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Teachers Perceptions of Students' Readiness for Kindergarten

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and Dr. Amy Malkus

The increase of parents who decide not to enroll their children into a formal kindergarten once they become of age has triggered questions of what impacts readiness. The act of redshirting has doubled since 1980. Parents want to make sure that with high stakes testing, a more demanding curriculum, and an increase in rigorous standards that their children are ready to start kindergarten for the best rate of success.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of kindergarten teachers to identify factors that may hinder or promote kindergarten readiness in children enrolling in their first year of schooling. The factors surveyed were age, gender, prior preschool experience and socioeconomic status. The study also examined perceptions of preschool and kindergarten teachers as to whether or not readiness can be determined by a readiness test.

The design method chosen for this study was nonexperimental quantitative. Teachers responded to an online survey. The survey was distributed via email to preschool and kindergarten teachers who were employed within 2 rural east Tennessee counties. This study included the responses of 46 participants who chose to respond to the survey.

This study found to a significant extent that preschool and kindergarten teachers perceive that prior preschool experience, age and socioeconomic status does have an impact on kindergarten readiness. Teachers perceived Prior preschool experience as having the greatest impact followed by age and then socioeconomic status. It was also found that preschool and kindergarten teachers perceived that readiness can be measured by conducting a readiness test. Teachers did not perceive gender has having an impact on readiness as perceived by those participating in the study

Online Education: The Perceptions of Faculty Members and Administrators at a Four Year Public University, Four Year Private Colleges and a Two Year Community College

by

Sneha E. Abraham

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Lampley (chair), Dr. Good, Dr. Bethany Flora, and Dr. Graybeal



The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of faculty members and administrators of online learning environments compared to traditional face-to-face instruction by exploring the factors that impact online instruction. This study also explored various strategies that can lead to effective online learning environments in public and private higher education institutions and community colleges. This study focused on the faculty members and administrators working with online education at 6 traditional, regionally accredited, degree granting higher education institutions.

The number of participants consisted of 169 from the public university, 98 from the private institutions, and 33 from the community college. The survey instrument used a Likert-type scale, and had four dimensions (student engagement, student-student interactions, faculty engagement and academic dishonesty) to measure the perceptions of faculty members and administrators on online education. The survey instrument contained 17 statements and 9 demographic questions.

Statistical analyses of the data revealed: (1) No significant difference in the perceptions of faculty and administrators towards the four dimensions and the type of higher education institutions, (2) No significant difference in the perceptions on the four dimensions between administrators and faculty, (3) No significant relationship in participants' years of service and the perceptions on the four dimensions, (4) No significant difference in the perceptions on the student-student interactions dimension between faculty who teach primarily online and those who teach primarily face-to-face, and a significant difference in the perceptions on the other three dimensions, (5) A significant difference in the perceptions on the academic dishonesty dimension between the four groups showing the percentage of online classes taught and no significant difference in perceptions on the other three dimensions, (6) A significant relationship in the perceptions on the academic dishonesty dimension based on the number of years teaching online courses and no significant relationship in the perceptions on the other three dimensions, (7) No significant difference in participants' mean scores on the four dimensions based on the age and the gender of faculty members and administrators.



Relationship Between the TCAP and the Pearson Benchmark Assessment in Elementary Students' Reading and Math Performance in a Northeastern Tennessee School District

by

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Dissertation Committee: Dr. Foley (chair), Dr. Glover, Dr. Lampley, and Dr. Nyarambi

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there is a relationship between the TCAP test and Pearson Benchmark assessment in elementary students' reading/language arts and math performance in a northeastern Tennessee school district. This study related to 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students. The study focused on the following subgroups: gender, Title I school status, and socio-economic status as determined by free and-reduced price meal benefits. Test scores of students taking the Pearson Benchmark assessment in the fall, winter, and spring of the 2011-2012 academic school year and the TCAP in the spring of the 2012 academic school year were compared. Test scores were collected from 5 elementary schools. A total of 1,069 students were included in this study.

The analysis focused on ten research questions. Data collected for this study were entered into an Excel data file for analysis using IBM-SPSS. The research questions were examined using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, the *t* test for independent samples, and the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to account for differences in a set of two dependent variables.

Based on the analyses and findings of this study, there appears to be a relationship between the TCAP test and Pearson Benchmark assessment in elementary students' reading/language arts and math performance in a northeastern Tennessee school district. This relationship extends to students' gender, Title I school status, and socio-economic status as determined by free and-reduced price meal benefits.

