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COHORT 1 DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

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CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING
SECOND-GENERATION NIGERIAN YOUTHS IN THE UNITED STATES

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CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF HIGH-ACHIEVING
SECOND-GENERATION NIGERIAN YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

This study investigated the characteristics and challenges of high-achieving second-generation Nigerian youths in the United States. An increasing number of youths in America's schools are from immigrant backgrounds due to the flow of immigration from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Given the local and national mandates to improve the academic achievement of all children, we cannot afford to leave any group behind .

Although research on immigrant children from Asia and Latin America and their adaptation and schooling has increased in the last two decades, the educational experiences of Black immigrant children from Africa and the Caribbean have been understudied. The scant research on African immigrants lump all Africans into a homogeneous group despite the different experiences and obvious diversity found within Africa and among African immigrants. Using theoretical triangulation from educational anthropology (cultural ecological theory), sociology (social capital), and psychology (social cognitive theory), the researcher examined the role of parents, personal traits, and social contexts on the academic experiences of high-achieving second-generation Nigerian youths.

The study used surveys, in-depth interviews of Nigerian youths and parents (mothers) and a focus group interview of high-achieving second-generation Nigerian youths to explore the academic experiences of high-achieving second-generation Nigerian youths to identify factors that determine their educational outcomes. It is anticipated that the results of this study will

contribute to the literature on immigrant, minority, and Black students' education in the United States.

High-achieving second-generation Nigerian youths credited their parents, extended family, the Nigerian community, and their upbringing for their motivation and academic success. Nigerian parents were actively engaged with the education of their children, both in the traditional realms of school involvement and in the non-traditional process of school engagement. Although youths faced the challenges of peer teasing, under preparation for college, and parental pressure, they devised coping strategies through code switching, the reevaluation of their definition of academic success, and an increased determination and effort to succeed. They also were involved in several extra curricular activities, which helped them to create social networks with peers and adults and to break social barriers.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR
HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN
TRADITIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL SPANISH CLASSES

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR
HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN
TRADITIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL SPANISH CLASSES

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Abstract

The national increase of Latinos has resulted in an increase in students who speak Spanish. The major topic in this study was the instructional practices used by Middle School Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Spanish teachers when working with Heritage Language Learners (HLLs). HLLs have different needs from those of the traditional LOTE student. Recent literature has focused on HLLs at the elementary, high school, and university levels. Researchers have suggested activities to meet the needs of HLLs, but there is little evidence that teachers utilize these suggestions.

This multiple case study sought to determine how teachers modify instructional practices to address the unique needs and talents of the HLL through classroom observations, student focus-groups, and instructional scenarios completed by practicing teachers. The study also sought to determine if teachers were aware of the suggested activities for HLLs through coursework, workshops, or professional development. This study provides insight on how to assist teachers when working with HLLs.

Fifteen teachers of Spanish completed an Instructional Scenarios Questionnaire about their instructional practices with HLLs and non-HLLs. These teachers were from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, and their native languages were English, Spanish, or Italian. All had been teaching Spanish for at least two years; some had received training through formal

coursework or professional development to work with HLLs. Five Middle School teachers were selected by convenience for classroom observations. An observation form, the Instructional Practices Record (IPR) was developed for use during a total of seven classroom observations. Additionally, 14 students were interviewed in small focus-groups of HLLs and non-HLLs. Data were coded and analyzed for themes to determine which instructional practices were being used in Middle School Spanish classes with HLLs.

Results of this study indicate that teachers understand the needs of HLLs and are familiar with recommended strategies to meet their needs. However, teachers and students reported little difference in the activities assigned to or in learning expectations between HLLs and non-HLLs. Little modification was reported in any part of the study. Using methods adapted from instruction of gifted and talented students, a Curriculum Compactor was designed to help teachers plan accelerated and enriched activities for HLLs.

THE KINDERGARTEN BUDDY PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECT ON
READING ACHIEVEMENT FOR AT-RISK KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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THE KINDERGARTEN BUDDY PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECT ON
READING ACHIEVEMENT FOR AT-RISK KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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Abstract

Research states that more time and attention is needed for some students to acquire the necessary skills which allow them to become successful learners. Full-day kindergarten programs are desirable to ensure that all students have the necessary time to be successful. Due to lack of funds many school districts are unable to offer full-day kindergarten programs. The Kindergarten Buddy Program is a viable alternative for school systems seeking ways to provide opportunities for students who require extra support. The effectiveness of providing additional instruction in phonological awareness for at-risk learners needs to be explored to determine its impact on reading achievement. This information will be beneficial to school districts as they struggle to meet the needs of at-risk students in a fiscally responsible manner.

