lack of knowledge of multisensory structured language training and thus created WRS. Thirty five percent of the students in the study had been retained, had shown small or no gains with other reading intervention programs and most received special education services in daily pull out programs. The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test was used to measure growth in word attack, passage comprehension and total reading and the Wilson reading test was used to measure spelling growth. Both tests were given pre and post to Wilson

instruction. Teachers implementing the program were trained during a two day workshop and then instructed a student, one on one, two to three times a week. A Wilson certified trainer observed at least five lessons to verify the accuracy of the lesson plan teaching techniques. Lesson plans, student materials and assessments were checked periodically. Teachers attended monthly seminars from September to June. After one school year of program implementation, the students were given the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and Wilson spelling test to obtain post testing data. Results from the post testing data indicated significant gains in word attack skills, with an average gain of 4.5 grade levels. Wilson noted that much of a gain indicated that WRS greatly improved students' decoding abilities. Gains were also made in passage comprehension, with a 1.6 average grade level gain and a 1.9 grade level gain in total reading. The average gains in raw scores for spelling was ten and an analysis of spelling test showed growth in written word structure. Students who had not made reading gains with other intervention reading models made gains in WRS. Results from the study show students with reading disabilities who receive instruction from teachers trained in the multisensory teaching of phonological awareness and word structure can make significant gains in reading and spelling in a one year pull out program using WRS. Wilson describes and claims WRS an effective reading measure for students with reading challenges, but her opinion may be viewed as biased because she is the creator and profiteer of the product. WRS is not an inexpensive program. Teacher training and Wilson products can cost a school district several thousands of dollars. Many school districts are spending substantial amounts of money on educational services and products designed to help close the reading gap.

What does other research say about Wilson Reading System and its effects on the decoding and reading improvement for students with reading difficulties and disabilities? Is it worth the cost? According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (U.S. Department of Education 2006), 36 percent of fourth graders read below the basic reading level. Three quarters of these students never attain average levels of reading skills and are more likely to drop out of high school. A report prepared for the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance by the Corporation for the Advancement of Policy Evaluation (2007) was completed based on a large scale, longitudinal study on the impact of reading interventions for struggling readers. Four reading interventions were reviewed; Spell Read Phonological Auditory Training, Corrective Reading, Wilson Reading and Failure Free Reading. Measures of reading skill in phonemic decoding, word reading accuracy, text reading fluency, and reading comprehension were administered several times to assess student progress in learning to read. The third and fifth grade students in the evaluation sample score about one standard deviation below the national norms on measures used to assess decoding skills.

When reviewing the four interventions as a whole in comparison to the control groups, it was found that the interventions improved some reading skills. The interventions had an impact on decoding, word reading, and comprehension. Students in the third grade cohort benefited more from the interventions than the fifth grade cohort of students. The interventions helped to narrow reading gaps by one sixth to one third for students in the intervention groups compared to students in the control group for the third grade cohort. Students in the fifth grade cohort reduced the gap in word attack skills by one half. It appears that the sooner a student is identified and given an intervention, the

better. Although fifth grade students made progress in reading skill areas, their progress was not as substantial when compared to the younger students. The interventions did not improve test scores standardized assessments.

Teachers involved in the longitudinal study on the four reading interventions were trained on using WRS and all students began on Step one in the program to keep with the systematic approach of teaching the language structure. Students were then able to move at a pace commensurate with their skill level. Students in the study progressed somewhere between steps four and six in one year of instruction. Steps one through six in Wilson Reading establish foundational skills in word reading, steps seven through twelve familiarize students with more complex rules of language and morphological principles. Ninety four percent of the instructional time was spent on word-level skills and six percent was spent of comprehension and vocabulary. The third grade students' word attack scores (phonemic decoding skills) increased five standard score points, an effect size of .36, and decoding efficiency scores increased four points, an effect size of .26. This impact suggests that the intervention moved the students approximately five to ten percentile points more than that would have been gained if not using the intervention. Wilson also had an impact on word identification test by four score points, an effect size of .28, and sight word efficiency by 3 points, and effect size of .17. Wilson had the highest effect size in regards to word identification and sight word efficiency than any of the other three interventions. The overall impact of the interventions on the fifth grade students was fewer than that of the third graders; however, Wilson had a significant impact on phonemic decoding. The fifth grade students increased word attack scores by 8 standard score points, a significant effect size of .52. Results from the study showed

that students made reading improvement in some reading skill areas with instruction in reading intervention programs, with higher effect sizes for third grade students than fifth grade students.

