

Research Summaries

“Rainbow Reading, Using Taped School Journal Stories”

Meryl-Lynn Pluck (1993)

In 1993 forty-three students from 19 different schools in Nelson, New Zealand were given practice in reading on a tape-facilitated reading program for half an hour daily. In this trial the students ranged in age from 7.8 years to 12.8 years (average: 10.1 years) yet their reading levels ranged from just 6.5 years to 10 years (average: 8 years). After an average time of 27.5 weeks (range: 9-32 weeks) the students made average gains in reading level of 2.23 years and up to 4 years. At the start of the project students were, on average, reading 1.7 years below their chronological ages but at the end of the project their reading was, on average, just .5 years behind. Twenty-three of the students' reading ages equaled or bettered their chronological ages and there were also substantial gains in reading comprehension, fluency and interest. Rainbow Reading using original books was developed as a result of the gains made by students during this trial.

“Tape Assisted Repeated Reading For a Group of Low Progress Readers in a Secondary School”

Julia Langford (2000)

Fifteen low-progress readers (many of whom had English as a second language) in Years 8 to 10 were identified as needing extra assistance in reading. The Rainbow Reading program, using taped, leveled books was chosen as the intervention. A teacher aide facilitated the program providing students with half an hour daily reading practice for eight weeks. Analyses of test results revealed that students made on average 1.2 years progress in reading level and comprehension along with an average gain of 9.7 months in word recognition skills. Five of the students made two years progress in reading.

The overwhelming response of the students to the program was positive. All fifteen selected students agreed to participate, they felt that they had made good progress and they enjoyed the sessions. The researcher concluded, “It is a very worthwhile intervention to recommend for secondary schools who need assistance in meeting the needs of their low-progress readers.”

“Is Tape Assisted Reading an Effective Support Program?”

Sue Harlow (2001)

Sue introduced Rainbow Reading to Year 8 students in her decile 4 Dunedin intermediate school. They followed the format recommended by Rainbow Reading publishers. Twenty four students made average gains of 1.9 years in reading level (range: 1-3 years) in just 15 weeks on the program, as tested using the PROBE reading test. The average number of Rainbow Reading levels (a level is equivalent to 12 months progress in reading) moved was 3.6. The lowest number of levels moved was three which was achieved by 3 students. The highest number of levels moved was five which was achieved by two students. Sue reported that “children on the program made significant gains in their reading ability” and that “the program itself has proven to be an effective one ... it provides a good model by a good reader, it focuses on what reading is all about (understanding the author's intent), it reinforces and extends the child's existing language patterns, it allows for the much needed extra practice without pressure from others, it shifts the focus away from getting all the words right and the child has control over their learning environment.”

Furthermore students enjoyed the program, rarely had to be reminded to go to practice, asked to take the books home to read to their parents and were generally very positive.