MASTER’S CAPSTONE RESEARCH PRESENTATION & RECEPTION

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Graduating Candidates for the degrees of:

Master’s of Education - Curriculum and Instruction

Master’s of Education - Curriculum and Instruction Teaching

Master’s of Education - Mind, Brain & Education

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016
MAVERICK ACTIVITY CENTER — 2
ROOM 133
MASTERS' CAPSTONE RESEARCH PRESENTATION & RECEPTION

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016
MAVERICK ACTIVITY CENTER – 2
ROOM 133

PROGRAM

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

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INTERIM DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DR. ANN CAVALLO
Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies of the College of Education

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
The Effects of Cyber Bullying Training on Middle School Students and Their Parents
Madiha Zaheer, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this research study was to determine the effects of cyber bullying training on middle school students and parents. The study used a pretest-posttest control group design. The participants were 26 parents of middle school students and 56 middle school students. The study comprised of a comprehension test in which adult and student participants were graded according to the percentage of questions answered accurately. The adult participants received cyber bullying training that provided them with the information necessary to address cyber bullying at home. The students in the experimental group received information about cyber bullying prevention and consequences from their parents who received cyber bullying training. In order to compare the groups, the independent samples t-test and plot of means were utilized. The research findings indicated that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores for both the student participants in the experimental group and all of the adult participants as well, though there was not a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores for the control group. The results of this study illuminate the need for administrative policies that provide cyber bullying prevention training for middle school students and parents.

Mathematical Attitudes, Beliefs and Achievement in Pre-Service Elementary Teachers
Aimee Myers, Master of Education
Mind, Brain and Education

Abstract
Mathematical standards in the United States have been updated in the past few years. This revision has created an expectation for student achievement that requires teachers to have a deep knowledge of mathematical content as well as pedagogical skill that can be drawn upon with automaticity and flexibility. The research discussed in this paper examines correlations between mathematical knowledge and the beliefs and attitudes that may serve as a default for the quantity of in-the-moment decisions teachers must make in the classroom daily. This paper reports on the results of three surveys completed by 36 pre-service elementary teachers at the University of Texas at Arlington. The results showed correlations between pre-service teacher math score and their attitudes about teaching as well as a correlation between their math score and belief in student ability to make rational decisions.

M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education
CHRISTINA L. GARCIA
BELINDA JUANITA GARCIA-BONNER
KRISTEN D KARLENS
PORNTEERA KITRUNGROENGKUL
JEANNETTE MIREYA REZA
DAVID DANIEL VETEIKIS
KEYSHA DENICE WATERS
SARA NICOLE WRIGHT

M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction
Open Option
BRITTANY NICOLE BANKS
MARIA INES CHAVES-DE LA CRUZ
WALLY DUANE FORSON
CARLITA DENISE METTERS
AHMED MAZEN MOHAMED HADI
VANDANA NANDAKUMAR
ASHLEY ELIZABETH NELSON
MONICA RAE PULIS
LYNN ADAIR TAYLOR
JELENA VUKOVIĆ
Effects of Student Athletic Involvement on the Rate of Academic Success
Christopher William Weidner, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences between athlete and non-athlete academic success. Using a quantitative approach, the fall semester grade averages of 60 athletes and 60 non-athletes at a north Texas high school were compared. In this study, the athletes were involved in high profile varsity sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball. Non-athletes, however, were uninvolved in any extra-curricular school related activities. In order to compare the semester grade averages, the one-way ANOVA and independent samples t-test statistical comparison tools were utilized. Research findings indicated that there was a significant difference between athlete and non-athlete academic success. Gender, on the other hand, was not a significant factor in the academic success of athletes compared to non-athletes. These findings not only address the difference between athlete and non-athlete academic success, but additionally illuminate the need for targeted educational and administrative policies that will bridge this gap and provide academic success to all students.

Social implications of Biological children of Same-sex marriage
Christopher Whitehead, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this study was focused on the positive and negative social implications of same-sex marriage with at least one child in the home being biological to one parent. The significance of the study lies in the fact that there has been little to no research in the area of biological children of same-sex marriage, and the effects thereof. The setting was the home of a same-sex couple with two biological children, a son and a daughter, directly related to one of the Mothers. The study was conducted as a qualitative phenomenological study. The results of this phenomenological study suggested that biological children exhibited both social and scholastic implications due to the family structure. In conclusion, same-sex parents appear to not fully understand the social and scholastic implication of this family structure on the biological children. A relevant insight may be that if we are not preparing these children for the negativity of society that still pervades, we are setting these children up to fail both socially and scholastically due to the enormous pressure being put to bear upon their young shoulders.
**Effects of Note Taking Methods**
*Stephenie Miller, Master of Education*
*Curriculum and Instruction*
*Secondary Teacher Certification*

