

The Response of Middle School Special Education Students to Differentiation of Reading Instruction in the Academic Enrichment Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This action research study describes the influence of differentiation of reading instruction based on student choice and interest on the reading growth of seventh grade special education students in the academic enrichment classroom. This research was grounded in the theoretical framework that involves differentiation of instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), special education students (Bender, 2012), and middle school reading instruction (Robb, 2010). This action research study implemented a parallel mixed methods design in order to explore the research question: What influence does differentiation of reading instruction based on student choice and interest have on the reading growth of 7th grade, special education students in the academic enrichment classroom? The participants in this study included 10 special education, inclusion/academic enrichment, seventh grade students. The data collection methods used in this study were field observations, interviews, and pre- and post assessments. Data was analyzed for growth over time in improvement of time off task, reading accuracy, comprehension, and fluency, and overall willingness to read and attitude about reading. The results of this study indicated that when responding to differentiation of reading instruction based on student choice and interest, seventh grade special education students displayed positive responses in time off task, reading growth, and willingness to and attitude about reading.

Keywords: learning disabilities, special education, middle school reading instruction, interests, differentiation of instruction, student choice