

Action Research Projects

Secondary MAT Interns

2005—2006

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Body Mass Index: What do the students think?

Amy Arnold

Abstract

Arkansas Act 1220, passed by the Arkansas General Assembly and signed by Governor Mike Huckabee, states that every Arkansas public school system measure the students' body mass indices and send a report home notifying the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of their child's body mass index score. The body mass index was first measured during the 2003-2004 school year. The purpose of this research is to determine what the students think in regards to having their body mass index (BMI) measured at school. Based on related literature, the measurement does not account for lean body mass and most athletes are reported as being at risk or as being overweight. There were 29 participants involved in this research, 17 were male and 12 were female. Each participant received a questionnaire after returning his or her signed consent form. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions. Five of the questions asked for demographic information, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and height and weight. The remaining ten questions asked the students' about their self-concept, whether or not they are more influenced by their family and friends, how they felt about the BMI being measured throughout the United States, and whether or not they had participated in the BMI measurement at school. Using Microsoft Excel, the researcher calculated the percentage of responses for questions three through 13 for male, female, and male and female combined. The data collected from the 29 participants gave the following results: 51.7% of the participants believed that all schools in the United States should be required to measure students' BMI at school. Also, 17.2% reported as feeling uncomfortable when having their BMI measured, whereas 65.5% did not feel uncomfortable during the measurement. Recommendations for further studies include that a survey be conducted at all levels to determine students' views regarding BMI being measured in the school setting.

Sparks in the fire: Teacher motivation and techniques in the classroom

Rob Barnes

Abstract

Motivation of students is one of the main focuses of teachers in today's schools, and is the cause for much concern from the beginning teacher. Exactly what constitutes good motivation techniques, what methods work, and when and how they are properly used lends to great insight and holds a vital thread to success in the classroom. This study surveyed teachers at the primary and mostly secondary level, addressed what techniques are used in the classroom, what works, and when to use these methods. These results are compared to the expectations of beginning teachers and between male and female teachers too see if there is a gap of thought and to bridge the results to create ongoing success stories. Twenty participants were surveyed with varying questions of motivation, methods, and examples. Findings are used to see if the multiple uses of motivation practices, success and failures, and develop a relationship of use of motivation in the class room, sources of motivation, and what each participant in the classroom environment brings into this equation. Based on the results of this study, strong relationships that teachers believed the students responsibility to motivate themselves were shown to be very important across the board as well as classroom environment differences between male and female teachers surfaced. These conclusions suggest that although there are many different forms of motivation, and the roles of teachers form a big part in this process, students have to bring the correct attitude to learn with them, and the experience of the teacher is not an overwhelming determining factor. Recommendations to the field and future suggestions for continuing this study and building on the findings presented here, would be to include more extensive and focused questions in the instrument, include more participants overall to insure higher response numbers and select a direct method of survey that is not as dismissible as email.

Does a student's involvement in school activities improve their academics?

Dannie Beeman

Abstract

Articles have reported that student involvement in school activities produces positive academic results. In an attempt to further evaluate this relationship, a survey was given to 150 eighth grade and 135 tenth grade science students in Northwest Arkansas. These 285 public school students anonymously completed a Likert-type survey consisting of twelve items to determine the significance of student participation in school activities. The purpose was to investigate whether or not a student's involvement in school activities has an impact on their academic performance. Consequently, the findings of this study examined whether or not a positive relationship exists between student involvement in school activities and improved academics. A review of the literature was initially described followed by the methodology used. A hypothesis, which coupled student involvement in school activities with improved academics, was analyzed using an instrument consisting of a twelve-statement Likert-type survey. Validity and reliability issues, which included a sample of 50 eighth grade and 55 tenth grade students, were supported with only a couple of concerns with students not answering honestly. The procedure for survey participation was discussed then followed by a data analysis of responses. In order to determine if findings were statistically significant, the researcher proposes that further study be made to correlate student grades with self-evaluations of school involvement. This additional study would closely map students' grade progress throughout the entire school year from pre-testing to final semester exams, while at the same time continuing to monitor their involvement and motivation in school activities.

Why taking Spanish in high school?

An investigation of students' motivational orientations

Lunita Benchimol

Abstract

This study was undertaken to examine the effects of gender, grade level, Spanish/language level, and heritage language on students' motivational orientations (MOs) to enroll in a Spanish class. MOs were classified and measured on three subscales, as follows: school-related, instrumental, and integrative motivation. Data were gathered through a 28-question survey questionnaire, which was administered to 106 high school students (10th through 12th grades) enrolled in six Spanish classes at Rogers High School. The findings of the study revealed that there were no significant differences neither between males and females nor among students in different grade levels in their motivation to enroll in a Spanish class. In contrast, there was a significant difference among students with different Spanish/language level in both their instrumental and integrative motivation to enroll in a Spanish class. Specifically, in terms of instrumental motivation, follow-up tests revealed that the AP Spanish level was more instrumentally motivated than the Spanish I level; the Spanish III level was more instrumentally motivated than the Spanish II level; and the AP Spanish level was more instrumentally motivated than the Spanish II level. Similarly, in terms of integrative motivation, results of the follow-up test showed that the AP Spanish level was more integratively motivated than the Spanish II level and that the Natives I & II level was more integratively motivated than the Spanish II level. Finally, results of the t-test indicated that heritage language learners were more instrumentally and integratively motivated to enroll in a Spanish class than non-heritage language students. Recommendations and suggestions for future research are provided.

Sabrina Blanchard
Preservice teachers' opinions about extracurricular activities

Abstract

This study examines the opinions preservice teachers have about extracurricular activities. It was predicted that preservice teachers whose surveys indicated a high extracurricular attitude score would be more willing to change their assignment or test dates for an extracurricular activity. It was also predicted that preservice teachers, who participated in extracurricular activities while they were in school, will be more willing to change their assignment or test dates for an extracurricular activity.

The fifty-six M.A.T. Interns at the University of Arkansas were given a survey in March 2006. Forty-three surveys were returned to be analyzed. The data from the survey were analyzed using T tests and an ANOVA. The results of these tests were not statistically significant. This means that the M.A.T. Interns were found to have no biases towards certain extracurricular activities. The conclusion is that both predictions were not correct. Thus, the Interns' personal extracurricular experience and gender did not affect their attitude towards extracurricular activities. These conclusions recommend that these future teachers will be able to handle extracurricular activities in a fair, objective way.

Does More Study Time At Home Equal Higher Grades?

