



1. Introduction

Summertime is the time for leisure activities, family time, vacations and getting some much needed rest and relaxation. Students look forward to going to the pool, playing with their friends, and not getting up early. However, their parents see something different. Many parents and teachers use the summer break as an extended learning season, specifically to enhance the academic skills of those that struggle to meet the academic goals set throughout the year. By 2000, many of the nations’ school districts require that students that struggle to meet academic standards attend summer school (Mathews, 2000).

Research shows that students, who are not involved in academic activities during the summer months, tend to fall behind academically when school starts in the fall. This is especially true for students who struggle in areas of reading and math (Cooper, 2001). More often than not, “children placed at-risk for academic failure rely primarily on school for academic learning” (US Department of Education, 1993, p.2). Students across the country specifically African American students who are placed at risk for academic failure are reading below their grade level. As a result, these students tend to have behavior problems, low classroom participation, low test scores, and lack of academic success. In light of this staggering information teachers are faced with the challenge of meeting their students where they are at the start of the school year. One of the biggest challenges is to aid students in recalling the academic information that they may have loss during the summer. Cooper et al (1996) found that summer learning loss equaled at least one month of instruction. In another study, Sargent &Fidler (1987) show that students with learning disabilities and those at-risk may need extra summer learning opportunities. Cooper et al (2000) found that summer programs focusing on remedial, accelerated or enriched learning had a positive impact on the knowledge and skills of participants.

This places a massive burden on educators. They will have the responsibility of recognizing and putting into place strategies as well as plans for improving students a placed at- risk reader’s proficiency levels. The loss in mathematics, spelling, and reading skills can accumulate each year and by the end of a child’s sixth grade year they will be significantly behind their peers. Children who repeatedly experience summer learning loss can be as much as two years behind their fellow classmates (Cooper 2001). The question for teachers especially novice teachers then becomes “how” can we prevent this from happening? Summer enrichment programs have proven to have major benefits for students placed at-risk in reading. Studies show that students who attend high-quality summer school, participate in enrichment programs, or read 10 or more books during the summer, can maintain or improve their skills. Additionally, reading just four or five books over the summer can have a significant impact in stemming summer learning loss. Given that reading is the foundation for other academic learning; for students placed at-risk, attending a summer enrichment program has the potential for improving or maintaining reading proficiency.

This project explores the research, curriculum development and the tutoring experience of a summer reading intervention program, designed to enhance the academic achievement of at-risk 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students. One of the unique features of this program was allowing the students to listen to themselves read and focus on improving their reading fluency based on what they hear. The literature focusing on this particular strategy is scarce, which makes this study significant. The goal was to provide at-risk readers with a reading intervention program that focused heavily on the common components of reading: rereading familiar text, focusing on words, and guided reading of new text through the use of audio tape recordings.

2. Method

The PI secured the location where the study would take place. It was discovered that a local public school had several students that were placed at risk for academic failure in the areas of reading and math. Although the school is not a title one school, they have a high population of at-risk students. After conversations with the principal, this location was agreed to be the best for this project.

The research assistant was paired with the schools reading coach to implement the program. Initial reading data for the students was shared with the PI and the research assistant and the students were grouped accordingly. Our research sample was drawn from seventeen students who were identified by their teacher as reading below grade level. The students ranged from 9-12 years of age. The current grade level of participants was 3rd to 5th grade. Participants consisted of six female and eleven male students. Of these students eight were African American, one Hispanic student, and eight Caucasian students.

After permission for participation in the study was obtained student’s pre-data test scores were reviewed from their most current STAR reading test. The mean reading level of the 3rd grade participants was 3rd grade 3rd semester with one 3rd grade participant reading on a 2nd grade 1st semester level. The mean reading level of 4th grade participants was 3rd grade 7th semester with one 4th grade participant reading on a 1st grade 5th semester level. The mean reading level of 5th grade participants was 5th grade 2nd semester with one 5th grade participant reading on a 3rd grade 4th semester level, one participant reading on a 4th grade 5th level and a final participant reading on a 4th grade 7th semester level. The current grade level accounts for 2011-2012 academic school year.

Using talent development and ARI reading strategies, students were provided whole group and small group instruction. During whole group instruction students were grouped according to grade level, 3rd and 4th grade students were group together while 5th grade students were grouped together. Grouping this way allowed for students to not be singled out and separated from their peers. For small group instructions students were group according to reading level. Students who were in 3rd and 4th grade in the 2011-2012 academic year, but according to their end of the year STAR reading score indicated that they were reading below that grade or not yet on the next grade level were identified as at-risk, while those that were reading at the next grade level or slightly below were identified as on grade level, and those with higher reading scores were placed in the high reading group. Fifth grade students were grouped similarly for small group reading. Although the participants received tutoring in reading and math, reading was the focus of this study.

The research assistant was tasked with finding research on best practices for implementing reading strategies that worked best for students placed at risk. Forty minute lesson plans for teaching were then developed based on research based strategies. Students were given a learning style inventory survey to assist with developing appropriate lessons. Seventeen students completed the learning style inventory. The research assistant read aloud the questions and responses. She explained the codes V-means visual, A-auditory, and K-kinesthetic. The participants were then instructed to circle the best response that describes them. Results indicated that: 9 were visual learners, 5 were kinesthetic learners, and 3 were auditory learners. This information helped in planning activities and pairing of students.

3. Results

The following are results taken from the audio recorder only. Results from other strategies and samples conducted during this research are detailed in final report.

Pre-Data							Post-Data								
	I read with ease	I read quickly (when needed)	I read with expression	I automatically recognized the words I was reading	I paused at punctuation marks	I stopped at the end of each		I read with ease	I read quickly (when needed)	I read with expression	I automatically recognized the words I was reading	I paused at punctuation marks	I stopped at the end of each		
Participant 1	2	1	3	4	4	4		4	2	3	4	4	4		
Participant 2	0	0	0	0	0	0		2	2	2	1	2	4		
Participant 3	3	3	3	4	2	2		4	3	3	4	4	4		
Participant 4	3	3	4	2	4	4		4	3	4	3	4	4		
Participant 5	2	3	2	2	2	2		4	3	3	4	3	3		
Participant 6	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	2	2	2	2	2		
Participant 7	3	4	4	2	4	4		4	4	4	4	4	4		
Participant 8	2	2	2	2	2	2		3	2	3	3	3	3		
				Key											
				Always= 4											
				Very Often= 3											
				Sometimes= 2											
				Never= 1											
				Absent= 0											

4. Conclusions

There were several factors that affected the outcome of this research. The following factors are as follows but not limited to student attendance. Attendance in this summer enrichment program was not mandatory. Despite the fact that the participants in this research were chosen by their primary teachers based on their low test scores, they were not required to attend this program. Many of the participants families vacationed during one or more weeks while this program was in session. Another determining factor in the outcome of the program was the inconsistency at which the other teachers implemented the curriculum designed by the researcher. The curriculum was designed for all groups. The main group given the curriculum on a consistent basis were the 3rd and 4th grade group. With that being said looking at the data the results show that for those students who participated on a regular basis showed improvement in reading fluency.

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