Major recommendations from this study included the use of formative assessment benchmark tools to generate timely data aimed at the improvement of student learning and achievement, tracking the time spent on benchmark testing and carefully evaluating whether this is the optimal use of student academic time, analyzing the use of formative assessment and the relationship to teacher growth and development, and considering the development of the whole child as opposed to strictly focusing on quantitative academic measures to define student success.

Inclusion and Autism: General Education Teachers' Perceptions
by
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Dissertation Committee: Dr. Glover (chair), Dr. Foley, Dr. Good,
and Dr. Blankenship



The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate general education teachers' perceptions of being prepared to work with students identified with autism, grade level assignments, time concerns, and the presence of an ancillary in their classrooms. Participants in this study were located in one city school system in North East Tennessee. All data were collected through an online survey distributed to 230 teachers, of which 79 responded. Four research questions were analyzed, three with single sample *t* tests and one with a one-way ANOVA. Results indicated no statistical significance regarding grade level assignments and general education teachers' perceptions of inclusion of students identified with autism. General education teachers that participated in this research indicated significant negative perceptions of feeling prepared to manage social issues, communication issues, and aggressive behaviors associated with autism as well as having adequate time to work with students identified with autism. Significant positive perceptions were indicated for the presence of an ancillary in their classroom to assist with students identified with autism.



Teacher Attitudes and Practices that Support Effective Teaching
by

C. Travis Sutton

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and Dr. Blankenship

Generally in today's classrooms educators have the responsibility to develop teaching practices that are best suited for a particular group of learners. Since the early days of one-room schools, various teaching styles have been developed to accommodate a changing world. As the curriculum has broadened through the years, individual student needs have remained the focus as teachers have become more and more accountable for student learning.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate or identify how successful teachers manage their classrooms. It defines key student behavior issues that most teachers experience daily. The study further investigates the hypothesis that lesson planning and productive teaching with overall good student behavior is not a product of good luck or chance; it results from efforts made by caring teachers who aid learning for their student. This inquiry attempts to determine what the typical teacher does in efforts to reach the goal of effectively educating students and managing various issues that arise within the classroom setting simultaneously.

The study was conducted within middle school grade levels. All teachers were interviewed and asked open-ended questions during the 2013-14 school year. Also, the teachers were observed in their actual classrooms. It examined their practices that enable them to teach. The teacher responses offered valuable information about perceptions pertaining to excellent teaching, classroom management, and the relevance of teaching factors that enhance student learning.

Exerting extra effort toward minimizing classroom disruptions, while consistently providing a learning environment, requires an assertive approach in planning before the students enter the classroom. This research can give all educators insight to such of an educational environment that has proven to be productive in today's complex world. These teaching techniques would better assure students upon their arrival to the classroom each day, a routinely excited, enthused, and caring educator.

Bob Johnson: Coach, Leader, Role Model, Community Servant
By

Daniel Cantone, Winner of the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the
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Dissertation Committee: Dr. Glascock(chair), Dr. Good, Dr. Lhotsky
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There are many things known about Coach Bob Johnson, including his military background and dynamic coaching career, but there are still many more facts unknown by most. By most accounts, he was a dynamic leader who was able to motivate, influence, and lead over the course of his 27 year career coaching and teaching at Emory and Henry College. The success of his career is visible through the success of his teams, players, the number of wins, and multiple accomplishments, awards, and recognitions he received.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about Coach Johnson's life by examining his life as a coach, teacher, administrator, and person to help demonstrate his leadership and examine events that led to his impact and influence at Emory and Henry College. This study was based around five research questions which included:

1. What was his leadership style?
2. What type of person was he?
3. What type of coach was he?
4. How did Coach Johnson influence you (what did he teach you about life?)
5. What were your perceptions of his life and work?

These questions helped demonstrate the leadership and influence of Coach Johnson, fitting Leithwood and Riehl (2003) three core leadership practices for successful leadership in educational settings, which include: setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization and also the Leadership Challenge Model (Kouzes and Posner, 1987) which consists of: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.

As there is no previous research on Coach Johnson, this study is significant and provides insight and knowledge on leadership and the influence and impact one can have by conducting semi-structured interviews with those that knew Coach Johnson well.