Blakeney J. Cain

University of Arkansas

Abstract

The present study investigates the study habits of 8th grade students at Southwest Junior High School in Springdale, Arkansas. Students getting higher grades study more outside of class than students getting lower grades. Many educators, along with me, have become dissatisfied with the time students devote to any particular subject matter outside of class. This study documents the extent of study time spent on Earth Science in any of three areas – 1) doing homework, 2) reading the textbook, and 3) studying for a test. A survey was used to generate responses from these students about how much time is spent outside of class on these three areas during an average week. Results indicate that a significant difference exists between study habits of students with high academic achievement and those with low academic achievement. With the data supplied by this study, it can be concluded that there exists a positive correlation between more study time outside of class and an overall rise of a students' grades. From this conclusion, it can be strongly recommended that both teachers and parents should motivate students to do studying at home, and that both parents and teachers should help students to find success in their homework efforts.

Grammar Instruction: Attitudes and Practices of

English Language Arts Teachers

Sean D Carney

Abstract

In light of the continuing controversy over the significance and best methods of grammar instruction, this study attempts to elicit the attitudes and practices related to grammar and its instruction of secondary level English Language Arts teachers in a school district in Northwest Arkansas and compare those attitudes and practices with historical trends, popular philosophies, and current research about grammar and its instruction. The results of the study were based on a survey sent to the ELA teachers in that school district. The results revealed that most of the teachers surveyed believed in the importance and relevance of grammar and its instruction, but their opinions were divergent when it came to the methods used in grammar instruction. Though the small number of respondents in the study limited the conclusions that can be drawn from it, these results do suggest conclusion wherein the participants reflect the nature of the current national debate and the voices of various researchers, commentators, and experts on the subject. It is recommended that this study and studies like it may compliment comparative studies done on various methods of grammar instruction, measuring the results of each in relation to the others, or studies that compare grammatical competency and writing proficiency, another debated issue. Recommendations for the improvement of this study include: 1) a delivery method other than email, 2) a shorter questionnaire, and 3) a larger sample return.

Students' Perspectives on Historical Novels

Josh Cook

Abstract

The historical novel has long been respected among secondary history teachers as a method of teaching history, but students' attitudes toward it have been largely ignored. This study attempted to discover students' attitudes toward historical novels as a method of teaching history. Surveys were given to 14 11th and 12th grade students with the same history teacher at Springdale High School in Springdale, Arkansas. These surveys asked questions concerning the efficacy, practicability, and relevance of historical novels as part of a history course, as well as the subject's overall attitude toward this method. The survey was produced by the researcher and was not tested for validity or reliability. It consisted of 15 questions concerning the four aspects being investigated, with an unequal number of questions addressing each issue and some questions overlapping more than 1 aspect. The purpose of this study was to refine the use of historical novels as a teaching method so as to further student participation and learning through it. Results indicated that while students feel that historical novels are relevant to their daily lives, they believe they are impractical and perhaps ineffective in teaching history. However, students had a positive overall attitude toward historical novels. An ANOVA test revealed no statistically significant difference between these four aspects. Further study is needed, with a larger sample and a re-worked survey containing an equal number of questions for each aspect being investigated, so that a test for correlation can be performed. The new survey should contain more questions for a deeper investigation.

Job Satisfaction in Fayetteville

Cecili Cormier

Abstract:

Job Satisfaction is a key component in a working adult's career. It is equally important to educators across the nation. This study is designed to reveal the job satisfaction of certified, full-time teachers that are employed in the Fayetteville School District. There are many factors associated with job satisfaction and how teachers perceive their career. These factors may affect a teacher's decision to stay in the profession of education or pursue another career. The purpose of this study is to uncover the influences that are most important to Fayetteville teachers and to determine the difference in satisfaction between elementary, junior high and high school teachers, young versus experienced teachers and male versus female teachers. A 4 point likert scale, with 28 questions, was used to determine the demographics and level of satisfaction with this school district. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and T-test. The results do not portray a statistically significant difference between questions 22 and 23. These two questions in the survey relate directly to faculty satisfaction. This study also analyzed the demographics of this school district including both average and range of age, ethnicity, sex and average years of experience. School districts need to be aware of the factors that influence their teachers to strive for success and provide the best education to the children and young adults of the community. The Fayetteville administration may use the results from this study to create a positive and successful workplace and an environment that is conducive to student learning. Conclusions based on the results find that Fayetteville Public School certified teachers are satisfied with their career and jobs in this district. It is also concluded that elementary teachers are more satisfied than are high school teachers. It can be recommended that additional studies like this be conducted with both larger and representative population.

The Effects of Ability Grouping on Self-Esteem in Middle School Students

Laura A. Culver

Abstract

Thirty-four seventh grade students from Holt Middle School in Fayetteville, Arkansas participated in a survey examining the effects of ability grouping on student's self-esteem. Ability Grouping is the placement of students in class groups as based upon their performance on tests and/or teacher judgments.

The research project used a survey to rate the level of self-esteem participants by self-report. The participants selected a rating between 1 (Never) and 5 (Always) to each of the 12 questions. The participants were placed in 1 of 4 groups based upon the school's predetermined ability placement: Delta Force, the highest group, Navy Seals, the mid-high group, Green Berets, the mid-low group, and the Rangers, the lowest group. The hypothesis of the study stated that the participants in the 2 high groups would have higher levels of self-esteem when compared to the 2 low groups.

The results of the study indicated that there was not a significant difference in the levels of self-esteem for any of the four groups surveyed. It is possible that self-esteem does not vary within ability groups.

Based upon the above conclusion it would seem that in this instance assigning students to ability groups does not affect either positively or negatively the student's self-esteem. Based upon this conclusion, I recommend a further study with a broader participation base, as well as opened questions to allow the students to fully express their feelings on the issue of self-esteem. Regardless of ability grouping, Middle School is a difficult time for students.

The Effects of Gender on Students' Mathematical Self Concept

Katie Cunningham

Abstract

Much research has been done on the relationships between gender and mathematical ability, gender and participation in mathematics, and gender and attitude toward mathematics. However, much of this research was done in the past. It is suggested that the attitudes of students, parents, and teachers toward mathematics have become less stereotypical and more gender neutral in recent years. This study examined the attitudes of eighth and ninth grade students at Woodland Junior High School in Fayetteville, Arkansas to determine if gender stereotyped attitudes exist. It is important to be aware of students' attitudes and beliefs about mathematics because research shows that students' self concept of their mathematical ability can serve as a predictor of their mathematical achievement just as much, if not more so, than their actual ability. Only when we get an accurate measure of students' mathematical self concept can we begin to improve their confidence in their mathematical ability, and thus their mathematical achievement. This study found that in the areas of usefulness, success, teachers' attitudes, and mathematics as a gender neutral domain, there is not a significant difference between the genders. However, gender does impact students' mathematics-related affect (perception of their math ability) as well as parents' attitudes toward both their child's mathematical involvement and the subject of mathematics. Further research is recommended in order to find whether the lack of confidence in mathematics is coming from parents, other students, or perhaps within. Then teachers will be better able to address it in the classroom and help to build on confidence, and thus ability in mathematics.

