

THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE TUTORING IN SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION OF FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS AT-RISK FOR READING FAILURE

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of an alternative reading program on the performance of at-risk first graders. Sixty first graders from three north Louisiana public elementary schools with high poverty rates, who were determined by their teachers and principals to be functioning in the bottom 20-30% of first-grade reading students, were purposefully selected. Students were pretested on three subtests of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test-Revised (WRMT-R), Form G, and randomly assigned to either a control or an experimental group. Experimental group students received 15 minutes per day of tutoring by America Reads Volunteers in the Edmark Reading Program, a highly structured sight word program; control group students were read aloud to for 15 minutes each day by the same volunteers.

At the completion of the first semester of the school year, the 60 participants were tested on four subtests of the WRMT-R, Form H (Letter Identification, Word Identification, Word Attack, Passage Comprehension) and were asked to read aloud the 150 words taught in the treatment program. Qualitative data were also collected in the form of student, parent, teacher, and administrator interviews, observation, and examination of documents. Quantitative data were analyzed with four ANCOVAs and one ANOVA; stepwise multiple regression was used to determine covariates for each subtest. Qualitative data were examined using content analysis.

Results indicated a significant difference in the performance of experimental group students on the WRMT-R Passage Comprehension subtest and Edmark posttest. Qualitative data indicated that more experimental group students than control group students exhibited significantly improved reading ability, attitudes toward reading, attitudes toward school, and attitudes toward self. Results suggested that schools should consider the use of volunteers to implement one-on-one tutoring in the Edmark Reading Program to teach a supplementary sight word vocabulary to at-risk first graders.