The purpose of this study was to determine if additional instruction in phonological awareness, the Kindergarten Buddy Program, had an effect on reading achievement for at-risk kindergarten students. Students' reading achievement was analyzed to see if participation in the Kindergarten Buddy Program enabled them to reach grade level expectations. Using a convenience sample (N = 92), scores on the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test and the Kindergarten Inventory of Skills in the half-day extended Kindergarten Buddy Program were compared to students' scores in half-day kindergarten without an extended program and in a full-day kindergarten without an extended program. An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were differences in the post-test scores of the different groups. Differences over time were also analyzed using a repeated measures

ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference in the means of the scores of the three groups as measured by the Inventory of Skills.

The study revealed that half-day Buddy students scored significantly higher than half-day kindergarten students on the letter and letter/sound subscores on the Gates MacGinitie test. Scores comparing the Buddy Program to a full-day program were similar as were the half-day kindergarten and full-day programs. This suggested the Kindergarten Buddy Program made significant strides in improving letter and letter/sound abilities of the at-risk students and therefore, it was as effective as the full-day program in assisting at-risk students in reaching grade level expectations.

A COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP TO TEACHERS' PERCPETIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

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A COMPARISON OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP TO TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

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Abstract

The purpose of the research study was to (a) determine how teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive) of middle school principals and instructional leaders differed; (b) identify the extent to which teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive) of school leaders (principal and instructional leader) predicted the teacher and principal behavior variables of school climate; and (c) determine the effects of the type of agreement (high-high, high-low, low-high, and low-low) between the school leaders' (principal and instructional leader) self-perceptions and teachers' perceptions of the school leaders' transformational leadership style on the teacher and principal openness behavior variables of school climate. Causal comparative and correlational designs were utilized for the study. The sample population consisted of 7 principals, 7 instructional leaders, and 114 teachers from 7 middle schools in Connecticut. Teachers completed the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X* to assess their perceptions of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and passive) of principals and instructional leaders, while principals and instructional leaders completed the self-rater form of the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire-5X*. In addition, teachers completed the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire-RM* to assess teacher and principal openness behavior variables of school climate.

Paired samples *t* tests, stepwise multiple regression, and multivariate analysis of covariance were performed to analyze the data.

First, results of paired samples *t* tests indicated that significant differences exist between teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles of principals and instructional leaders. Next, results of stepwise multiple regressions indicated that (a) the principals' transformational leadership style predicted the teacher openness behavior variable of school climate and (b) the principals' transformational leadership style, principals' transactional leadership styles, instructional leaders' passive leadership style, and instructional leader' transformational leadership style predicted the principal openness behavior variable of school climate. Finally, results of multivariate analysis of covariance indicated that the discrepancy between principals' self-perception of the transformational leadership style and teachers' perceptions of the principals' transformational leadership style significantly affected the teacher and principal openness behaviors variables of school climate. However, no significant effect was found when the analysis was conducted with instructional leaders in place of principals.

EFFECTS OF A COLLABORATIVE TEACHING MODEL OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON
NEW SIXTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES,
SELF-EFFICACY, MOTIVATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTRUCTION

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EFFECTS OF A COLLABORATIVE TEACHING MODEL OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON
NEW SIXTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES,
SELF-EFFICACY, MOTIVATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of a collaborative teaching model of professional development on new sixth through twelfth grade teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, motivation, and implementation of instruction. Educating students in the 21st century requires not only content expertise and the desire to teach, but pedagogical competence. To acquire these requisite skills new classroom teachers need more than discrete, periodic, in-house or off-campus professional development programs.

This research investigated the effectiveness of a collaborative teaching model for 6th through 12th grade teachers ($n = 23$) using a Pre/Post Quasi-Experimental Design. The dependent variables were the teachers' attitudes toward professional development, levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and implementation of instruction. The first three variables were measured by the *Semantic Differential Scale* (SDS), the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* (TES), and the *Work Motivation Inventory* (WMI), respectively. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was employed to determine change over time. Implementation of instruction was assessed using the *Teaching Competencies: Non-Tenured Teacher Appraisal Program Observation*. At the beginning and end of the study, observations ($n = 6$) of three voluntary collaborative teacher teams were conducted using the school district's teacher evaluation form. To fully describe the effect of this dependent

variable, data were described using means, standard deviations, and frequencies to view teacher classroom behavior. Lastly, a *Teacher Exit Questionnaire* assessed individual teacher ($n = 23$) reflection of the professional development role of the collaborative model. In this study the independent variable was the active participation in a collaborative teaching model.