What do Students Think? A Look at Student's Perception on the Relationship between
Extra-Curricular Activities and Academic Success.

Julia DeFreece

Abstract

Many teachers, students, and parents have long believed that there is a positive relationship between academics and extra-curricular activities. The purpose of this study is to explore how young adolescents perceive the relationship between academics and extra curricular activities in response to a survey. Out of 147 9th grade speech/drama students at Oakdale Junior High the researcher gathered a sample of 76 participants. The participants completed a 10 question survey, based on a Likert scale, with questions regarding student's attitudes towards school, extra curricular activities, and the relationship between the two. The hypothesis of this study is that 9th grade students will perceive a positive relationship between extra-curricular activities and academic success. The results of the research indicated that a majority of 9th grade students at Oakdale Junior High enjoy school, enjoy extra-curricular activities, and believe extra-curricular activities motivate them to do their best on their school work. The data collected also suggests that the participants believe extra-curricular activities contribute to academic success.

The researcher recommends further investigation with a larger sample for an extended period of time to ensure a more statistically significant outcome. It would be beneficial to look at individual grades and how those grades are affected by extra-curricular activities. Finally, a random sample as apposed to a convenient sample would be ideal for this study.

Has High-Stakes Standardized Testing Taken Over the Classroom? A Survey of Secondary Language Arts Teachers and the Role of Test Preparation in Classroom Instruction

Shannon Doise

Abstract

This survey assesses the methods of instruction of secondary Language Arts teachers in the Rogers and Fayetteville school districts in the state of Arkansas, and if those methods are intended to increase student learning of the content, or if their purpose is more to prepare students to pass standardized tests.

The purpose of this study was to determine if high-stakes standardized testing has replaced valuable instruction and assessment practices in the Language Arts classroom. The study surveyed Secondary Language Arts teachers in the Rogers and Fayetteville school districts during the months of January and February of 2006.

The results of the study indicated that the teachers in the Rogers school district feel more strongly than those in the Fayetteville school district that their schools' policies are intended more for the students' passing the required standardized tests.

Based on the results of the survey, it cannot be concluded that all secondary Language Arts teachers in Northwest Arkansas feel that instruction time has been replaced with preparing students for standardized tests. It is recommended that one should observe and record the amount of time that all teachers in all grade levels and content areas spend preparing students for standardized tests and compare those to the amount of time the same teachers actually spend on regular classroom instruction.

Four-Day School Weeks: Can They Work in an Urban Setting

Allison Dolan

Abstract

America's educational system is constantly being plagued with funding cuts. States and their school districts have to look at alternatives to keep costs at a minimum. Most of the districts, where the four-day school week is successful, are in rural areas. The purpose of this study was to find out if the Springdale, Arkansas community thought the four-day school week could be successful in their district. The target was to assess what parents and teachers thought about the four-day school week system and if they thought it would be triumphant in Springdale. A survey was sent out to Helen Tyson Middle School and circulated among teachers and parents. It was believed that the parents of Springdale School District would not be in support of a four-day school week, because of childcare and work issues. On the other hand, it was believed that teachers would give full support to the implementation of a modified school week, while the results of the parent survey did not show significant evidence that parents were for or against a four-day school week. The teacher survey did show significant results that teachers were very supportive of a modified school week. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers are positive and parents are quite neutral concerning a four-day school week.

Does differentiated instruction help? The impact of core subject content learning labs on academic performance for students at risk

Johnny F. Elmore

Abstract

Driven by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many schools have re-evaluated how they deliver educational curriculum. Faced with the Arkansas Department of Education Act 35 requirement to have individualized academic instruction plans for students not testing as at least proficient, school administrators are searching for methods to meet increasing academic standards. One solution to meeting higher standards appears achievable via incorporating the works of education experts such as Richard DuFour, professional learning communities, and Carol Ann Tomlinson, differentiated instruction. To ascertain if these strategies result in improved academic performance, this study analyzed data for 66 at risk students from George Junior High School (GJHS), Springdale, Arkansas.

GJHS employs a seven-tiered intervention program with six levels directed towards students at risk. Due to time constraints, this study only considered data from GJHS's second intervention level, core subject content study halls. Limitations to the study include a short timeline, a relatively small data scope, inability to account for student motivation, and lack of beginning student knowledge baselines.

Results support that student interventions using content study halls appear to improve academic performance. Students exhibiting improvement ranged from 18% to 90%. Questions that still require answers are how and when should differentiated programs of instruction be applied? To better answer these questions, the study recommends that professional researchers conduct in-depth analyses of data from similar programs.

The Effects of Active Learning Methods on Student Learning in Secondary World History

Mary Floyd

Abstract

Active learning methods are becoming popular in secondary history classrooms, but there is little empirical evidence that these methods produce greater student learning of content than traditional instruction. This study investigated whether active learning methods helped world history students at the Rogers High School Sophomore Campus learn more history content than traditional instruction. The sample of 28 students was made up of 67.8% Caucasian, 28.6% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian, 25.0% male, and 75.0% female students. One class (13 students) received traditional classroom instruction about European absolute monarchies, while another (15 students) created newspapers on the same subject. Both groups took the same test before and after instruction. The test consisted of 30 multiple choice questions written by the researcher to measure students' factual knowledge and higher-level thinking about the European absolute monarchies studied. The traditional instruction group scored 14.4 percentage points higher on the posttest than the active learning group, leading the researcher to conclude that the active learning method used was not conducive to student learning of all of the content and evaluation of students' newspapers would have been a more appropriate assessment of the active learning group's learning. However, these conclusions cannot be generalized due to the use of a small convenience sample for this study. More research is recommended to investigate the effects of other active learning methods and the use of more appropriate means of assessment. Teachers are also encouraged to choose active learning methods and assessment to fit their specific learning objectives.

What Do They Think? Teachers' and Interns' Opinions about Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in a Regular Education Classroom

Beth Gray

Abstract

Since the 1970s, students with disabilities have slowly made their way into the mainstream society and the regular education classroom. In the last fifteen years, the number of students with disabilities in a regular education setting has shown a steady increase. Because of the increase in students with disabilities in regular education settings the purpose of this study is to find out teachers' opinions and attitudes on the subject.

There were 57 participants in this study; all teachers and preservice teachers in Northwest Arkansas. Of these teachers, 17 were male and 40 were female. All but one teacher had taught a student with a disability previously. This study showed that over half of the teachers studied said that students with disabilities should be mainstreamed as much as possible. Over half of the teachers also said that inclusion of these students in a regular education setting was a good idea in some cases, but not in others. It is all dependent on the severity of the disability. Teachers also commented that the idea of inclusion is good, but needs more work and planning. Most of the teachers felt that inclusion of these students in regular education settings was a wonderful learning experience for students without disabilities.