Research reviewed in preparation for this study showed support for both guided reading and Wilson Reading in regards to effective reading instruction. While guided reading is commonly used as a reading program for general and special education children with or without reading difficulties, Wilson Reading System's design was made for students with severe reading difficulties. Do students with learning disabilities, at the second and third grade level, benefit more from a less structured, skill driven program using leveled readers or more from a highly structured, systematic phonics program? This study will review each model's effectiveness in teaching elementary students with learning and language disabilities the skills necessary for fluent reading.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Context

This study on the effectiveness of guided reading in comparison to Wilson reading for improving phonemic awareness and fluency was conducted in a self contained special education classroom of sixteen students with varying degrees and types of disabilities and reading difficulties. The school district that houses the school is located in Southern New Jersey and is home to both rural and urban populations. The district serves students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade and has a high proportion of low socioeconomic status families. The school particular to this study is a Kindergarten through fifth grade and has a population of 464 students. There are 40 teachers in the school which makes a student/teacher ratio of nine to one. Two hundred and thirty eight students (51 %) are eligible for discounted or free lunch.

The students in the study all have individualized education plans and receive accommodations and modifications based on their needs. Five students are classified with specific learning disability, six have multiple disabilities, four have communication impairments, and one is other health impaired. Eight students have IQ scores from 90-110 and five have IQ scores 89 and below. Half of the class is in third grade and the other half is second grade. All students tested below grade level in comparison to their assigned grade level using reading subtests on the *Peabody Individual Achievement Test* (PIAT). Grade three students averaged one to two years below grade level on reading subtests on the PIAT. Grade two students averaged a few months to one year below grade level on reading subtests. Students will be placed in four reading groups with four

students per group. Student placement in each group was configured by reading level as determined by the reading recognition and comprehension subtests on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT). Below are tables of the reading groups for small group instruction. Included in the chart are the students' grade level, PIAT reading recognition/comprehension scores, DIBELS fall benchmark data, type of disability, and full/ performance intelligence quotients.

Table 3.1: Reading Group 1: Guided Reading Instruction

Student	PIAT Score Fall 2010	DIBELS Fall Benchmark Report	Type of Disability	IQ Level
CG Grade 3	RR: 1.9 RC: 2.5	Core	Multiply Disabled	FIQ: 97 PIQ: 103
MD Grade 3	RR: 2.2 RC: 2.0	Core	Other Health Impaired	FIQ: 88 PIQ: 92
NB Grade 3	RR: 1.9 RC: 1.7	Core	Multiply Disabled	FIQ: 90 PIQ:93
KW Grade 2	RR: 1.4 RC: 1.2	Intensive	Specific Learning Disability	FIQ: 100 PIQ: 104

Table 3.2: Reading Group 2: Wilson Reading System

Student	PIAT Score Fall 2010	DIBELS Fall Benchmark Report	Type of Disability	IQ Level
CC Grade 3	RR: 1.6 RC: 1.5	Strategic	Specific Learning Disability	FIQ: 99 PIQ: 102
DC Grade 3	RR: 1.9 RC: 1.7	Strategic	Communication Impaired	FIQ: 76 PIQ: 82
SM Grade 2	RR: 1.9 RC: 1.8	Core	Communication Impaired	FIQ: 97 PIQ: 98
AG Grade 3	RR: 1.5 RC: 1.8	Intensive	Communication Impaired	FIQ: 90 PIQ: 85

Table 3.3: Reading Group 3: Guided Reading Instruction

Student	PIAT Score Fall 2010	DIBELS Fall Benchmark Report	Type of Disability	IQ Level
JS Grade 2	RR: 1.9 RC: 1.3	Intensive	Multiply Disabled	FIQ: 98 PIQ: 84
AR Grade 3	RR: 1.5 RC: 1.4	Core	Specific Learning Disability	FIQ: 90 PIQ: 85
BR Grade 3	RR: 1.3 RC: 1.3	Intensive	Specific Learning Disability	FIQ: 90 PIQ: 98
EN Grade 3	RR: 1.1 RC: 1.1	Intensive	Multiply Disabled	FIQ: 85 PIQ: 102