The findings from the one-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed that the new 6th through 12th grade teachers ($n = 23$) showed statistically significant differences on pre and post assessments on two dependent variables (attitude and motivation). The Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed the mean differences for both variables were significant at the .05 level. Descriptive data from the *Teaching Competencies: Non-Tenured Teacher Appraisal Program Observation* and the *Teacher Exit Questionnaire* regarding the implementation of instruction showed that 96% of the teachers noted an increase in their ability to identify different student learning needs and apply appropriate strategies. Thus, both the statistically significant repeated measures effect and the teachers' enacted and reported practice were impacted by the collaborative teaching model experience.

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS WITH
RESPECT TO THE ROLES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS THEY IMPLEMENT THE
NEW YORK STATE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING MODEL

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PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS WITH
RESPECT TO THE ROLES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS THEY IMPLEMENT THE
NEW YORK STATE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING MODEL

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Abstract

The proposed study examined the perceptions of school counselors and administrators towards the New York State School Counseling Model .The study focused on (a) actual and preferred counselor activities to provide direction on how school counselors are defining their practice and (b) counselors' and administrators' perceptions of how the New York State Comprehensive Model is implemented into school counseling practice.

A sample of the New York State school counselor population (n = 900) was invited to participate in a survey in obtaining quantitative data. *The School Counseling Activity Rating Scale* and an adapted New York State version of the *Readiness Survey* were sent to participants by mail. A matching sample of high school administrators was sent the *Readiness Survey* to ascertain their perceptions of the New York Comprehensive Model.

A multiple regression and a two-group MANOVA or Hotelling's T^2 were conducted as methods in data analysis in this research. Results indicated a significant correlation when each of the five preferred school counseling activity subscales were employed as dependent variables. Curriculum, coordination, and non-guidance significantly correlated with the independent variable of readiness, which was entered as a block .Furthermore, results indicated a significant correlation for the preferred school counseling activity subscales of counseling and consultation when each independent variable for the readiness components and actual activities were entered

as two separate blocks. Results of the MANOVA indicated that community support, leadership, staff time, and district resources showed a significant multivariate impact when responses from school administrators and school counselors regarding school counselor readiness were compared.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS LEADING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS LEADING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

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Abstract

This dissertation sought to discover contributing factors that lead to students being suspended from school. Policies and practices of which efficacy is questionable, that by design or happenstance result in a particular segment or segments of the community being removed from classrooms because of subjective interpretations of rules of behavior, require closer investigation. At a time when high-stakes testing makes consistent attendance in class critical, students who are removed from class miss valuable instructional time. Not only are these students' educational and social opportunities interrupted as a result of these practices, but it quite possibly violates their civil right to a free and public education.

This qualitative study included consenting teachers in an urban middle school (N = 53) in the Northeast Region of the United States. The middle school in this study received two presentations of professional development in the areas of de-escalation strategies and cultural sensitivity. The consenting teachers were asked to respond in writing to a scenario before professional development began and a scenario after the professional development concluded. These scenarios were analytically scored using three criteria of Eyler and Giles (1999) to indicate change over time and qualitatively coded to discover common as well as unique themes. In addition to the scenarios, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of teachers and this information was qualitatively coded and analyzed for common as well as contradictory themes regarding perceptions of student behaviors and the referral process.

Responses from the instruments suggest an intellectual disconnect from the intended purpose of the referral process, as it is identified by the teachers, and how the referral was employed in various situations to deal with classroom management of students' perceived behaviors. Responses also suggest the wide variations in teacher management styles, definitions of behaviors, tolerances of behaviors, definitions of offenses, and the consequences meted out because of these offenses is subjective in nature and resulted in overrepresentation of minority students being referred to the office for disciplinary actions that resulted in student suspensions.

EFFECTS OF CONCEPTUAL ASSESSMENTS USING TEST DEBATE AND TEST
ANALYSIS ON CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

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EFFECTS OF CONCEPTUAL ASSESSMENTS USING TEST DEBATE AND TEST
ANALYSIS ON CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of the conceptually designed assessment, test debate and test analysis, on students' critical thinking and ability to analyze literature. The test analysis and test debate process involved three steps: (a) teachers created and administered a multiple-choice exam that asked conceptual questions; (b) students participated in a Socratic test debate in which they were required to support their answers using specific textual references; and (c) students wrote a metacognitive reflection of the evolution of their thought process including an initial interpretation of the question, the points gleaned during the debate, and their final interpretation of the course concept or theme addressed in the question.