In conclusion, the research found that teachers in Northwest Arkansas have a mostly positive attitude toward inclusion. Their main concern is the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. The teachers are also concerned about the amount of education and training that they receive in teaching these students. The researcher recommends more adequate training for these teachers so that they feel more comfortable with inclusion. The researcher also recommends further research on this subject. Since the research was done solely on teachers in Northwest Arkansas in the field of secondary education, the results may not be as accurate as they would be if the study were done in a wider geographic area.

“Real” Literature: A Look at Young Adult Literature and Its Uses in Secondary Classrooms

Matthew Harp

Abstract

A drastic change has taken place in the curriculum of secondary English. Teachers have begun to use contemporary literature written for persons aged twelve to eighteen, hereafter referred to as Young Adult Literature, in their classrooms as opposed to more traditional, canonical literature. This change has occurred on all levels of secondary education, from middle school to programs for the education of future teachers, though the adoption of Young Adult Literature has by no means been universal throughout these levels. This study assesses how conceptions of Young Adult Literature and its uses vary across these levels as well as by the degrees held by participants. The purpose of this study is to gain evidence of a significant difference in the conceptions and use of Young Adult Literature across these various delineations. The researcher’s findings indicate that while no significant difference exists between general conceptions of Young Adult Literature across these categories there was a significant correlation between how often teachers used Young Adult Literature in their classroom and the level they taught. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers’ generally positive opinions of Young Adult Literature are not necessarily translating into its use in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher recommends further study into this disconnect with a possible reevaluation of the types of literature assigned to students.

Dictionary-based letter sequence retrieval speeds in ELL 2 and 3 students:
Cognition, performance and interference

Jay Huwieler

Abstract

Dictionary-based letter sequence retrieval is a basic skill of natural interest for teachers of English Language Learners (ELL). A sample of middle school native Spanish-speaking ELL in Northwest Arkansas displayed a seeming discrepancy between needed time to retrieve Spanish letter sequences in a Spanish dictionary and English letter sequences in an English dictionary. Previous research suggested semantic knowledge and literacy level should not affect letter sequence retrieval; this study therefore considered letter sequence retrieval a perceptual-computational process only. This study measured dictionary-based letter sequence retrieval times of visually-present Spanish, English, and Cognate letter sequences to determine whether etymologic category affected retrieval performance. A post-experiment survey also sought determining what other factors may have affected retrieval results. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA tests, and *t*-tests. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between English and Spanish Cognate etymologic orthography due to skewing of data by outliers. This study concluded etymologic category did not likely affect dictionary-based letter sequence retrieval time. Recommendations for this study include working with a larger sample size, receiving greater assistance during data collection, and using a stronger method for selecting the difficulty-level of target letter strings. Additionally, a separate letter-recognition test should be administered prior to the letter sequence retrieval test to isolate letter-recognition times.

Censorship: Friend or Foe? A Look at the Effects of Censorship on the Classroom Environment, Student Attitudes, and Student Reading Habits as Noted by Faculty and Staff.

Graci Johnson

Abstract

Censorship is a concern among public school systems and public libraries. Censorship comes in a variety of forms, it can be seen when dealing with plays, dance routines, classroom discussions, and reading materials. The challenges to books with a call to censorship can be placed anywhere a patron or concerned party deems necessary. In general, the review of related literature was inconclusive as to the effects of censorship. Within the past year, a case calling for censorship has been brought to one of the school systems within Northwest Arkansas. Though dismissed, this challenge led to researching and questioning of what kind of positive—negative feelings such a case would generate in the school’s environment. By using a Likert scale, the faculty and staff were surveyed; this study looks at the effect of publicized censorship cases upon the school. The researcher’s results show that most teachers didn’t indicate stress; that they think the challenges were poorly thought out, and that student interests in challenged materials rose. Based on these results it is can be concluded that the faculty and staff didn’t look on censorship as stressful. This result suggests that faculty and staff feel some control when dealing with censorship issues and challenges. The limitations of the study include, but are not limited to, the sample size. Based on the data it is strongly suggested that additional studies be repeated with a larger sample size and in a place where the censorship challenge was not fully dismissed. It is also recommended that demographic data be collected for each participant.

How Are the Study Skills of Students in Advanced Classes Different From Other Students?

Matt Jones

A student who has good study skills is a student who will go far. However, good study habits are usually not developed in most students until college. This study compares the perceptions and attitudes toward studying of ninth graders in advanced classes to those of other ninth graders. A twenty-question Likert-type survey was given to seventy-seven junior high students in March of 2006 through their science classes. This survey was prepared by the researcher and was not checked for reliability or validity. Students' attitudes were measured in the areas of work ethic, homework, confidence, study habits, and time spent outside of school. The number of questions concerning each area was uneven, but no question overlapped with any other area. The responses of the students in regular classes were then compared to the responses of students in advanced classes using a t-test. The findings of this study point to a gap between students at the ninth grade level. There are statistically significant differences between the two groups in the areas of confidence, study habits, and time spent outside of school. Students in regular classes consistently scored lower in these areas than the students in advanced classes. This would suggest the conclusion that the students who have achieved some measure of academic success are separate from those who, for whatever reason, have not. It is recommended that further study is needed in more narrow areas within study habits to produce truly significant results. However, the conclusion of this study seems to make the case that the students who have achieved some level of success in education are the students who have good study skills.

The opinion of foreign language teachers about the use of media and technology to enhance the teaching of culture in the classroom.

Bamela Jerome KOUSSANTA

Abstract

Education is a growing field, and one that continues to promote change in the classroom, in the way we teach, and in the way we learn. A major cause of this change is the use of technology in and out of the classroom. New methods and new technologies have evolved very quickly in the last 10 years, contributing to major changes in the ways teachers have been accustomed to teaching students and meeting their ever-changing needs. Today, with the technology-rich environment, in which we live, foreign language teachers have come to realize the need to utilize the new technology available in the classroom to teach cultural materials in the classroom. This paper gives the floor to teachers (via a survey), especially to those teaching a foreign language, to let us understand how far they feel they have come in using technology to effectively teach culture as one of the standards in foreign language education. Several survey questionnaires were sent to foreign language teachers in area schools (Fayetteville-Springdale-Bentonville-Rogers) and data were collected informing to which extent teachers are confident in using technology in the classroom. The results show teachers strong attachment to the technology as one of the many effective ways to teach in a foreign language classroom. The results are particular to those surveyed and could not be generally generalized as the view of all foreign language teachers in North West Arkansas. Further research based on the findings indicated the need for long-term, intensive research to focus on the use of technology in improving teaching and learning through media and technology in foreign language education. In addition to this focus it is recommended there is a need for invention and innovative approaches to enhancing student and teachers' communication, learning, and performance through the use of media and technology.

