

Project Abstract

Enhancing the Quality of Expository Text Instruction and Comprehension through Content and Case-Situated Professional Development: Goal 2 IES Grant – Teacher Quality Research

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The Teacher Quality project application addresses responds to two related education problems: *(a) students in the United States perform increasingly poorly as they move from primary to higher grade levels where reading to learn from content-area textbooks is central to the curriculum, and (b) little direct attention has been devoted to helping teachers develop strategies to promote reading comprehension of content-area text in actual classroom situations.*

Texas A&M University and the University of Texas working in partnership are conducting a 3-year program of research to refine, extend, and evaluate the efficacy of content- and case-situated professional development designed to optimize collaborative learning situations in which the best sources of evidence and expertise are linked with the experiences and current needs of teachers. From this program of development research, we expect the following contributions: (a) a professional development model that uses case-situated modules to enhance teachers' knowledge and instruction of informational text, (b) an on-line mentoring and virtual coaching system illustrating evidence-based practices in real classrooms with project teachers, and (c) emerging evidence of the efficacy of the model to improve students' reading comprehension of social studies text

We will conduct the 3-year program of development and experimental research in two school districts in central and southeast Texas. Participating schools have high concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged children from three predominant ethnicities: African American, Hispanic, and White Nonhispanic. Across the 3 years of research, 10-12 schools, 90 content-area teachers, and 720 fourth-grade students will participate. Eight students from each class (4 students from the lowest third and 2 students each from the middle and upper third of the ranked distribution) will be selected to participate.

In Year 01, we developed and piloted cases based on identified needs of content-area teacher/researchers. In Years 02 and 03, 40 fourth-grade teachers and their respective students will be randomly assigned to either case-based professional development or typical practice. We will use a series of randomized experiments, with professional development (content and case-situated and typical practice) as the independent variable and teacher as the unit of assignment and analysis to assess the effects of case-situated professional development on teachers' application of evidence-based practices in classrooms, fourth-graders' reading comprehension and content knowledge, factors that mediate implementation, and feasibility of use. We will employ latent growth modeling methods, and specifically hierarchal linear modeling and structural equation modeling to test main effects and interactions and identify factors that mediate and moderate effects.