Using a sample of convenience ($n = 157$), this study assessed the use of test debate and test analysis in six separate classes among heterogeneously and homogeneously grouped students in grades 6 through 11. The quasi-experimental research design of this study used *The California Measure of Mental Motivation (CM3)*, Advanced Placement English Language and Composition raw scores, and New York State English Language Arts assessments to consider how well the process enhanced students' critical thinking skills and students' ability to read and analyze literature.

A two-group and three-group multivariate analysis of variance (MANCOVA) with the Literature Pretest covariate was conducted on the six dependent variables: Literary Analysis, Mental Focus, Learning Orientation, Creative Problem Solving, Cognitive Integrity, and

Scholarly Rigor. The data set was analyzed using an independent variable with two levels (trained and treatment and no treatment) and three levels (trained and treatment, trained no treatment, and no treatment).

The two-group MANCOVA data analysis revealed statistically significantly group difference on three of the six dependent variables (Creative Problem Solving, Scholarly Rigor, and Literary Analysis). The three-group MANCOVA produced similar results with regard to significance level, but examination of mean scores was not consistent with the findings of the two-group MANCOVA. A statistically significant effect of the independent variable three groups (trained and treatment, trained no treatment, and no treatment) existed for Mental Focus, Creative Problem Solving, Scholarly Rigor, and Literary Analysis. It can be concluded that the statistically significant multivariate effect was driven in part by the impact of grouping on these dependent variables.

IMPACT OF PROBLEM FINDING ON THE QUALITY OF AUTHENTIC
OPEN INQUIRY SCIENCE RESEARCH PROJECTS

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IMPACT OF PROBLEM FINDING ON THE QUALITY OF AUTHENTIC
OPEN INQUIRY SCIENCE RESEARCH PROJECTS

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Abstract

Problem finding is a creative process whereby individuals develop original ideas for study. Secondary science students who successfully participate in authentic, novel, open inquiry studies must engage in problem finding to determine viable and suitable topics. This study examined problem finding strategies employed by students who successfully completed and presented the results of their open inquiry research at the 2007 Connecticut Science Fair and the 2007 International Science and Engineering Fair. A multicase qualitative study was framed through the lenses of creativity, inquiry strategies, and situated cognition learning theory. Data were triangulated by methods (interviews, document analysis, surveys) and sources (students, teachers, mentors, fair directors, documents). The data demonstrated that the quality of student projects was directly impacted by the quality of their problem finding. Effective problem finding was a result of students using resources from previous, specialized experiences. They had a positive self-concept and a temperament for both the creative and logical perspectives of science research. Successful problem finding was derived from an idiosyncratic, nonlinear, and flexible use and understanding of inquiry. Finally, problem finding was influenced and assisted by the community of practicing scientists, with whom the students had an exceptional ability to communicate effectively. As a result, there appears to be a juxtaposition of creative and logical/analytical thought for open inquiry that may not be present in other forms of inquiry.

Instructional strategies are suggested for teachers of science research students to improve the quality of problem finding for their students and their subsequent research projects.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING ACHIEVEMENT, WRITING SELF-EFFICACY, WRITING APPREHENSION AND PERCEIVED VALUE OF WRITING BY GENDER FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WRITING ACHIEVEMENT, WRITING SELF-EFFICACY, WRITING APPREHENSION, AND PERCEIVED VALUE OF WRITING BY GENDER FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS IN A SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Abstract

Writing requires strong motivation to persevere through the unique problem solving and self-monitoring process required for a successful execution of the task. Results of writing achievement research often reveal a gender gap. Typically, girls outperform boys at local, state, national, and international writing assessments. This study examined the relationship between writing achievement ability and writing motivation by gender for third-grade students in a suburban school district. Writing motivation included writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension, and perceived value of writing. This study is important due to a dearth of information on academic motivation in the domain of writing because what does exist is usually focused on students from middle school to college age, not elementary age students. Academic motivation in literacy needs to be better understood in order to both maximize instructional practices suited toward this goal and to increase the development of self-efficacy among students.