Does inappropriate classroom behavior increase throughout the day? A look at teacher perceptions of student behavior patterns

Todd Lewis

Abstract

Most educators agree that student misconduct in the classroom interferes with the learning process. Many factors influence student conduct in the classroom. This study examines student behavior patterns from the teacher's perspective. Teachers at Southwest Junior High in Springdale, Arkansas, were asked to participate in an opinion survey to test the hypothesis that student misbehavior in the classroom increases throughout the school day. Sixteen teachers participated by responding to a Likert Scale opinion survey that asked them to rate the classroom behavior of their students in morning classes versus afternoon classes. Parts one and two of the survey produced two sets of data: one for morning classes and one for afternoon classes. Using a two-tailed *t*-test, the data was compared to see if a statistically significant difference could be found in the responses. The data gathered tends to show a relationship between time of day and student behavior from a teacher's perspective. A statistically significant relationship is identified between teacher perceptions of student misbehavior in morning versus afternoon classes with teachers indicating that student misbehavior tends to increase in afternoon classes. This is also seen in the qualitative data where 14 of 16 teachers indicated student behavior is affected by time of day. The results of this study are limited, however, based on the relatively small sample obtained and the small percentage of respondents to the survey given. Additionally, the study does not look at documented instances of student misbehavior that would tend to further validate the findings of this study. Further study of this topic should include a larger sample size, more objective data and measures calculated to encourage greater participation.

Student Motivation: Are students motivated to perform proficiently on high stakes tests?

Lael Lynch

Abstract

This study assessed the level of motivation in 64 6th grade science and math students at Lingle Middle School in Rogers, Arkansas. A 4-point Likert scale, using 20 questions, was used to determine the level of motivation for each student. The questionnaires were evaluated and compared to the previous year's Benchmark exam scores for the participants. The data, such as a high mean score of 66.53 on an 80 point scale, suggested a high level of motivation for the 6th grade sample studied. Data were examined for statistical differences between gender and ethnic groups. The results showed statistical significance between gender groups, but not ethnic groups. The standard deviation was larger for boys than girls suggesting that 6th grade girls have a higher level of motivation than boys. The null hypothesis of no difference between the ethnic groups failed rejection. A correlation was found between student motivation and high stakes test achievement level on the math exam, but not on the literacy exam. Statistically significant differences were shown between the Advanced group and the Basic or below groups with regard to motivational scores. The researcher suggests a larger sample group for more comparison. This study may be relevant for educators to better gauge success of their own students with regard to motivation and high stakes tests. More research is needed to determine if attitudes about high stakes testing change as a student progresses through the public school system.

Surveying Opinions about the New Start Time at Fayetteville High School

Kerri May

Abstract

Recent research has shown that sleep is a major contributor to adolescents' behavior, attention, and comprehension in school. School start times for adolescents have become increasingly early over the years, but there is a movement to delay start times in American public schools. Fayetteville High School (FHS) in Fayetteville, AR, has moved its start time from 7:40 AM to 8:20 AM. This study examines student opinions to this change because they have been continually neglected in this area of educational and scientific research. Students from Physics classes at FHS were polled to ascertain their opinions on their sleep, homework, jobs, focus, parent opinion, and activities, and to correlate these to their opinions of the new schedule. A survey was used to collect data; positive and negative statements were included for validity purposes. The topic of homework was shown to have the highest correlation with student satisfaction with the new schedule, although no topic showed high correlation. From the factors examined, a student is most likely to view the schedule positively if he feels that he can get his homework done in a reasonable amount of time at night. Further study should be done to rule out other factors such as that may affect opinions of the new start time. For instance, a student may have fewer activities because he or she did not make an athletic team instead of this being related to the school schedule. Future studies also could address the seven-period day that FHS will be using next year.

Teacher Attitudes toward Standardized Testing

Amanda Metz

Abstract

With the recent No Child Left Behind act, the importance of standardized tests in the classroom has increased. The increasing emphasis on test scores and pressures of sanctions is designed to have an effect on educators in Northwest Arkansas. The purpose of this study is to understand the attitudes of sixth- and seventh-grade teachers at Holt Middle School toward the high-stakes standardized tests that are administered at their school and the effects of these tests on teachers' choice of curriculum.

Fifty teachers at Holt Middle School were informed of and given the survey. Twelve teachers completed the 10-question Likert survey. The survey assessed the participants' opinions on standardized tests, the tests' effects on their curriculum, and how effective they believe these tests are at accurately assessing students' knowledge and understanding. The percentage of their level of agreement for each question was calculated. Their total scores also were compared between the subgroups. However, the conclusion is that not enough data was generated by the responses to establish statistical significance.

However, these conclusions clearly indicate that a majority of the participants demonstrated a negative attitude toward standardized tests. Therefore, the investigator recommends further investigation with larger samples. The sample used in this study represents a small population of teachers from one region of the state. A larger sample representative of the various regions of the state may increase the statistical validity of the study and allow for statistical significance to be tested.

Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes of Ability Grouping and Its Affect on Instructional Practices

Michelle Morris

Abstract

This study examines the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards ability grouping. It also attempts to gauge whether or not ability groups affect teachers' instructional practices. The questions that guided this study focus on teachers' feelings about ability groups, how aware they are of the differences between the groups, and whether or not teachers consider the levels of each group and vary their instruction accordingly. Teachers self-reported their attitudes, perceptions, and degree of differentiation of instruction through a 16-item Likert-scale. Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets and SPSS. The data recorded suggest that teachers have contradicting attitudes about ability groups. Though they believe ability groups recognize unique learning styles and promote equal opportunities, teachers also feel that ability groups can negatively label students. Teachers are divided on the issue of ability groups' affect on classroom management. In addition, the data suggest that teachers recognize the differences between the groups and take those differences into consideration when planning instruction. Furthermore, a correlation was found between teaching experience and varying materials. By understanding teachers' perceptions and attitudes of ability grouping and whether or not ability groups affect instruction, schools can be better informed on an issue that has garnered negative attention, yet continues to be used in today's classrooms. Future research should conduct a Correlational study between attitude towards ability groups and instructional practices, a study to determine how teachers differentiate between groups, and a study to determine how teachers develop attitudes and perceptions of ability groups.

Does small class size in secondary education improve student's performance?