Table 3.4: Reading Group 4: Wilson Reading System

Student	PIAT Score Fall 2010	DIBELS Fall Benchmark Report	Type of Disability	IQ Level
FM Grade 2	RR: 1.1 RC: 1.1	Intensive	Multiply Disability	Composite Score Only: 96
RG Grade 2 Grade 2	RR: 1.0 RC: 1.0	Core	Communication Impaired	FSQ: 73 PIQ: 92
GP Grade 3	RR: 1.3 RC: 1.0	Intensive	Specific Learning Disability	FIQ: 89 PIQ:90
WA Grade 2	RR: K.1 RC: K.4	Intensive	Multiply Disabled	FIQ: 54 PIQ: 68

Key:
RR: Reading Recognition Subtest **FIQ: Full Scale IQ**
RC: Reading Comprehension Subtest **PIQ: Performance IQ**

Procedure

This study will focus on language arts literacy improvement in the areas of word identification, decoding and fluency. The current reading curriculum in the school

includes a daily phonics lesson, a computer based reading program, and guided reading center three times a week. The school district has decided to utilize the Wilson Reading System for students in grades two and above who are reading below grade level. This study will evaluate the results of the use of the Wilson Reading System compared to a Guided Reading program on the reading achievement of students with learning and reading disabilities using the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) first grade assessment data. Students will be pre-assessed the second week of January (10^{th} -14^{th}) using the DIBELS winter benchmark. At the start of the third week of January, students will be placed in four reading groups, with four students per group. Each group of students will receive instruction for a half an hour, in guided reading or Wilson reading, three to four times a week for six weeks (January 17^{th}-February 25^{th}). At the conclusion of the six weeks of instruction, students will be given a post-assessment using the same winter benchmark.

DIBELS benchmark data, for grade one, will be used to provide assessment data on initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency, oral reading fluency, retell fluency, and word use fluency. DIBELS provides a validated and reliable assessment for reading skill acquisition and fluency. According to research obtained from the University of Oregon, a predictive validity of .42 for phoneme segmentation was found when DIBELS first grade data was compared to the Woodcock Johnson Total Reading Cluster. A concurrent validity of .54 was found when compared to the Woodcock Johnson Readiness Cluster. The reliability measure yielded a .74 median for the phoneme segmentation subtest. Oral reading fluency DIBELS subtest provided the highest validity score of .91. Additional validity and

reliability information was obtained through a study by Elliot, Lee & Tolleson (2001). Results from their study indicated correlations between DIBELS and the WJ-R of .72 for letter naming fluency, .72 for sound naming fluency and .60 for phoneme segmentation fluency. The reading skills assessed by DIBELS are essential and predictive of reading success. DIBELS will be used to assess the students on these skills so that I am aware of which reading program is yielding the best decoding and fluency results; Wilson reading system or guided reading.

Chapter 4
Results

This study compared the effectiveness of Wilson Reading System and the Guided Reading approach in improving the decoding and reading fluency of second and third grade students with learning disabilities. The research question was whether one approach would be more effective than the other. This study was limited to a single class size of a total of sixteen students. A group comparison research design was used to complete this study and analyze results.

Students were pre-assessed during the second week of January (10^{th} -14^{th}) using the DIBELS winter benchmark. At the start of the third week of January, students were placed in four reading groups, with four students per group. Each group of students received instruction for a half an hour, in guided reading or Wilson reading, three to four times a week for six weeks (January 17^{th}-February 25^{th}). At the conclusion of the six weeks of instruction, students were given a post-assessment using the same DIBELS winter benchmark. Students were not all on the same reading level, or on the same grade level however all students were reading below grade level and were in a self contained special education classroom. Participants have varying degrees of disability and intelligence quotient levels. All students were instructed in the classroom by the special education teacher and no student received additional support through resource room services.

DIBELS was used to assess the students on nonsense word fluency, whole words read and oral reading fluency. DIBELS provides a validated and reliable assessment for reading skill acquisition and fluency. The tables below show pre and post test data results from the DIBELS winter benchmark assessment.

Skill Area Assessed:
Nonsense Word Fluency

Guided Reading

The results of testing on the "Nonsense Word Fluency" subtest of the DIBELS test for the guided reading group are shown in table 4.1. Three students in Table 4.1 made positive gains, one student remained the same, and the scores for the other three students decreased from pre to post- testing. Two students moved from "strategic" to "core" in this skill area. All students who initially tested "core" remained in "core" and tested "intensive" remained in "intensive." A "core" label signifies the skill area assessed has been mastered. A "strategic" label signifies the skill has not yet been mastered and the student would benefit from continued support and instruction. An "intensive" label signifies that the student is at high risk and needs intensive reading intervention. There was an average decrease of 4.25 points from the pre- test scores to the post- test scores for the guided reading group. CG's scores significantly skewed the average in the negative range.

