Innovative Teaching Practices to Accelerate Student Learning in the Areas of Literacy and Science

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Abstract
The researchers of this joint dissertation aspired to create and implement innovative instructional practices that would accelerate student learning. Both researchers believed in the importance of experimenting with structures and processes that lead to instructional impact. They were both passionate about developing an instructional model that would accelerate student learning by focusing on student transfer of skills. They sought to answer the question, Can learning be accelerated when teachers are supported and encouraged to create and implement instructional practices grounded in research? One researcher studied a practice that would potentially increase students’ ability to think critically and problem solve using 5th grade science content. The other researcher created an instructional intervention practice for underperforming students whose progress was flat and not on track to close reading gaps between their same-grade peers. Both used action research to study their respective instructional practices. One researcher used qualitative data to inform and monitor the instructional practice being studied, the other researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data. One study used critical thinking skills to aid students’ ability to learn science content. The other study used an innovative model of intervention to aid students’ ability to transfer learning from one instructional setting to another. Collectively, their studies revealed that when teachers are given the opportunity to create instructional practices that are grounded in research student achievement is accelerated. Their studies also revealed a possible link between school structures and student achievement as well as a strong need for collaboration between classroom teachers and support staff.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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