Jon Pattyson

Abstract

The effect that small classes have on secondary education level is the focus of this research. What makes this research so important is the effect that small class learning has shown to have on elementary children. Additionally, the current research indicates that children who are at risk because of socioeconomic or ethnic situations tend to benefit the most from small classes because of this the issue of class size needs to be investigated at all levels of education. Changing the class structure of schools could cause an increase in the performance of these traditionally underperforming groups, and this could positively affect proficiency results on the no child left behind mandated tests. The effects of small class size on elementary aged children has been researched in the recent past, and this research has shown that small class size has had an impact on students performance well after they have been exposed to this environment. However, most of the research in this area has focused upon elementary aged children, but the effect that small classes have on children at the secondary education level has not been studied. This study investigates how class size affects student performance in a 10th grade social studies classes. The study observes a sample of 104 student's performances, and then compares small class and large class means, mode, and standard deviation. Additionally, we develop a line of regression of the means for 3 large classes and 2 small classes (20 or less students), and then we are able to predict results based upon class size. This study finds an inverse relation exists between class size and class performance, and as a result class size decreases the class mean performance increases. However, the results of this study are not statistically significant.

Does it matter? How does parental involvement effect student achievement?

Reid Pierce

Abstract

One issue many believe continually plagues public schools is the duty of involving parents in their children's education. Yet, as important as it may seem, some studies suggest that parent involvement doesn't have the ultra-beneficial effect that most think that it does. However, there also exists research that directly correlates parent involvement to higher student achievement. The purpose of this study was to investigate this same relationship using a more exact definition of parent involvement. Participants, parents of 8th grade students, were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to gauge their level of involvement. That level was calculated and compared to their child's grade point average with conclusions being drawn from that comparison. A total of sixty-six questionnaires were returned. The mean parent involvement was deemed moderate (12.89 out of 29) and the mean grade point average was 3.55. A linear correlation and regression test was used to compare the two sets of information and an r value of 0.0241 was returned. The comparison was statistically insignificant. Therefore, based on this information, it is suggested that a more in-depth and comprehensive study should be conducted if a more definitive answer is desired. A larger number of participants, a more random sample group, and a larger, more complete questionnaire are all improvements that should be made to obtain a more comprehensive indication of the effect that parent involvement has on student achievement.

Does a preference in how a student prefers do their schoolwork have any relationship to how well they do on assignments?

Jessica Prater

ABSTRACT

In the classroom, students will often ask to work in groups, and claim that they will get better grades if they do so. The purpose of this study was to determine whether a student's preference for cooperative learning has any correlation to how well they perform on their assignments. It was my hypothesis that students preferring group work would have higher scores than those that did not. After completing consent forms, a survey was administered to the students who had returned permission forms. The survey contained three parts: (1) How the student preferred to complete their schoolwork: alone, as part of a group, or no preference, (2) Did the student believe they performed better on assignments that were done in this way, and (3) were they male or female. Of eighty sixth graders, permission forms given, five were returned with signatures. Those five were comprised of four girls and one boy, with two girls preferring group work, and two preferring to work alone. The girls all believe that their scores would be higher. The boy did not have a preference and stated that he did not believe that his scores would be affected. Results were inconclusive due to the small body of students surveyed and the similarities in overall high grades for these particular students. To improve the validity of this study, the researcher should obtain a larger body of students to survey. To obtain a larger body of students to survey, the researcher would need to be on site at the school to ensure that students are continually reminded to complete their permission forms.

To Choose or not to Choose: Student Choice and Attitudes toward Reading

Kelly Russell

Abstract

Reading is one of the fundamental skills students need to master in order to be successful in academics and other areas of their lives. Reading is a skill used not only in English and Language Arts classrooms but also in all other content areas. This study aims to discover whether giving students choice in what they read will improve their overall attitudes toward reading in general, thereby enabling them to be more successful in their academic and professional careers. In general, the literature supports the belief that reading is an integral part of the public school curriculum. It presents various ways to improve students' attitudes, including giving students more time in class to read. It also presents the idea that choice, among other things, greatly improves students' attitudes toward reading. A short, 13-question Likert-scale survey was administered to 61 eighth-grade students at a junior high in Springdale. Each of the 13 items presented a statement related to assigned or self-selected reading with which students could agree or disagree, based on their personal feelings. The data collected from the students' answers on the survey demonstrated that the majority of students would enjoy reading more if given the opportunity to choose their own reading material. The limitations of the study include, but are not limited to, the small sample size, especially of those who do not enjoy reading. Based on the data, it is strongly recommended that the study be repeated with a larger sample size. It is also recommended that educators integrate as much choice into their curriculum as possible in order to improve their students' attitudes toward reading.

The Effect of Central-Question Based Units in Social Studies

Raelene Schneider

Abstract

The use of central-question based units is not a new concept. Research has shown that it is an effective method to teaching social studies. However, it is not a commonly used way to design units due to the difficulty in designing central-question based units. This study examines the effect of using central-question based units in social studies. Six classes of 10th graders, a total of 134 students, were taught a unit in world history with the instructor using a central-question based unit. At the end of the unit students were given a unit test based on national and state standards. The test scores were then calculated using a correlated sample t-test. The hypothesis was that students who received instruction from a central-question based unit approach would have significantly high test scores. The results of the study were not statistically significant. The research did, however, provide insight into the problems with forming central-question based units. This insight will serve as a guide for future research on the subject. The research also was valuable as a tool for learning how to collect, interpret and design research in education. This new knowledge will be helpful when designing future research in education, especially practices that make classrooms more effective.

Predicting Success:

A Comparative Study of Seventh-Grade Students' Performance on Reading Components of the Fall Common Assessment and ACTAAP Benchmark Examination

Yvonne Scorse

Abstract

A major area of concern in Rogers Public Schools is student performance on Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program (ACTAAP) Benchmark Examinations. This study examines the predictive ability of a formative, classroom-based assessment of reading performance by establishing its relationship to a high-stakes summative criterion-referenced reading assessment. This research focuses on these questions: (1) How does Lingle Middle School seventh-grade performance on the reading portion of the fall common assessment compare with performance of sixth-grade Lingle students on the reading portion of the Benchmark Examination of March 2005? (2) Does student performance on the fall common assessment have predictive ability for performance on the Benchmark Examinations? A large group correlation design was used to examine the relationship between the performance of 592 students on the reading portion of the March 2005 *Grade 6 Benchmark Examination* and the November 2005 seventh grade English fall common assessment. The result was a correlation coefficient of 0.41. Although this correlation is statistically significant, there is a much stronger relationship between the Benchmark and the STAR Reading and Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) tests. Compared to these other tests, the fall common assessment would have less predictive ability for student performance on the Benchmark Exam. Replication of this study using the results from this year's Benchmark exam could answer the question of whether the results were affected by changes in student performance over time. The results of this study can be used by Lingle Middle School in decision making regarding the administration of a common assessment next school year.

