ZIMMERMAN, BELINDA S., Ph.D., December 2003   TEACHING, LEADERSHIP, AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

ANALYSIS OF TEACHER-CHILD TALK AND LITERACY ACQUISITION OF TWO FIRST GRADE READERS (209 pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Nancy Padak
                              Timothy Rasinski

This study examined the nature of the literacy conversations between one teacher and two children during the one-to-one phase of an intervention program designed to prevent reading failure among struggling first grade readers. The purpose of the study was to describe how the literacy conversations were used to scaffold children's literacy development. Additionally, the study investigated the children's perceptions of themselves as literate individuals and how these perceptions changed as the children became more self-regulated in their reading.

A qualitative case study approach was used to characterize the kinds and patterns of talk that occurred between the teacher and each child during the book introduction and the attempted first reading of a new book. Data collection included observations, interviews, field notes, videotapes, and audiotapes. Artifacts included pre- and post-assessments, running records, and children's artwork.

Data analysis followed the transcription of the observations and interviews and revealed that five categories of talk were used by the teacher in assisting the child's performance: modeling, feeding back, instructing, questioning, and cognitive structuring. Within each category of assisted performance, subcategories of assistance emerged and were distinguished by the kind and level of support they provided.

Further analysis of the literacy conversations suggested that the means of scaffolded assistance provided by the teacher need to operate in diverse ways in order to successfully support and advance children's learning. In addition, children's increased metacognitive awareness and feelings of self-efficacy appeared to be influential factors in attaining literate awareness and, ultimately, reading success.