**Abstract**
The purpose of this study was to discover the effect of note taking to increase student achievement by increasing recall of information. This study is significant because it informs other educators what strategies work best in the classroom for student success on retention of material. Participants of this study were 78 English I Pre AP students enrolled at the same suburban high school in the researcher's class. This study used a pretest and posttest control group design with 45 participants using the Cornell note taking method and the remaining participants using the Skeleton note taking method while presented with a lesson about dramatic elements. The findings of this study differed from the hypotheses in that there was no significant difference between the posttest scores of students using differing note taking methods. There was also no evidence that student opinion on Cornell notes has an impact on its effectiveness on recall of information. Rather than the method of note taking used by students, the amount of time given to review the material and the level of completion of their notes for the purpose of studying seemed to improve student recall of information.

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**Effects of Hands on Learning on Students’ Achievement and Motivation in Science**
*Casey Nixon, Masters of Education*
*Curriculum and Instruction*
*Secondary Teacher Certification*

**Abstract**
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of hands-on learning versus a lecture method approach on seventh grade students’ science achievement and attitudes toward science. The sample of this study consisted of 50 students, from two different seventh grade classrooms in a junior high school, which were instructed by the same science teacher. The classrooms were assigned as the control group and the experimental group based on their initial survey responses. In the experimental group, hands-on learning was employed; whereas in the control group, the same material was given using the teacher lecture method. In order to assess the treatment effects on seventh grade students, surveys were given before the first unit and after the fifth unit of material, as well as five unit exams to the control and experimental groups. The results of the study showed that students in the experimental group had better performance on unit exam scores and rated their interest in science higher.
Effects of Using Pre-Teaching Strategies on Third Grade Bilingual Students’ Math Achievement
Christina Garcia, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of pre-teaching as an intervention to help students who struggle in math, specifically bilingual students who are at risk for math failure or below grade level in math. This study was important to help find out the effectiveness of pre-teaching, as a strategy to help students who are struggling in math. Teachers need to help these students in order to close the gap in math achievement so that they can be on grade level. This quantitative study employed a pretest-posttest three-group design with two treatment groups and a control group. The participants for this study were 17 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students from three bilingual third grade classes in a Title I school in an urban school district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The findings indicated that only one of the treatment groups made greater gains than the control group. The results also indicated that all 17 students in this study made gains from the pretest to posttest.

Effects of Parental Involvement in Schools on Student Success in Reading
Belinda J. Garcia-Bonner, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore the effects that parental involvement has on the academic success of children in the area of reading and their perceptions on the possible relationships between parental involvement and students’ academic success in reading levels. This study was important to help parents recognize the significance that their involvement has on their children’s success in reading and to help teachers realize the importance of engaging the parents in the reading process at home. This mixed-methods study took place in a Title I school in an urban school district in Waco, Texas. The participants were 16 Hispanic parents with a total of 16 second grade, bilingual, mixed-ability students. Participants in the treatment group used literacy exercises at home, while participants in the control group used traditional literacy practices. Both groups were assessed using the same pretest and posttest. Parent participants were interviewed using a face-to-face survey. Quantitative findings indicated no significant statistical difference between the groups in the posttests, p > 0.05. However, qualitative analysis of parents’ interview responses suggested that it is challenging to engage the parents in their children’s homework when they themselves do not have the necessary skills to help them.

Effects of Time Spent on Technology to Access Online Science Material on Middle School Students’ Science Scores
Rana Elkassih, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this research study was to determine if student achievement scores can be improved through utilizing technology by using various instructional techniques. This quantitative study used a pretest-posttest three-group design with two experimental groups and one control group. This study was conducted in a Title I middle school of an urban school district in the DFW area. In this study 89 eighth grade middle school students participated from three self-contained eighth grade science classes with 25, 29, and 35 students, respectively. The results of this study did support the research hypothesis. Based on how each group performed on components of the universe, experimental group A (M = 80.69, SD = 10.67) performed significantly higher than the control group (M = 71.20, SD = 12.01) and experimental group B (M = 71.17, SD = 13.17). The data supported that a technology-rich method of instruction is helpful to improve student achievement scores and further supplement student success. Teachers should increasingly plan their curricula to include many types of online activities, especially in the area of science. The research supports that technology and online science learning materials play a vital role in educating and connecting students to learning opportunities.