The Effect of Gender on Student Attitude toward Science

Amanda Serio

Abstract

Historically, research has shown student attitudes toward science to be significantly poorer in females than males, but more recent research suggests a narrowing of the gender gap. This paper questions whether gender is still a significant factor affecting science attitudes in a Northwest Arkansas junior high school. A 40 item survey consisting of a variety of science attitude-related statements and evaluated by a 4-point Likert scale was used to anonymously assess the attitude toward science of 62 out of 141 students in core physical science classes taught by the same teacher. The sample included 23 males and 35 females at the 9th grade level, and no other demographic data was considered. Overall attitude scores were analyzed by t-test for difference between genders, and although males averaged higher, no significant difference was found. Only two gender specific statements were included in the survey, and the most striking result was that 82% of females disagreed that men have more scientific minds, 47% of them strongly. The average response in both genders was middling, suggesting that the overall improvement of attitudes toward science is more pressing than gender differences.

IEP identification: Teacher responses on current Arkansas state standards and the effectiveness of implementation

Brent D. Smith

Abstract

Yearly, teachers and administrators evaluate students to determine those who need IEP accommodations and assess those who currently have IEPs for possible modifications. Using a 20 question Likert survey, 25 teachers at Fayetteville High School were asked to participate and respond to questions that focused on state standards, personal involvement and program support. Responses to these statements were evaluated to determine if they agree with the current state standards used to identify need, their level of involvement in the IEP process and their level of satisfaction in the overall program. Furthermore, the data was sorted by the participant's gender, years of experience and level of education to determine if any of these factors made a statistical difference in their responses. The results of the data collected concluded that 58% of those surveyed expressed general agreement with the state standards used in IEP identification and 60% indicated active involvement in the IEP process. Though 48% indicated general satisfaction with the current program, 46% indicated general dissatisfaction in the program indicating that the participants were split regarding this issue. In addition, statistical t-tests indicated that none of the demographic information made a statistical difference in the participants' responses. As the result of these conclusions and specific response distributions for individual survey statements, it is recommended that further research be completed to better understand the full extent of participant ideas.

A Last Minute Look at Graduate Student -Teacher Procrastination Behaviors

Kyle Smith

Abstract

Procrastination is a major challenge to academic success among college students with up to 80% of students reported as chronic procrastinators and graduate students constituting one of the most prone groups. As both graduate students and secondary teachers, MAT interns have the unusual opportunity to observe the effects of academic procrastination in their students while simultaneously exhibiting the same behavior themselves. This study examined the tendencies of these student/teachers to procrastinate on their own academic tasks and how that behavior correlates to procrastination in their teaching tasks. A 26-item survey was administered to 88 interns to assess both respondents' tendency to procrastinate and the stressful impact felt due to procrastination. Analysis of the responses indicates no relationship between type of task and the frequency of procrastination. In fact, the data show the best indicator of a tendency to procrastinate in one domain to be a habit of procrastination in the other. This suggests that procrastination is a habit and once a procrastinator, always a procrastinator. As procrastination does not appear to be domain specific, interventions designed to reduce academic procrastination, specifically for graduate work, might do better to address procrastination in general.

Secondary Science Teachers' Knowledge of the Nature of Science in the Rogers School District

PK Sukthavy

Abstract

Teachers' understanding of the nature of science (NOS) is important to better educate science-to-science students. This study investigated secondary science teachers' knowledge of the nature of science in the Rogers School District. With educational programs such as the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) at the University of Arkansas and other relevant programs that prepare preservice science teachers along with teacher in-services and professional development days for existing teachers, an initial understanding of the nature of science and its functions in the classroom should have been discussed and elaborated upon. This research study was accomplished with a fifteen-question (True/False) questionnaire on the nature of science, two questions that entailed if the educators took a course/in-service on the nature of science, and queried if and when they taught their students on the nature of science. The questionnaire also included an open response essay, "What is Science?" The results were that 34.4 % of the teachers' understanding of the nature of science was in fact wrong and the essay confirmed that their understanding in some aspect was indeed false. The conclusion was most teachers do teach the nature of science to their students and was usually the first thing taught. However, the topic, in some aspects, was inaccurately understood and taught by teachers and thereby, inaccurately understood and learned by students. Recommendation for the study would be to key the entire questionnaire of the nature of science on the NSTA definitions/position statement.

Is There a Correlation Between the Perceived Job Satisfaction of Teachers and Their Years of Experience?

Stacey Thomas

Abstract

As the teacher population in the United States ages, it is becoming more and more critical for school districts to be able to retain both novice and veteran teachers. To do this, it is important for a school district to assess the degree of job satisfaction of its teachers. It is crucial to know whether or not novice teachers are feeling overwhelmed. It is just as important to know how more experienced teachers perceive the level of satisfaction derived from their jobs.

This study attempts to assess the degree of correlation, if any, between the perceived job satisfaction of teachers and their years of teaching experience. Data was obtained from 22 teachers employed at a middle school in Arkansas. The research data was obtained from a questionnaire in which participants used a Likert scale to give their opinions on a variety of topics related to teaching.

The results show that teachers with more experience are somewhat more likely to be less satisfied with the profession, but this difference is not found to be statistically significant. The study also finds that teachers with Bachelor's degrees are slightly more satisfied than teachers with graduate degrees, although this result as well is not found to be statistically significant. However, the small sample size of this study does not allow the author to generalize to teachers as a whole from the results of this research. It is therefore recommended that a more comprehensive and demographically sensitive study, with a much larger sample, be undertaken to try to more fully answer the questions posed by this research study.

Isaac Townsend

How much influence do calculators have? An analysis of attitudes towards calculators in the high school mathematics classroom and their effects on the student's learning process.

Abstract

The extent to which calculators are implemented in high school mathematics classrooms has become a heated debate among educators. Many of the changes in the last few years in mathematics curriculum have been those which require even more use of calculators. Many educators feel that as calculators have become more available, they have also become more depended upon, because the calculator can do many mathematical processes with ease. The debate rouse between educators because many feel that calculators are overused already, while others are trying to further incorporate them into classrooms. Previous research has been conducted to determine whether students' scores on tests result in a significant increase or decrease. Standardized testing agencies were particular concerned with student scoring with and without a calculator. Multiple tests provide evidence that suggest that scores are raised when students use calculators. However, these increases in scores were not significant to warrant a separate scoring table from the students who use calculators on the exams. This research attempted to address this dilemma through the measure of the attitudes of high school mathematics students affected by calculators. Although the results of this research did not produce an overwhelming significant conclusion, it provides a proper approach of implementation of calculators into the high school mathematics classroom based on these attitudes. Future research conducted with calculators in the high school mathematics classroom should be collect from multiple stages to see how the student's attitudes change throughout their mathematics education process. Future research should also address the relationship between a student's calculator experience and their mathematics performance.