This study employed a quantitative approach using the following measures: self-efficacy for writing, writing apprehension, writing valuation, the Connecticut Mastery Test's Direct Assessment of Writing, and general aptitude from the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). The first analysis involved an examination of any differences in writing achievement scores for boys and girls, after covarying for general aptitude. Then, two regression analyses

were conducted, one for boys and one for girls. Analyses were used to predict the variation in writing achievement scores by first entering ability into the equation and then entering scores for writing motivation (self-efficacy for writing, writing apprehension, and writing valuation). This study included 107 regular education third-grade students in a district, out of a population of approximately 300 students. For the purposes of this study, regular education students are defined as those not identified as special education students however this definition does include students who participate in the challenge program, which is for gifted and talented students. Results from this study provide insight for creating instructional practices critical to developing students' self-efficacy and perseverance in writing.

Results indicated general aptitude did not significantly influence writing achievement, but that there was a significant difference in writing achievement scores for boys and girls ($F(1, 104) = 11.950, p=.001$). Stepwise regression analysis indicated writing apprehension and self-efficacy influenced boys' writing achievement scores, and self-efficacy influenced girls' writing achievement scores. It appears different factors may be influencing success in writing achievement based on gender. Further research is needed to explore this issue.

THE EFFECTS OF LITERACY COACHING ON TEACHER STRATEGY USE AND
STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION

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THE EFFECT OF LITERACY COACHING ON TEACHER STRATEGY USE AND
STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION

Jennifer Falcone Mitchell, EdD

Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of literacy coaching on teacher strategy use and student reading comprehension. A convenience sample of 20 third-grade teachers and their students (n=330) participated in this study. Literacy coaches were identified as experts in the area of literacy, reading, and teaching methodologies. They provided job-embedded staff development to teachers with the intent of improving teacher effectiveness and student learning. The coaching consisted of three levels (in-class coaching, consultant coaching, and no coaching). Before treatment, the researcher provided an initial 3-hour presentation on summarization, the instructional focus of the study. Then, seven literacy coaches in seven schools administered the coaching treatment during an 8-week coaching cycle. The two treatment groups (in-class and consultant) received different numbers and/or combinations of follow-up coaching training. This study utilized a pre-post test, quasi-experimental design. Parametric and nonparametric statistics were used to analyze the data.

In order to measure whether the type of coaching (no coaching, consultant coaching, or in-class coaching) impacted teacher strategy use, the Concern Based Adoption Model's (CBAM) *Levels of Use* (LoU) structured interview was administered pre and post treatment to investigate gains achieved by the teachers in the implementation of summarization. The Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a significant difference in teachers' use of summarization among teachers in the different coaching conditions. The in-class coaching group attained significantly more growth

than the no coaching group. However, no significant differences were found between the consultant coaching group and the in-class coaching group or between the consultant coaching group and the no coaching group.

The second research question examined how literacy coaching (in-class coaching, consultant coaching, and no coaching) affected students' reading comprehension. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze this question. Reading comprehension was measured pre- and post-treatment using an instrument developed by the researcher, the *Assessment for Reading Comprehension* (ARC-A and ARC-B). Students' pre reading comprehension (ARC-A) and overall reading achievement (*Degrees of Reading Power*) served as covariates to produce adjusted means to equate post-treatment reading achievement scores based on initial reading ability. ANCOVA results indicated a significant difference among the three coaching groups. Results of the Bonferroni procedure indicated that the in-class coaching group's ARC-B scores were significantly higher than those of both the consultant coaching group and the no coaching group.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS
OF THE DEVELOP OF MATHEMATICAL SELF-EFFICACY
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING
AND PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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2008

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS
OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICAL SELF-EFFICACY
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING
AND PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

In this multi-case qualitative study, conducted in two elementary schools, the self-efficacy experiences of 67 5th grade mathematics students were observed in daily lessons. Of four classrooms observed, two classrooms each used traditional instructional materials and standards-based instructional materials. Classrooms were observed a total of 40 times for periods of 30 minutes each. A problem solving activity, student and teacher interviews, a Student Mathematics Self-Efficacy Survey, and analysis of student work samples and teacher instruction materials were used to confirm information gathered through observation.

Analysis of information sources resulted in the development of four major constructs: social learning, feedback, modeling, and strategy use. Both groups experienced each construct however, students in standards-based classrooms were exposed to higher levels of each. Students in standards-based classrooms experienced greater numbers of direct interactions during social learning activities than their peers in traditional instruction classrooms. Children in standards-based classrooms experienced more frequent direct feedback from their teacher and from their peers than students in traditional instruction classrooms. Student and teacher modeling were found to be a feature at both sites. However, teachers in standards-based classrooms were more likely to use feedback and modeling to create scaffolded discussions for teaching concepts.