Technology Use and Student Engagement in the Classroom
Todd Lucas, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the link between students’ engagement in classroom settings where technology use is prevalent. The aim of this study was to determine ways to enhance student technology use in classrooms while remaining on-task rather than misusing technology for entertainment purposes. This study is important as technology is currently driving many educational policies both locally and globally. Participants in this study were pre-service and full-time teachers in local public and charter schools who contributed data via two online surveys. The two surveys administered were an initial technology familiarity survey, and a primary survey consisting of multiple choice, Likert scale, and open ended questions. Results from the familiarity survey found that students’ knowledge of technology is exceedingly higher than that of their teachers. The primary survey demonstrated that students do appear more engaged in classrooms when allowed to use technology, but often quickly begin using technology for other entertainment purposes. As research into technology and student engagement in a classroom is limited, future research which could target specific grade levels or age ranges may allow for a more in depth examination of this topic.
Understanding the Needs of Secondary English Language Learners to Meet Graduation Requirements

Hilda DeHoyos-Garza, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how test scores were affected by hands-on activities and practical application of teaching methods in the science classroom. Learning through experience and practical application of topics in the classroom is useful across many educational subjects and is in no way limited to science classrooms. The classroom of this study was a biology science class and the lessons taught were over the concept of dialysis and nutrient flow across a membrane. The participants of this study were intermixed from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. There were three different treatment groups all covering the topic of nutrient gradients and membrane flow. Control group participants were only given a spoken lecture. Treatment A participants were only given a hands-on laboratory experiment to complete. Treatment B participants were given both a spoken lecture as well as a hands-on laboratory experiment over the same material. Test scores improved for each group, but the groups that completed a laboratory experiment improved more. While laboratory experiments help students improve their test scores, the combination of a lecture and the experiment is the best way to ensure improvement of test scores in the science classroom.

Practical Application in the Science Classroom and How Hands-On Activities Affect Test Scores

Courtney Doss, Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how test scores were affected by hands-on activities and practical application of teaching methods in the science classroom. Learning through experience and practical application of topics in the classroom is useful across many educational subjects and is in no way limited to science classrooms. The classroom of this study was a biology science class and the lessons taught were over the concept of dialysis and nutrient flow across a membrane. The participants of this study were intermixed from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. There were three different treatment groups all covering the topic of nutrient gradients and membrane flow. Control group participants were only given a spoken lecture. Treatment A participants were only given a hands-on laboratory experiment to complete. Treatment B participants were given both a spoken lecture as well as a hands-on laboratory experiment over the same material. Test scores improved for each group, but the groups that completed a laboratory experiment improved more. While laboratory experiments help students improve their test scores, the combination of a lecture and the experiment is the best way to ensure improvement of test scores in the science classroom.

Elementary School Age Students’ Nutritional Choices, Their Perceptions of Nutrition and Relationships between Healthy Eating Habits and Academic Performance

Kirsten D. Karlsen, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction - Mathematics Education

Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to investigate elementary school age students’ understanding of relationships between nutrition habits of mind, the significance of high quality food choices and consumption behaviors, and the impact of these on academic performance. This study is significant because it examines children’s attitudes toward nutrition. Its results provide insights for educators and researchers into young students’ perceptions about beneficial nutrition habits of mind related to academic performance. Participants included four elementary school teachers at four different schools and students in their charge. Following preliminary field researcher observations, two instruments were constructed for data collection. Teachers observed mealtime behaviors on two separate occasions, and then recorded their observations on a researcher-provided questionnaire. Children completed a researcher-created Likert scale survey comprised of six prompts intended to gauge their self-perceptions about what they ate and its nutritional values. The Likert surveys were analyzed for mean values and reliability. A summary analysis of the teacher questionnaires was also prepared. In conclusion, the results of this study indicated that there was a notable lack in students’ nutritional knowledge, and that they exhibited minimal understanding about connections between nutrition behaviors and academic performance.

The Effectiveness of Technology (TI-Nspire Graphing Calculators) on Student Achievement in a Math Classroom

Pornteera Kitrungroengkul, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction – Mathematics Education

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the TI-Nspire graphing calculators in eleventh-grade and twelfth-grade Algebra 2 classrooms at a career school in a suburban Fort Worth, Texas. This study was significant because it informed teachers to decide if they should incorporate the use of TI-Nspire graphing calculators into teaching mathematics. Sixty students and 24 high school mathematics teachers participated in this quantitative study. Pretest and posttest were given to measure the effect TI-Nspire graphing calculators had on students’ achievement, and the data were analyzed using paired-samples t-test. In addition, students and teachers were given student survey and teacher survey to measure their attitudes toward the use of TI-Nspire graphing calculators, and the data were analyzed using percentages and frequency counts. Findings indicate that students and teachers responded positively towards the use of TI-Nspire graphing calculators in a mathematics classroom. Additionally, there was a significant difference in the scores for pretest and posttest. This study concluded that the use of TI-Nspire graphing calculators not only helped students perform better on the examination but also had a positive effect on students’ achievement.
Analyzing the Factors that Influence Hispanic Parents’ Decision to Choose the Bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) Program
Jeannette Reza, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence Hispanic parents’ decisions toward their children’s education and how they choose between the Bilingual program or the ESL program for their children. This study was important to help identify the influencing factors and in turn using that information to educate the teachers and parents. This study helped identify ways parents receive information about their Language Program options. This mixed-methods study took place in a Title 1 school in an urban school district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The participants in this study were 17 Hispanic parents with a total of 25 children in grades PK-5th. The data suggest that the least educated parents tend to choose English programs more often than Bilingual, and parents who are most highly educated choose Bilingual programs more often. The study’s findings suggest that the district and the school have a responsibility to improve the sources of information for the parents.