Foreign Language and ESL-certified teachers' perceptions of
systems to reward students for participation

Frances vandenHeuvel

Abstract

The issue of rewards systems and reward contingencies is controversial in many settings across the United States. In regards to the educational scene, an investigation was conducted to inspect secondary level teachers' perspectives on reward systems for student participation in classrooms. This study examined the opinions of 19 Foreign Language and ESL-certified teachers in Springdale, Arkansas, including 7 teachers from Springdale High School and 12 from Har-Ber High School. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives on the effects of reward systems on students' intrinsic motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence; therefore, a 12-question Likert-Scale questionnaire was developed to address teachers' opinions regarding each of these issues. The hypothesis was that Foreign Language and ESL-certified teachers would perceive a system of rewards or incentives for student participation as a factor that might minimize anxiety levels, increase self-confidence, and contribute to students' intrinsic motivation. The results show that a higher percentage of teachers disagree that gold stars or paper points might decrease anxiety levels, but they also agree that rewarding students for participation increases levels of self-confidence. It can also be concluded that a smaller amount of participants than expected believe that offering extrinsic rewards for participation would increase students' intrinsic desire to learn. From this conclusion it is recommended that further research be conducted to receive more insight into teacher and student opinions about the effects of rewards systems on student anxiety, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation.

Denee Wallin

Abstract

Teaching through inquiry is distinguished by its emphasis on a questioning attitude, gathering data, reasoning from evidence, and communicating explanations that can be justified by available data (Haury, 1998 p. 3). Teaching students through experience and helping them to apply their knowledge to other aspects throughout their lives is an important skill. It is important for teachers to know how to teach inquiry methods to their students and be aware of the problem solving techniques the students are obtaining.

Thirty-one science teachers from Springdale High School, George Junior High, and J. O. Kelly Middle School, were asked twenty-eight questions about their belief of the teachers and students role in inquiry science. This research could help educators better understand the feeling toward inquiry science and what other educators are doing in the classroom.

The Effects of the READ 180 Program on Middle Level Literacy Scores at Lingle Middle School

Kyndall Wilson

Abstract

Literacy is one of the primary focuses of every school district in Arkansas. Many Arkansas schools are faced with the annual challenge of improving literacy scores. As a result, programs are implemented to engage students in the fundamentals of reading comprehension. This study focused on the knowledge of 66 sixth and seventh grade students enrolled in the ROAR program at Lingle Middle School in order to determine the effectiveness of the READ 180 program in Rogers, Arkansas. The students were introduced to an eight-month literacy-enriching program. This program was held every week on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. During the program students had three twenty five minute sessions that enriched literacy skills through independent reading, one on one teacher interaction, and a computer based program that allowed students to enhance reading, spelling, and writing skills while listening to different stories. The students took a series of small quizzes and tests. These quizzes and tests assessed the progression of student knowledge during program enrollment by examining lexile reading scores prior to entering the program and lexile reading scores received after program involvement. The study resulted with 67% of students increasing their lexile levels, while 23% of students decreased their lexile levels and 10% remained the same. By examining the research taken from aggregate data, the correlated scores conclude a statistically significant relationship. With the knowledge of student performance in the READ 180 program, it is recommended that other schools may implement READ 180 and improve literacy.

Is It Important? The Effects of Small Class Sizes in Secondary Education

Kyle Wood

Abstract

It has long been understood that smaller classes in elementary school enable young students to advance further in education. This research study will attempt to answer if the same cannot be done for secondary students. Although the state of Arkansas has passed a law that enforces all secondary classes in the state must be below thirty, many argue that this is still too big. A smaller class size in secondary schools allow teachers to give more time to all students and allows students to be in comfortable settings that invite learning. The research asked the question: Do teachers and students both want and need smaller classes. The study shows that making small class sizes are nearly impossible when the almighty dollar is behind most educational decisions throughout the country. Thirty eight teachers responded to ten questions on questionnaire that asks questions about their opinions on class sizes, discipline, and state mandate. The findings from the data gathered shows that most teachers believe that smaller class sizes helps teachers better educate as well as control discipline problems. The findings also prove that even though teachers agree that smaller class size could be successful, few agree on how to make class sizes smaller. The data is analyzed by calculating the mean and standard deviation for each question. Next, the data collected for the mean and standard deviation is compared in each of three demographics. Finally, findings from the questionnaire are compared to the research and support what has been done.

How can we improve? A look at teacher's needs in professional development
Joshua Worthy

Abstract

Professional development is a key aspect of maintaining a teaching certification in schools. This study has assessed the perspectives and commitments towards professional development among certified secondary teachers at Fayetteville High School. We have examined teachers' activities in professional development programs, how much they use their new skills in the classroom, which aspects of professional development are out of date, and which programs need to be improved. The purpose in this study is to gain evidence of possible corrections and additions that could be implemented in district wide professional development, which could improve teaching efficiency and classroom technology skills in the schools. This study involved the Fayetteville High School faculty, staff, and administration members that partake in professional development every year. The population was given a survey to complete, which our instrument consisted of questions regarding their personal opinions of state mandated professional development requirements, their personal expectations during developmental workshops, what areas they have been involved in or have personal expertise in, and what areas should be improved in district offered professional development programs. Out of 130 Fayetteville High School teachers in the population, 38 certified educators returned the devised instrument survey. Our research supports that Fayetteville High School teachers overall have low opinions about state and district professional development requirements, which they also desire a more in depth developmental program involving educational technologies. For future studies we suggest that a larger sample be surveyed, more in depth instrumentation be devised, and that the results be implemented throughout the entire state. My findings have been reported with approval of the Institution Review Board committee at the University of Arkansas.

High School Students' Intent to Participate in Civic Activities

Erin Yell

Abstract

Northwest Arkansas now reflects a diverse society, including millions of first and second-generation immigrants. The purpose of this study was to attempt to identify a link between civic involvement at the high school level, and future political involvement of youth, and especially youth minorities, living in northwest Arkansas. Studies have shown that students who participate in school-sponsored civic activities, and whose parents are involved in political activities, are more likely to be civically active as adults (Kaplan & Liu, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Uslander & Brown, 2005). This study looked at current civic participation of white and immigrant students and their parents, in an effort to predict the future involvement of those students in political and civic activities. Unfortunately, many minorities are not engaged in school and community activities. Often, immigrants don't see the benefits of U.S. citizenship, and they consider themselves outsiders who don't fit-in (Cho, 1999; Uslander & Brown, 2005). Is the immigrant population less engaged in civic activities? To measure the level of civic involvement of students and intent to become involved, a short survey was administered to 11th and 12th grade students in four social studies classes at a local high school. The results of the survey indicated that only sixty-four percent of students participated in school activities, and less than fifty percent of students intended to participate in political activities after high school graduation. The immigrant population did not demonstrate significantly less participation in civic and school-related activities than did whites. It is clear that more needs to be done in the schools to teach citizenship education to all students, in terms of promoting awareness, equality, civic duty and leadership. The students must become engaged in the society to benefit it.