A COMPARISON OF THREE METHODS FOR THE TEACHING

OF READING IN THE FIRST GRADE

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Carol A. Beers
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Carol Ann Beers
Western Connecticut State College
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The purpose of this investigation was to determine the relative effectiveness of three reading programs: a basal reader program, the Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.) and Words In Color. All three programs have been used in the same school system for several years.

The Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) was used as the pretest measure and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), primary level, was the posttest measure. The pre and posttest scores were collected for all first graders in the sample during the 1970-1971 school year. Three different elementary schools were in the same system used in this study. The reading scores for each program were pooled across all three schools, that is, even though each school taught two or more reading programs, the data was grouped according to a particular reading program, not to a specific school. Each program was divided into two subgroups, boys and girls. Ten subjects were then randomly selected from each of the six subgroups to give equal cell numbers. In all sixty children participated in this study.

Since the correlation between the pretest and posttest was .539 both the analysis of variance and the analysis of covariance were used.

There were several questions which this investigation was trying to answer:

1. Was there any overall difference in reading achievement among the three programs?

2. Was there any difference in reading achievement between boys and girls grouped across all three reading programs?

3. Was the achievement for boys and girls the same in each of the three reading programs?

4. Did each reading program produce an increase in reading achievement?

As a result of the analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The children using the Words In Color program demonstrated a significantly higher gain in reading achievement over their pretest scores than those children in the Basal program (at the α = 0.05 level of significance).

2. I.T.A. showed the next highest gain which was also significantly higher than the Basal program.

3. The Basal program itself showed a slight decrease in scores between the pretest and posttest.

4. The analysis of covariance showed a significant difference in student reading achievement between the Basal program and the other two, as measured by the posttest.

The Basal pretest mean score was 65.9. The Basal posttest mean score dropped to 55.88. The mean I.T.A. pretest score was 63.95. The posttest score was 68.35. The Words In Color mean score rose from a pretest mean of 69.05 to a posttest mean of 73.95. Based on the results of the tests, the Words In Color program was the most effective method of teaching beginning reading to the children in this sample.