Music Genre and its Effect on Teenage Drivers
Christopher Almryde, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate students driving abilities while listening to different genres of music in order to determine whether the driving abilities were altered due to different genres if music played while driving. The participants in this study were seniors who attended a large north Texas high school located in Fort Worth. There were 58 participants who qualified for this study, majority of the participants were Hispanic. In this mixed methods study, participants were surveyed and that data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. This study showed that with this particular sample the music genre had no significant effect on student drivers. This study did show that the longer the drivers held a driving license the more likely they were to have more accidents. Although this particular study didn’t find the answers in keeping students safe behind the wheel, it is a step in the right direction. Future researchers could take this as a stepping stone to conduct further research on effects of music on students’ driving ability.

Relationship between Mathematical Anxieties and Students on Intervention
David Daniel Veteikis, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Mathematics Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences and effects between students with math anxieties and students without math anxiety. This study was significant for informing teachers of the importance of recognizing anxiety in students. This quantitative study employed a pretest-posttest control group design. The treatment group consisted of students with mathematical anxieties who were on an intervention, whereas the control group consisted of students without mathematical anxieties but were also on an intervention. Participants were 10 fourth grade students from a low-income school campus. Findings indicated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The control group’s posttest scores were significantly higher than the treatment group’s posttest scores. Also, the investigation of the effects of anxiety on students pretest and posttest did not produce significant results. While these findings were not significant, previous studies have shown that anxiety scores significantly improve with interventions.

Success, Shyness and a Survivalist Mentality
Jessica Betancourt, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Secondary Teacher Certification

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a link in teaching students/parents fundamental aspects of brain functionality and emotional intelligence in order to foster a heightened self-esteem/self-awareness. Secondary educators ultimately want all students to live a successful and productive life long their after high school graduation. However, who exactly is charged with teaching students formulas for success, such as goal setting, developing productive habits, seeking mentors, self-awareness, a competitive spirit, brain functionality, and emotional intelligence? Would parents or teachers be responsible for teaching these traits to students? This qualitative study aims to gain perspective from a multi-generational Hispanic family to provide insight into how mindsets could potentially cause stagnation to their professional growth, success and prosperity. Qualitative analysis of participant interviews reveals trends on the views of success, impediments to growth due to shyness, a survivalist mentality and unclear pathways for goals or undefined goals.
Effects of Parenting Styles (Permissive versus Authoritative) on Reading Interest of Male Students Ages 5 to 7

Jeffery Jacinto, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Middle Level Science Education

Abstract

As differences in parenting styles have been demonstrated to influence many aspects of a child's growth and development, this study sought to examine competing parenting styles (authoritative vs. permissive) and their influences on the reading interest of 15 male students ages 5 to 7. Exploration of whether the students' perceived reading content as masculine or feminine when parenting styles were considered was additionally explored in this research. A revised K-2 Interest Inventory Survey with open discussion interviews was utilized to assess the variables of interest. The findings did not indicate that a relationship existed when competing parenting styles were compared between the students' reading interests and perceptions of reading content as masculine or feminine. Some limitations were discussed and suggestions for future research were provided.

Effects of Small Group Tutoring on Middle Grade Students’ Math Anxiety

Theresa McCleary, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Middle Level Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find if math anxiety in middle school students was reduced after the students participated in small group tutoring for eight weeks. This study was significant because it showed that math anxiety could be reduced after a short period of tutoring, allowing schools to combat this problem with a minimal cost. Tutoring sessions consisted of no more than 10 students, with each 45-minute session being held once a week. Mastery of concepts was stressed over getting correct answers. This study was conducted on 21 eighth grade students in the same middle school in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. This was a quantitative study that used pretest and posttest math anxiety questionnaires to determine participants' math anxiety levels. Findings of this study supported the hypothesis that small group tutoring reduced math anxiety in middle school students.

