

Abstract

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to increase the reading abilities of elementary students with dyslexia through the development of a teacher preparation practicum that includes education, tutoring, and mentoring. This project will: (a) develop a successful practicum for teaching pre-service teachers how to instruct students with dyslexia; (b) increase pre-service teachers' knowledge of the origins, prevalence, characteristics, and treatment of dyslexia; (c) increase the reading ability of elementary education students with dyslexia. The researchers will determine:

(a) is there a difference in pre-service teacher knowledge before and after intervention; (b) is there a difference in knowledge between the pre-service teachers in the intervention and control group at the completion of the study; and (c) are there differences in elementary student reading abilities post tutoring.

Setting & Participants. Both pre-service teachers and elementary students will participate in this study. A pre-service teacher is a student in higher education pursuing a degree in teaching, specifically in elementary or special education for the purposes of this study. Two groups of pre-service teachers from two western universities will participate. Pre-service teachers will be in the second to final year of their programs, just before completing student teaching requirements. Total pre-service teacher participant numbers will range from 75 to 100, based on the size of the teacher preparation programs. Fifteen to 30 elementary students in grades 1-3, with a diagnosis of dyslexia will also partake in the study, as recipients of tutoring from pre-service teachers in the intervention group.

Intervention. Pre-service teachers in the intervention group will participate in the following for the length of one school semester: (a) "Understanding Dyslexia," a three hour online module covering evidence based knowledge of dyslexia; (b) weekly group training of explicit instruction in reading program development; (c) one-on-one instruction of reading to a student with dyslexia; (d) weekly mentoring and feedback of instruction.

Control condition. Pre-service teachers in the control condition will participate in: (a) "Understanding Dyslexia," a three hour online module covering evidence based knowledge of dyslexia; and (b) standard university teacher preparation curriculum.

Research Design and methods. To measure the efficacy of the proposed teaching practicum, multiple evaluations using a mixed methods approach will be implemented during the three year study. In year one a pilot study will be conducted in which a pre-test/post design will be utilized, as well as qualitative analysis of interviews, and case study responses. Elementary student reading ability and response to the tutoring will also be measured pre- and post-test. Years two and three will repeat the pilot study, but with refinements based on the results of previous years.

Key measures and outcomes. All pre-service teachers will be administered the Knowledge and Insights of Dyslexia Survey (KIDS) pre and post intervention, as well as researcher developed case studies to measure teacher understanding of dyslexia and reading instruction. Lesson plan reflections from the intervention group will also be coded for teacher understanding of dyslexia and reading. Teacher and student interviews will be analyzed for feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher practicum. Elementary students will be assessed pre and post tutoring using the reading subtests of the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement IV (WJIV) to measure reading abilities.

Data Analytic Strategy. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to determine: (a) differences between pre-service teacher knowledge pre- and post-intervention; (b) differences between pre- and post-scores of the intervention and control groups; and (c) differences in elementary student knowledge post tutoring by pre-service teachers.