Outline for SPED 637 Research Proposal

Source of Information:
- Author: XXXXX
- Title: The Effects of Empowering Internal Dialog on the Academic Achievement and Self-Esteem of 2nd-8th grade students at Kalamazoo Advantage Academy

Research Questions:
Do 2nd-8th grade students at XXX School who use positive self-talk (positive self affirmation statements), achieve higher reading test scores/check outs in the Decoding or Reading Mastery series?

Do the students have higher self-esteem than students who are not taught the skill?

Reason for Research:
- While reading Dr. Phil McGraw’s book, Family First: Your Step-by-Step Plan for Creating a Phenomenal Family, and seeing the effects of negative self-talk in my own classroom, I became inspired to teach my students how to think more positively. I thought that perhaps, the students may find themselves thinking more clearly and I might be able to create a greater feeling of accomplishment, accountability, and choice for what takes place in the classroom. Currently, I teach in a Middle School Special Education Resource room at Kalamazoo Advantage Academy in Kalamazoo, MI. My students come from many different backgrounds, but the majority of them are from generational poverty. They believe that they are destined to live the life of their parents, live with their parents for the rest of their lives or work for low wages. They hardly have a sense of what their future holds and I often hear the phase, “It’s not my choice,” or blamingly, “You (he or she) did it to me,” rather than taking responsibility for their own grades and/or behaviors.
- As I began to think further on what I could do to make a big change in my classroom atmosphere, I began talking with a colleague of mine, who has been teaching positive self-statements to her students for the last two years. The students have appeared to be happier and behavior problems have decreased (Middlebrooks, 2006). I decided that it would be more interesting to see how the school, as a whole, would be effected by the use of positive self-talk statements. This is how I decided on my research topic.
- Many studies have been done predicting the correlation between positive self-talk and self-esteem (Alexander, Hall, & Hardy, 2001) as well as the amount of academic engagement, or time on task (Callicott & Park, 2003). There has also been research which tried to establish a relationship between the use of positive and negative statements by a students parents and teachers, and how it related to the student’s perceptions of him or herself (Burnett, 1999; Burnett, 2003; Burnett & McCrindle, 1999). I have not come across any research in which someone has tested the hypothesis that a students’ academic achievement in reading is some how related to the use of self-talk in the classroom, whether positive or negative. The closest that I have come to finding research which is somewhat related to my study was that of Michael Kamann and Bernice Wong (1993). In this study, the two researchers tried to find a correlation between the use of positive self-statements (which they taught to the children) in students with Learning Disabilities, and
the student’s math performance on a pre and posttest in their math program (Kamann & Wong, 1993).

**Hypothesis:**
Kalamazoo Advantage Academy students in grades 2-8 who use positive self-affirmation statements daily in class achieve higher reading test scores in the Decoding or Reading Mastery series. These students also have a greater self-esteem than students who are not taught the skill.

**Subjects:**
- The students who have been targeted are in grades 2-8 at Kalamazoo Advantage Academy, a charter school located in the heart of downtown Kalamazoo, MI. The school has currently enrolled 385 students. The students are made up of approximately 87% African American with about 92% of the children receiving free or reduced lunch.
- The students chosen for the study are in ability based reading groups using the Decoding or Reading Mastery programs.
- The students are chosen based on 1 in 3 randomly selected per classroom for a total of 88 research participants. 6 out of 11 classrooms will use the Empowering Internal Dialog statements daily. The other classrooms will not use the statements. A short explanatory note will be sent home with the students asking parents to reply only if their child MAY NOT participate in the data collection by the Western Michigan University student researchers. Due to the lack of parent response and involvement in the school, this is the chosen method of contact. This study is somewhat non-invasive and participants will be anonymous.

**Sampling Procedure:**
- Independent Variable: Positive Self-Affirmation Statements said daily in class.
- Dependent Variable(s): Reading Test Scores/Checkouts, Measurement of Self-esteem
- Possible Confounding Variables: How often during the day the general education teacher uses the self-affirmation statements, what time of day used, the reading program’s ability to help improve reading scores in and of itself, accuracy of the students answers on the Self-Esteem Inventory

**Procedures for Implementing Research Study:**
- Create the Empowering Internal Dialog Self-Statements to be used school-wide and determine how often the statements should be used and how they should be presented by the teacher to the students.
- Hold a teacher in-service for an hour after school briefly explaining the research and how the study will impact their classrooms. Each teacher will be able to ask questions, be briefed on what and how to use the Empowering Internal Dialog statements in their classrooms (if needed) and will be told how the data will be used. The teachers will be assured that the data will not be used to measure their own effectiveness as teachers, but a measure of how positive self-statements affect the student’s personal performance in reading assessments.
- Draft explanatory slip describing research study to send home with ALL KAA students
Send home slip…wait two weeks for any parental feedback/questions before beginning study.
Assign students numbers and randomly select 1 of every 3 students per classroom for the study (eliminating students from the selection process whose parent(s) disagree with study)
Within first two weeks of study complete all Self-Esteem Inventories.
Because reading checkouts are measured at the end of each lesson (usually daily) we would not have to intrude on classroom activity on Wednesdays. The classroom teacher would merely email the scores of child #3, 6, 9, 12, etc. once a week on his or her own time schedule so as to collect the necessary data. Should the teacher not have a checkout on a particular Wednesday for whatever reason, the teacher should record the Thursday checkout for the researchers.
Data will be collected for a period of 6 months continuously for approximately 24-26 measurements of reading scores.
After the 3rd month, the students will be tested again with Self-Esteem Inventory during a two-week period.
After the study has been completed at 6 months, the students will be tested for the last time using the Self-Esteem Inventory.

Analysis:
Statistical Procedures: Data will be taken and interpreted each Wednesday for a period of 6 months.
The students will be given a reading checkout daily, however, the scores will be recorded on Wednesdays as students are more likely to be at school in the middle of the week than at the beginning and the end of the week.
Results of the students checkouts will be individually marked on a scatter plot table noting the student’s own personal growth.
The students will be given a Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) measurement test before the intervention and once at the end of the 3rd and 6th months, for a total of 3 readings. The data from the SEI will be plotted on a table to show whether or not the positive self-talk correlated with changes in reading scores.

References:


