

COMBINING THE POWER OF POETRY, REPEATED READINGS, AND
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS FOR LITERACY INTERVENTION: THE POETRY
ACADEMY (165 pp.)

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The purpose of the this study was to examine the effective use of community volunteers in four third grade classrooms at one rural elementary school in Northeast Ohio in a program called the Poetry Academy. A sequential-explanatory mixed methods research paradigm framed this study. The research questions were: (1) Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on student's fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring (a) words correct per minute (WCPM); (b) word recognition; and (c) score on a retelling? (2) Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students' attitude towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990)? (3) What observations or changes have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed in the students towards reading, if any, during the implementation of the program? and (4) What have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed as advantages and disadvantages of the program?

Thirty-six students were purposefully sampled from a population of 86 third graders to participate in the Poetry Academy based on their score on a curriculum-based assessment measuring words correct per minute, word recognition, and a score on a

retelling. During the eleven weeks of the program, six volunteers read poetry with the sampled students in a weekly cycle. Components of repeated reading (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993; Khun & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Therrien, 2004), listening-while-reading (Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski, 1990), assisted reading (Hoskisson & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2004), and modeling (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002) were used during their ten minute, weekly sessions.

Findings reveal that significant gain was made in the treatment population when compared to the control group in the areas of words correct per minute, word recognition, and attitude toward academic reading, while a marginally significant gain was made in the area of comprehension. Change in the treatment group was observed by the students, themselves, volunteers, teachers, and parents and included an increase in confidence when reading and improved attitude toward school.

The most notable contribution of this study is the combination of tutoring methods used during the ten minute, weekly sessions between volunteer and Poetry Academy student. Using the methods described above, the volunteers were able to affect change in students identified as disfluent when compared to national norms (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Also significant is the use of poetry. The Poetry Academy used poetry with positive results with students. Teachers, students, volunteers, and parents mentioned the short nature of poetry, combined with its usually humorous text, in conjunction with the improvements of the apprentices in their reading skills and attitudes towards reading. The use of poetry in the classroom could be used to help build confidence in students, as

well as improve their reading skills and attitudes (Certo, 2004; Homan et al., 1993; Moyer, 1982; Perfect, 2005; Rasinski, 2000; Rasinski et al., 1994).