Table 4.1 Pre/Post Scores on "Nonsense Word Fluency" Subtest for Guided Reading Group

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CG Grade 3	127 Core	70 Core	- 57
MD Grade 3	57 Core	51 Core	- 7
NB Grade 3	41 Strategic	47 Core	+ 6
KW Grade 2	47 Core	60 Core	+ 13

JS Grade 2	44 Core	44 Core	+/- 0
AR Grade 3	34 Strategic	51 Core	+ 17
BR Grade 3	63 Core	59 Core	- 4
EN Grade 3	19 Intensive	17 Intensive	- 2

Wilson Reading

According to post test results in the DIBELS category, "Nonsense Word Fluency," six students in Table 4.2 made positive gains, one remained the same, and one student's score decreased from pre to post- test. Two students moved from "intensive" to "strategic" in this skill area. All students who tested "core" remained in "core." There was an average increase of 6 points from pre- test scores to post- test scores for the Wilson reading group.

Table 4.2 Pre/Post Scores on "Nonsense Word Fluency" Subtest for Wilson Reading System

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CC Grade 3	54 Core	69 Core	+ 15
DC Grade 3	56 Core	73 Core	+ 17
SM Grade 2	30 Intensive	37 Strategic	+ 7
AG Grade 3	61 Core	68 Core	+ 7
FM Grade 2	27 Intensive	34 Strategic	+ 7
RG Grade 2 Grade 2	36 Strategic	37 Strategic	+ 1
GP Grade 3	26 Intensive	26 Intensive	+/- 0
WA Grade 2	8 Intensive	3 Intensive	- 5

Skill Area Assessed:
Whole Words Read

Guided Reading

According to post test results in the DIBELS category, "Whole Words Read," four students in Table 4.3 made positive gains, one student remained the same and three students' scores decreased from pre to post- test. Three students moved from "strategic" to "core" in this skill area, one student moved from "intensive" to "core," and one student moved from "strategic" to "intensive." All students who tested "core" remained in "core." There was an average increase of .75 points from pre to post- test scores.

Table 4.3 Pre/Post Scores on "Whole Words Read" Subtest for Guided Reading Group

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CG Grade 3	35 Core	18 Core	- 17
MD Grade 3	17 Core	13 Core	- 5
NB Grade 3	6 Strategic	11 Core	+ 5
KW Grade 2	5 Strategic	18 Core	+ 13
JS Grade 2	0 Intensive	10 Core	+ 10
AR Grade 3	4 Strategic	1 Intensive	- 3
BR Grade 3	0 Intensive	0 Intensive	+/- 0
EN Grade 3	0 Intensive	3 Strategic	+ 3

Wilson Reading

According to post test results in the DIBELS category, "Whole Words Read," three students in Table 4.4 made positive gains, four students' scores remained the same, and one student's scores decreased from pre to post- test. One student moved from "intensive" to "strategic" in this skill area. There was an average increase of 1.3 points from pre- test scores to post- test scores for students in the Wilson reading group.

Table 4.4 Pre/Post Scores on "Whole Words Read" Subtest for Wilson Reading System

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CC Grade 3	19 Core	19 Core	+/- 0
DC Grade 3	18 Core	22 Core	+ 4
SM Grade 2	2 Intensive	1 Intensive	- 1
AG Grade 3	20 Core	20 Core	+/- 0
FM Grade 2	1 Intensive	3 Strategic	+ 7
RG Grade 2 Grade 2	1 Strategic	2 Strategic	+ 1
GP Grade 3	0 Intensive	0 Intensive	+/- 0
WA Grade 2	0 Intensive	0 Intensive	+/- 0

Skill Area Assessed:
DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency

Guided Reading

According to post test results in the DIBELS category, "Oral Reading Fluency," five students in table 4.5 made positive gains, two students remained the same, and one decreased scores from pre to post-test. All students who tested "core" remained in "core." One student moved from "strategic" to "core," one student moved from "intensive" to "strategic," and one moved from "intensive" to "core." One student remained in "intensive" but made a fifty percent gain in his oral reading fluency. EN's scores significantly skewed the average in the positive range with a 50 % increase from pre to post- test results. There was an average increase of 7.8 % from pre test scores to post- test scores for students the guided reading group.