The Effects of Mathematical Retention Interventions on Retained Third Grade Students

Keysha Waters, Masters of Education
Curriculum and Instruction - Mathematics Education

Abstract

Academic accountability is of great concern; therefore grade retention is being considered for students who are not meeting end-of-the-year achievement benchmarks. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of mathematics interventions on third grade students who have been retained once, and to ascertain the attitudes of elementary teachers and students towards grade retention. The participants of this mixed-methods study consisted of 16 third graders and 11 teachers. The study reported data from the students’ summative assessment scores, and a paper-and-pencil questionnaire using a Likert-type scale. The study also reported data from open-ended interview questions with the teacher participants. The findings of this study indicated that the math interventions employed by teachers, and used by students had no significant effect on improving student’s assessment scores. However, it also revealed that students are receptive to the use of the interventions. As it relates to teachers, the data showed that they reflect upon a multitude of factors when considering grade retention for students who are at risk of being retained. Yet, students’ academic performance on end-of-the-year achievement tests was the leading factor that teachers indicated most frequently as the determining factor for retention.

Effects of Choice on Student Completion of Ungraded Homework Assignments in a Middle School Math Classroom

Sara Wright, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction – Mathematics Education

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role that choice of homework assignment has on students’ completion in a setting where homework is not graded. This study provides educators with motivational alternatives when grades can no longer be taken for homework. The study was conducted in a DFW area middle school. Participants were 7th grade students in on-level math classes. The 93 participants, 54 females and 39 males, came from a diverse socioeconomic background and ranged in academic ability. Over a three-week period, homework was assigned and completion data were collected the following day. Afterwards, for an additional three weeks, participants were given a choice in their assignment and data were collected in the same manner. A rating scale was used to determine the amount of homework completed. A Chi-squared test of independence was used to compare the frequencies of completion ratings in the pre and post-choice data. The results were significant with 50.5% change in amount of completion. 49% of male and 24% of female participants increased their completion amount while 2% of male and 24% of female participants decreased their completion amount when given a choice.
Brain-breaking in the Classroom  
Brittany Banks, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Open Option

Abstract  
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of brain-breaks on student retention rates. This study was conducted on 134 ninth grade English students. Participants were divided into three equally distributed groups, in regard to race, gender, and academic performance. The mixed methods data collection included short-term quizzes, long-term assessments, and a student questionnaire. Two of the test groups participated in brain-breaks, while the third test group was used as the control for the study. Additionally, one of the test groups, the structured group, participated in physical movement for the two-minute duration of the brain-break, while the other test group did not participate in any type of movement. The data collected in this study did not show statistically significant difference among the three groups, there were noticeable benefits of brain-breaks. Movement during brain-breaks had a positive effect on student retention rates, as the structured test group continuously exhibited higher-grade averages than the other groups. Furthermore, student questionnaires revealed that students had positive perceptions of the brain-breaks. This study is important, as it could contribute to further evaluations of the effects of brain-breaks on students’ academic performance, especially in regards to the inclusion of physical movement during those brain-breaks.

Effects of Utilizing a Validity Chart by Middle School Students to Evaluate Sources of Information Found on the Internet  
Maria Chaves-De La Cruz, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Open Option

Abstract  
Fewer than four percent of middle school students could correctly identify the author of a website, or evaluate their expertise or bias – or lack of (Forzani, 2015). The purpose of this study was to examine the benefits of utilizing a Validity Chart to help middle school students determine the reliability of the information they research online. Thirty-five sixth grade students in a private North Texas school participated in this mixed study that required them to read the homepage of a fake website and complete a 10-question survey about its accuracy and reliability. The experimental group (n = 19) utilized the Validity Chart before they filled out the survey. In a follow-up qualitative question and answer session, over half (n = 12) of the experimental group reported they believed the Validity Chart helped them discern the authenticity of the website. Results yielded an understanding that researching a website’s author, date of publication, URL, and source can assist students through the process of validation.

Effect of Romantic Relationships on Adolescent Academic Performance  
Daniel Cogan, Master of Education in Teaching  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Middle Level Teacher Certification

Abstract  
The purpose of this study was to investigate the possible effects of romantic relationships on academic performance among adolescent students. The focus was on romantic relationship transitions and how student academic performance changed during these periods of dissolution or creation of the relationship. Participants in this study were 46 eighteen year old high school students. Participants consisted of males and females who either experienced a dissolution of a relationship or began a new romantic relationship in the middle of the academic year. Single students were used as a control group to compare the two other relationship statuses. Participants completed a ten question academic success survey that measured academic behaviors and self-reported grades. Scores were calculated to provide group averages and were compared to one another to find relationship trends. Results indicated that students in new romantic relationships had higher self-reported grades and overall academic success scores than those who were single or experienced a break up. Differences in academic performance between single students and those who experienced a break up were insignificant.

