ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Small Group Instruction: Reading Instruction Utilizing Learning Style Preferences and the Reading Achievement of First Grade Students

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Two overlapping situations in the American educational environment have given fuel for this study: the NAEP reported that 34% of fourth grade students read below grade level and NCLB mandated that all children read on grade level by 2014. First grade students from a Midwestern elementary school participated in an after school reading club that met daily. This reading experience was different from others because these first grade students were grouped by learning style preferences. Meanwhile, many classroom teachers respond to the challenge of differentiating reading instruction based solely on students' reading ability levels creating a forever "reading below grade level" for struggling readers placed in low reading groups.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore reading instruction utilizing learning style preferences of first grade students. An overarching question for this study, "How might reading instruction (nurture) aligned with the child's learning style preference (nature) impact the child's reading achievement?" To investigate this question the researcher created a supplemental reading experience after school by grouping children by their learning style preference to differentiate instruction. Utilizing the *right* kind of quality instruction with the *right* level of intensity and duration with the *right* children at the *right* time created an effective preventive program (Torgesen, 1998). That is differentiated instruction! A pretest and posttest assessment

was conducted using running record reading assessments focusing on the total number of errors recorded.

This quantitative research design, randomized pretest-posttest control group analyzed the collected data using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis showed there was no significant difference in the posttests of the learning style treatment and the leveled reading control groups. Further analysis of the data revealed there was a significance comparing the pretest to the posttest within the treatment group and within the control group. This was important and implied grouping children by learning style preference for reading instruction may be an effective form of differentiation for small group reading instruction.