Table 4.5 Pre/Post Scores on "Oral Reading Fluency" Subtest for Guided Reading Group

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CG Grade 3	97 % Core	98 % Core	+ 1 %
MD Grade 3	91 % Core	91 % Core	0 %
NB Grade 3	82 % Strategic	87 % Core	+ 5 %
KW Grade 2	89 % Core	78 % Core	- 11 %
JS Grade 2	67 % Intensive	81 % Core	+ 14 %
AR Grade 3	72 % Strategic	72 % Strategic	+/- 0
BR Grade 3	65 % Intensive	69 % Strategic	+ 4
EN Grade 3	0 % Intensive	50 % Intensive	+ 50 %

Wilson Reading

According to post test results in the DIBELS category "Oral Reading Fluency," five students in table 4.6 made positive gains. One student remained the same and two students' scores decreased from pre to post- test scores. One student moved from "strategic" to "core" in this skill area. All students who tested "core" remained in "core" and tested "intensive" remained in "intensive." There was an average increase of 4.6 % from pre- test scores to post- test scores for students in the Wilson Reading group.

Table 4.6 Pre/Post Scores on "Oral Reading Fluency" Subtest for Wilson Reading System

Student	Pre Test	Post Test	Increase or Decrease
CC Grade 3	70 % Strategic	83 %Core	+ 13 %
DC Grade 3	80 % Core	86 % Core	+ 6 %
SM Grade 2	81 % Core	85 % Core	+ 4 %
AG Grade 3	81 % Core	91 % Core	+ 10 %
FM Grade 2	57 % Intensive	54 % Intensive	- 3 %
RG Grade 2 Grade 2	57 % Intensive	55 % Intensive	- 2 %
GP Grade 3	43 % Intensive	52 % Intensive	+ 9 %
WA Grade 2	0 % Intensive	0 % Intensive	0 %

Summary

The overall average for students in guided reading for "Nonsense Word Fluency" was negative at 4.25 points decreased, and positive at 6 points increased for Wilson

reading. The overall average for students in guided reading for "Whole Words Read" was positive at .75 points increased, and positive at 1.3 points increased for Wilson reading. The overall percentile average for students in guided reading for "Oral Reading Fluency" was positive at 7.8 points increased, and positive at 4.6 points increased for Wilson reading.

Combining all of the DIBELS skill areas assessed, the students in guided reading made an average increase of 1.4 points from pre to post- test results. Students in Wilson reading made an average increase of 4 points from pre to post test results. Wilson reading, therefore, had an average increase of 2.5 points over guided reading when compared to all assessed skill areas.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary

This study evaluated the results of the use of the Wilson Reading System compared to a Guided Reading program on the reading achievement of students with learning and reading disabilities using the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) first grade assessment data. DIBELS was used to assess the students on nonsense word fluency, whole words read and oral reading fluency. Combining all of the DIBELS skill areas assessed, the students in guided reading made an average increase of 1.45 points from pre to post- test results. Students in Wilson reading made an average increase of 4 points from pre to post test results. Students in the Wilson reading program, therefore, had an average increase of 2.5 points over guided reading when compared to all assessed skill areas.

According to research conducted by the *National Reading Panel*, one essential skill for students with disabilities to acquire for reading ability is phonological awareness. A student's disability may impact his or her ability to read and acquire phonological awareness, a precursor to reading in which you are able to hear and play with sounds in words. The scores on "Nonsense Word Fluency" for students in guided reading actually decreased while the students in the Wilson Reading program increased by 6 points. Student CG's scores in this subtest decreased 57 points, which significantly skewed the average for the guided reading group in the negative range. One possible reason for this large decrease might be based on this student's medical condition. This medical condition affects glucose levels which can have an impact on academic focus and

attention. A low glucose level may have impacted his ability to perform at his best academic level. If this student's scores were withdrawn from this subtest, the guided reading average would have increased to an average of 1.4 words increased. The students in the Wilson reading program still outscored the students in the guided reading program, however the average would now be in the positive range and not in the negative range.