The Presence and Depiction of Stereotypical Gender Roles in Caldecott Award Winning and Caldecott Honors Books  
Amanda Ehrlich, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Middle Level Teacher Certification

Abstract  
The purpose of this study was to identify stereotypical gender roles in current children’s literature and to look at how the portrayal of stereotypical gender roles in children’s literature has changed over time. This study is important because it informs educators and caregivers about the presence of stereotypical gender roles in contemporary children’s literature that may currently be used in schools or homes. This study was conducted in the home of the researcher and the Lake Arlington branch of the Arlington Public Library. The participants of this study are unique, in that the only human participant is the researcher. The subjects of the study are books, specifically twenty-four Caldecott award winning and honors books awarded during the years of 2009 to 2014. This was a mixed-methods study that used content analysis to analyze the book titles for gender behavior. The findings in this study supported research hypotheses. The data collected during the study suggest that Caldecott books are generally trending toward depicting more neutral and reversed, along with less stereotypical gender behaviors over time. There is still room for improvement. The trend needs to continue before Caldecott books can be said to treat gender behavior equally.
Multicultural Literature in Elementary and its Effects on Students’ Reading Skills

Martha Tostado, Master of Education I
Curriculum and Instruction
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how students’ academic reading scores and perceptions were affected after being introduced to multicultural literature. This study is important in informing educators whether student perceptions in second grade changed after the introduction of multicultural literature. In addition, this study informs educators about student post reading scores. This study was conducted in an elementary school in Fort Worth, TX. In this study 39 elementary school students participated. This was a quantitative study that used pre and posttest reading scores and pre and post survey responses. The results in this study supported the research hypothesis. Findings indicated in post-survey responses that second grade student perceptions improved or remained positive about multicultural literature. Second grade students showed positive results in comprehension and fluency. Kindergarten students showed positive results in phonemic awareness.

The Effects of Increasing Multicultural Awareness in the Classroom on Students’ Perceptions of Culture

Valeria Vianes, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find the effects of increasing multicultural education on elementary students’ perceptions of other cultures, as well as to find which group of students was predisposed to multicultural awareness. This research study was conducted in an urban public elementary school in Arlington, Texas. The participants of this study consisted of 21 students in 4th grade. This study used a mixed-method analysis consisting of Likert scale surveys, used to evaluate student opinion, which were given before and after multicultural education implementation. The results of this study showed that the implementation of multicultural education had a positive increase in students’ perceptions of culture, however no group was found to be significantly predisposed to multicultural awareness. This study is significant because educators can use these data to help their students increase their knowledge, sensitivity, and perceptions of other cultures in the increasingly diverse American school population. While further research is needed to make a conclusion about multicultural education in American public schools at all levels, it is clear that multicultural education affects students’ opinions and perceptions of other cultures.

Automaticity of Multiplication Skills and the Reduction of Cognitive Load for 8th Grade Science Students

Wally Duane Forson, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Open Option

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find a difference between two groups (regular and pre-advanced placement students) on science achievement after exposure to treatments of multiplication and division practice problems. The study was important to address the issue of low mathematic skills in science classrooms. This study was conducted in a major city within Dallas/Fort Worth area. This study focused on 127 students (44 regular and 83 pre-advanced placement) in 8th grade Science class. The study was performed as a quantitative pretest post-test design. The testing instrument was created by the school district. The experimental group (44 regular students) received the treatment from their classroom teacher on weekly science quizzes. The treatment was practice multiplication and division problems for extra credit at the end of the quiz. The findings of this study supported all research questions and results were found to be significant. In conclusion, the use of repeated practice of multiplication and division skill increases post test scores.

Influence of Gender Expectations on Literacy in Secondary Students

Carlita Metters, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Open Option - General

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how stereotypical habits influence student’s literacy habits. This study is significant because it seeks to identify effects parents and teachers have on students reading habits through gender expectations. The study was conducted in a middle school of a suburban ISD within a large metropolitan area in the southern United States. The participants were 128 eighth graders between the ages of 12-14 in either regular or AP science, comprised of 46% female and 54% male. The method used was a quantitative study in which the study instrument was administered to all participants in a single teacher’s science class. The findings of this study supported a portion of the proposed hypothesis. There was strong support between students and whether or not their friends and family were readers. Parents who read to their children suggest reading is an important factor in their children’s lives.
Weekend Schools: Parents’ Expectations and Evolutions  
Ahmed Mohamed Hadi, Masters of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Open Option

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to help weekend school stakeholders and curricula designers in constructing the best weekend school by having solid data on parents’ expectations who send their children to Arabic weekend schools. The method adopted in this study was a quantitative method consisted of two steps. First step was a focus group with ten parents from each school included in the study, where the researcher asked them to generate a list of the most important attributes in the school. The second step was a survey distributed to all parents. Findings of the study showed that parents were generally satisfied on their school. Results also showed that parents give more importance to teaching their children the Arabic language for the sake of gaining communicative skills, over learning the language to perform religious rituals. Moreover, parents believed that the teacher is the most important element in the school, according to the results. However, data also revealed that parents have limited options in teaching their children their heritage language, and one of these few limited options is the weekend school offered in their communities.

