

## **ABSTRACT**

### **DISSERTATION PROJECT:**

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This quantitative study explored the effect of intervention lessons on online reading skills in fifth grade classrooms. First, it sought to examine the relationships among demographic variables including gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and self-reported Internet use and Internet ability. Second, this study was designed to investigate which variables best predict performance on a measure of online reading. Third, the effect of lessons designed to improve online reading comprehension was explored to determine the efficacy of targeted classroom-based instruction on learned skills.

Three theoretical frameworks underpinned this study: 1) a new literacies framework (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004), 2) transactional model (Rosenblatt, 1978), and 3) socioconitive model (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004a). The study was conducted in a Midwestern, suburban school over a 12-week time period with 443 fifth grade students. The repeated measures quasi-experimental research design allowed a quantitative investigation of online reading comprehension instruction to provide a reliable and valid assessment of the impact of online reading comprehension instruction

on changes in student performance on an established measure of online reading comprehension. Additional attention to common variables known to influence outcomes in reading and technology performance (e.g., demographic variables, prior reading achievement scores) strengthened the design by allowing a more refined analysis of the isolated impact from the instructional activities.

A regression analysis revealed prior achievement on norm-referenced measures of English/Language Arts as well as reported Internet use accounted for a significant amount of variance on online reading comprehension performance. Statistical analyses revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in online reading performance growth. Results from the subskill analysis show students in the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement over the control group on two of the three subskills (locating and synthesizing). No significant differences in group growth were observed for the Web evaluation task.

Findings from this study indicate teachers varying in experience and Internet familiarity can effectively teach online reading in a classroom setting, and that students who received this instruction developed these skills at a greater rate. This work can inform future efforts as to how to best teach the skills and strategies of online reading.