Strategy use was present in both sites. Students in standards-based classrooms were more likely to use social learning as a strategy and more likely to use deeper level strategies than their peers in traditional instruction classrooms.

Recommendations for future research include the following: similar research with a more diverse socio-economic sample and research committed to detecting the background forces, which promoted the site differences in social learning readiness, and inquiry related to problem solving.

THE EFFECTS OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
IN FOURTH-GRADE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

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DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
IN FOURTH-GRADE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

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Abstract

Presently, research is questioning the value of homework, especially at the elementary level. One reason homework is considered important is that it allows for the opportunity to practice and reinforce skills. Currently, elementary school students in the United States are assigned homework in mathematics three or more times a week. Since homework assignments extend learning beyond the classroom environment, these assignments need to demonstrate an effective use of students' and teachers' time and energy.

Research has shown that mathematical problem-solving skills improve when students are metacognitively aware of the process they follow as they solve these problems, and this metacognitive awareness improves as students consistently practice and reinforce these skills. This study investigated the effects of metacognitive awareness on the development of problem-solving skills when metacognitive awareness practice was included as a part of mathematical problem-solving skills homework assignments of fourth-grade students.

This quasi-experimental study examined the effects of the independent variable of homework assignments with or without metacognitive awareness practice, on the dependent variables of mathematical problem-solving achievement, completion, accuracy, independence, and quality of responses. Although there was no significant effect of homework assignments, with or without metacognitive awareness practice, on these dependent variables, there was a

significant correlation between independence and mathematical problem-solving, completion, accuracy, and quality. Students who independently completed their homework had higher achievement scores than students who did not. Students who received assistance on their homework showed a temporary improvement in the completion, accuracy, and quality of their responses. In other words, help with homework improved the homework assignment but did not carry over to improve achievement scores. The results of this study pointed out the need to explore how the construct of homework can be effectively utilized as an important element in the development of independent learners.

THE EFFECT OF A STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM ON
SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES USE

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THE EFFECT OF A STUDY SKILLS PROGRAM ON
SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES USE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of a study skills program utilizing daily journal writing and weekly peer-group discussions to facilitate the acquisition of effective learning strategies and to enhance perceptions of self-efficacy. A quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest, control group study with random assignment utilizing a 2 X 2 factorial design was conducted. Instructional method with two levels (Study Skills Program Participation and Non-Participation) and students' grade point average with two levels (High GPA and Low GPA) were the independent variables. Posttest measures for perceptions of self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies use were the dependent variables with pretest measures used as covariates. The sample consisted of sixth grade students ($n = 83$) from a suburban, northeastern, public middle school. The Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies subtests of the *Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* (MSLQ), Middle School Level, were administered as pretests and posttests to measure potential benefits of study skills instruction; two-way ANCOVAs ($p = \leq .05$) were conducted to analyze the data collected for each of the two dependent variables. Data analysis revealed that for self-efficacy there was a significant main effect for group where the treatment group showed significant growth over the control group; as well as a significant interaction where the low GPA students in the treatment group showed significant growth over each of the other three cells. No significance effects were observed for the dependent variable of self-regulated learning strategies use.

THE EFFECTS OF VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES ON READING ACHIEVEMENT OF
STUDENTS WITH VARYING LEVELS OF MOTIVATION

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STUDENTS WITH VARYING LEVELS OF MOTIVATION

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) curriculum on reading achievement of students with various motivational levels. A 2X2 factorial design was used. The sample population consisted of 104 fourth grade students from an upper middle class school system in Connecticut. All students were administered a Motivation to Read Profile to measure their levels of motivation. Form S of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test served as a pretest to measure reading achievement prior to treatment. The pretest score was used as a covariate to control for initial reading levels. Both the experimental and the control groups received traditional reading instruction, but the experimental group's instruction was supplemented with nine weeks of the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum. A posttest using Form T of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered to both groups after the instruction to measure reading achievement.

A two-way Analysis of Covariance was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that students who were instructed with Visual Thinking Strategies did not perform better than students instructed without it. Although students with low motivation did not perform significantly better when VTS was used as the instructional method, there was a significant main effect of motivation on the comprehension subtest for highly motivated students. The educational implications of these results are discussed.