Exploring English Language Proficiency between U.S. Born and Foreign Born Graduate Students Studying in the U.S.  
Vandana Nandakumar, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Open Option

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the U.S. born graduate students and foreign-born graduate students’ levels of English Language proficiency, the teaching approaches that helped the students become proficient in English Language, and how feedback from their instructors helped them improve their language proficiency. This study will be significant to English Language teachers, as it attempts to address the gap in English Language proficiency levels between U.S. born students and foreign-born graduate students studying in the U.S. The setting for this study was the researcher’s university, in the city of Arlington, Texas. A total number of 100 students from the social work, engineering, and business departments were chosen. This study employed a mixed-methods design for data collection and reporting of all results and findings of data analysis. Both groups of students received similar instructions to answer a questionnaire, and a set of interview questions that graded their proficiency levels. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups’ English Language proficiency levels.

Impact of Grade Retention on Elementary Age Students’ Self-Esteem  
Joshua Jordan, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between grade retention of students enrolled in primary grade levels and the impact of retention on their self-esteem. The researcher used a Likert-scale survey in order to measure self-esteem levels of ten retained participants to compare their scores against twenty non-retained students of the same sex and same homeroom teacher. Survey questions were designed to measure self-esteem levels by providing a rating system that would allow participants to rate their own self-esteem levels and their performance versus that of their classmates. Participants were enrolled in a large Title 1 school in an urban setting. During analysis of this quantitative study the results displayed a difference between the self-esteem levels of participant groups, but not one that was statistically significant. However, limitations were addressed and suggestions for future research were described in greater detail in the study.

The Effectiveness of Teacher Professional Development and Student Achievement  
Furwa T. Rizvi, Master of Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to inquire about the effectiveness of teacher trainings and educational level with regards to student achievement. This study is significant because it informs educators about possible benefits of teachers’ professional development. This study took place in two elementary schools of two diverse districts in suburban cities within a large metropolis in north Texas. In School A, there were 22 students in third grade, 24 in fourth, and 20 in fifth. In School B, there were 22 students in third, 24 in fourth, and 20 in fifth. Additionally, six teachers were participants, one per grade level. This was a quantitative study with a pretest-posttest design using two independent groups. The posttest scores of School A had a mean of 83.66 and School B improved with a mean of 86.13. Teachers from School B with advanced degrees and intensive PD programs resulted with higher standardized test scores. School A did not show a significant increase in scores between pre and posttests. The results indicated that the difference of professional development training programs and educational level of a teacher produced greater student test scores.
Relationship between Early Childhood Programs, Private and Public, and Kindergarten Readiness

Gennifer Carr, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in early childhood programs (public and private) and their effects on kindergarten readiness. This quantitative study is significant because it will allow teachers to better understand what prior knowledge their students have when coming into kindergarten, as well as give parents beneficial information to use when choosing an early childhood program. The study was conducted over six weeks at an urban Title I elementary school in the DFW area. In the study there were 20 participants, 14 in the public Pre-K group and 6 in the private Pre-K group. This study was quantitative research in which participants were assessed in two pre and posttests that looked at letter identification and math skills. Findings indicated that both programs had gains in the posttest scores in both letter identification and Developmental Math Assessment (DMA), however the private Pre-K group showed a higher gain than the public Pre-K group.

Misbehaviors in U.S. Classrooms

Nirmal Dossani, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Early Childhood – Grade 6 Teacher Certification

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find answers to why punishments and consequences are no longer effective and why newer methods, such as incentives and encouragement, are superior. The significance of the study was to ensure that teachers are aware of and implementing the proper techniques to use for treating the problems they have with misbehaviors in the classroom. All participants of this study were observed in a Kindergarten classroom of a charter school in the suburbs of Coppell, Texas. Six students, 3 students from each class, were observed. Over the course of 6 months, data were collected from 2 teacher interviews, 6 student interviews, ten 30-minute in classroom observations, and computer based Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test scores. The data were triangulated with data collected in the form of observations and notes, casual interviews, and NWEA computer based test scores. The results were clear that there is an association to misbehaviors in the classroom and how students do in class and tests. Children who misbehave in the classroom, do poorly on their class work and test scores. Students are more motivated from positive reinforcement to misbehaviors in the classroom and negative reinforcements are not as preferred.