Wilson Reading's lesson plan placed a high focus on teaching phonological awareness skills, and therefore may have influenced the large point increase for decoding nonsense words on the DIBELS subtest. The use of a guided reading program, on the other hand, had a negative impact on the decoding and reading of nonsense words. The lesson plan for guided reading focuses much less attention on phonological awareness in comparison to the Wilson program. Students who have little or no phonological awareness would probably benefit from a program focused on phonological awareness skill acquisition. Using a program that does not focus on phonological awareness, or that is not supplemented by another program, may be unsuccessful in teaching student decoding and phonological skills, therefore effecting reading success.

As students with reading difficulties progress through grade levels, subjects, other than reading, will become increasingly difficult as text readings become more and more frequent and challenging. In whole word reading, while students in the guided reading program improved slightly, students in the Wilson program improved more.
The Wilson and guided reading programs addressed reading whole words in their lesson structure with the same amount of focus. A possible reason that the students did not make larger gains in reading words at a higher reading difficulty in either program was

the restricted time frame of the study. Students may have not had enough time to move through the program word difficulty levels that require reading words at a higher level.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) attest that it is a challenge to use a single text that fits the needs of all the students in the classroom. For some, the text will be too difficult, while for others, too easy. Using texts for a particular group with similar needs creates a context that supports learning. Expected student outcomes include reading increasingly difficult texts, problem solving skill acquirement, and comprehension and fluency improvement. The guided reading program focuses less on phonological awareness skills then Wilson and more on improving fluency. The overall scores on "Oral Reading Fluency" showed that students in both groups improved, although those in guided reading improved more. Although the Wilson Reading program allocates a percentage of lesson time to reading fluency, it is not as large of a percentage as in the guided reading program. Students in the guided reading group made a higher point gain in the fluency subtest of the DIBELS assessment and this may be due to the program's focus on oral reading fluency, use of leveled texts, and student mobility in reading levels. Students who are strong in phonological awareness and phonics skills may benefit from a program with a high focus on fluency.

Recommendation

The assessment data received from the DIBELS assessment provided information on specific components of reading; phonological awareness, decoding, word recognition and fluency. Students in this study who demonstrated a lack of phonological awareness and decoding skills benefited most from the highly structured, word analytic lesson plan provided by Wilson reading system. Students in this study who were stronger readers

benefited from the repeated readings and reading level mobility provided by the guided reading program. The results indicated that no single program proved to be the most successful in all areas assessed by DIBELS. Wilson Reading showed the most strength in teaching decoding and phonological skills, as scores for students in the nonsense word fluency assessment outscored those from the guided reading program. The guided reading program showed the most strength in teaching fluency, as scores from the fluency assessment outscored those from the Wilson program. Both Wilson and guided reading showed relatively the same gain in whole words read.

Students in this study will remain in the same class until the end of the school year. This data provided practical implications to be used in the classroom. The students will continue with the program they were in for the study if they demonstrated success. Students that did not demonstrate success may be placed in another group to see if an alternative program provides more success. DIBELS can be used to monitor the progress of students on a weekly basis, if needed, to provide frequent assessment data. Students that demonstrated weaknesses in a particular skill area can be targeted for that area and extra intervention can be implemented for support. As researched, there are five key areas for effective reading. One student may be strong in one area and weak in another reading area and vice versa for another student. It is helpful to know that guided reading can be used to help students increase fluency and guided reading can be used to help students increase phonological awareness skills.

If this study were to be repeated, it may be beneficial to divide the students, not by IQ or reading level, but by their reading skill area need. This study was limited to a small class size and short time frame. It would be interesting to see in a future study if

students with phonological awareness difficulties benefit most to a systematic language system as in Wilson, and students with strong phonological skills benefit most from a fluency based program as in guided reading. A longer time span for this study may also prove different results, given that the programs may need time to be effective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Wilson reading had a positive effect on decoding and guided reading had a positive effect on fluency. It can be assumed that Wilson reading proved most effective for students with phonological awareness difficulties. It can also be assumed that guided reading had the biggest impact on improving fluency for students stronger in phonological awareness. Reading is a complex process that evolves as skills are acquired. Students with learning difficulties often lack the pre-reading skills necessary for successful reading. Teachers of students with disabilities should be aware of the key areas for reading and how to teach those areas. A skill based assessment, such as DIBELS, provides valuable assessment data on those reading areas. Data driven instruction will provide students with instruction that fits their own particular needs. What works for one student may not work for another, no matter how similar they may seem. This is important to keep in mind, as we often want to meet the needs of all with one single curriculum.

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