Effectiveness of the Imagination Station (Istation) Computer-Based Reading Program

Ashley E. Nelson, Master of Education
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Open Option

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze whether the Istation reading program is an effective educational tool to raise student reading achievement. This study is significant because it informs educational administrators and policy makers as to whether Istation is a worthwhile program to invest in and implement in their schools. This study was a quantitative, descriptive study that employed an ex-post facto design to examine the pretest/posttest reading level growth of first grade students in two North Texas elementary schools (one that uses Istation, and one that does not). Results from a paired t-test indicated that the Istation students showed significant gains in reading level growth. However, results from chi-square tests showed that reading levels were similarly distributed after the pretest and posttest for both schools. Therefore, Istation is an effective educational tool for raising reading levels, but it may not be the only contributing factor for reading growth. Future studies should focus on a larger sample size, as well as controlling for other variables that may affect reading achievement. Furthermore, researchers should consider using STAAR reading grades to triangulate the data.

Differences in Third-Grade Students Reading Scores between Charter and Public School Systems and Charter School Teacher Professional Development Satisfaction

Monica Pulis, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Open Option

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the passing rate based on 3rd grade STAAR reading scores between public schools and charter schools within the North Texas region using quantitative research. This study also examined the job satisfaction of charter school teachers concerning literacy professional development through qualitative research. Charter school teachers received numerous professional development sessions throughout the school year. These professional development sessions were meant to develop teachers into instructional experts. This study examined the views of 23 charter school teachers and their experiences within their school district. Quantitative data showed no statistical significance between STAAR scores within charter schools and public schools. Qualitative data were gathered from survey research regarding teacher professional development and research found 52% of teachers surveyed would find employment elsewhere if professional development sessions on their campus were not of good quality.
Effects of Junior Reserve Officer Training CORPS (JROTC) on High School Student Achievement
Lynn Taylor, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction – Open Option, General

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to compare JROTC and non-JROTC students based on the criteria of state tests, suspensions, average daily attendance, and graduation rates. This study was significant to the school district and Cadet Command to consider in funding and expanding the program. This study took place in a North Texas Title One high school. In this study, there were 134 students enrolled in the JROTC program and 739 non-JROTC students. This study was quantitative and used a simple ex post facto design. This study found that there were significant differences in Algebra 1 and Biology test scores. Moreover, JROTC students graduated at higher rates with less discipline-related suspensions. Previous research found that graduation rates were an issue for public schools throughout the nation and were a key metric of success under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In this study, JROTC students graduated at a rate 18% higher than the campus average.

The Effectiveness of Spanish Language Education during the Early Childhood Development
Jelena Vukovic Kacavenda, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction – Open Option, General Education

Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the effectiveness of Spanish language during early childhood development. The study was of importance due to social, cognitive, and language development at an early age. This study was conducted in a private school, Pre-K through 5th grade in Cedar Hill, Texas. An English and a Spanish teacher participated in the interview along with preschool students who were observed during Spanish class. Through interviews with both teachers and surveys, different perspectives were shared pertaining to teaching Spanish to Pre-K students. Findings have indicated positive attitudes on foreign language education at such a young age. Teachers have experienced this program as fun, enjoyable, and beneficial for students’ communication, socialization and cognitive development. According to classroom observation, students were excited to learn Spanish. It made them feel knowledgeable, validated and special. Their attitudes showed positive effects of foreign language education and advantages to their early development. Referring back to two research questions of this study, both were supported by constructive feedback from the two teachers during the interview session, survey responses and students’ reactions during class sessions while learning Spanish.

Effects of Attending an Inquiry Summer Science Camp: Determining the Academic Success of Pre-High School Students
Tracy Campbell, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Science Education

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of inquiry based learning during a summer science camp at a local north Texas university. The study was significant in determining if guided inquiry helped at-risk students succeed with learning biology concepts. The summer camp included two, separate one-week immersion camps for 118 middle school students. Out of these participants, 57 were male and the remaining 61 were female. Through participatory action research professors and counselors engaged students by inquiry based learning and exploration for 5 days and nights. The study’s focus was on the participants completing inquiry activities in key biology concepts during the day. This study used pretest and posttest quantitative design. Data were collected through pretest and posttest, daily journal reflections, and observations. Daily reflections were made in Edmodo as a formative assessment towards making connections with inquiry. The findings of this study supported the research hypothesis.

Students Attitudes toward Food and Nutrition after Attending a 12-Week Food and Nutrition Class
Raylynn Jansing, Master of Education
Curriculum and Instruction
Science Education

Abstract
Despite the constant barrage of media coverage regarding United States’ diabetes epidemic, nutrition education programs are not being screened extensively for their ability to change US children’s behaviors regarding food. The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth analysis of a food and nutrition class in an urban Dallas Fort Worth junior high school. Thirty students of mixed economic demographic were provided pretests and posttests to compare their prior nutrition knowledge and behavior with what the food and nutrition class provided. The program was found to be successful in changing students’ behaviors and knowledge regarding food. While the critical analysis of this one urban program was valuable in its’ own right, this quantitative research was aimed at identifying specific themes and behaviors that might be used to assess future food and nutrition programs and compare best practices for effectively changing the health of children.