Motivation Influences on Academic Success

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine which form of motivation is most successful in increasing academic success in Kindergarten aged students. The measurement tool for this study was the tracking of student identification of the Kindergarten word list provided by the researcher's school system. This study involved weekly testing of students to track increased word knowledge. Students in the study were in an intrinsically motivated group or an extrinsically motivated group to track which style of motivation was most effective to student learning. All students in this study achieved an increase in Kindergarten word knowledge. Research in this area of motivation should continue as there was very little difference in which style of motivation is more effective to students at this age level.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Motivating Kindergarten students in this day in age can pose a challenge to many teachers, particularly teachers in Title I schools which have a significant population of students of lower socioeconomic status. Students at this young age have many influences that cause for distractions throughout the school day. Some of these challenges and distractions may be some of the students' basic needs. These concerns include a lack of sleep, malnourishment, transient home life, lack of a loving home and more. Some students who have access to different forms of technologies may have become reliant on them to keep their attention. This too poses as a challenge for teachers when trying to motivate students without it. Students at the primary level often need their basic needs met before they can learn. It is the goal of the teacher to motivate and engage students to the best of their ability even if the students' basic needs have not been met. This leads teachers to become creative in ways to motivate students in and out of the classroom to help them make the academic progress that they need to make to become successful. Engagement and a motivation to learn, is important in making progress as well as meeting the necessary scores on assessments. To achieve engagement and motivation of students, a teacher must access student motivation extrinsically or intrinsically. Ideas behind motivation are founded on assumptions about human nature and innate strengths (Cetin, 2015). It is the goal of this study to determine how to enhance academic learning through increased motivation.

The research in this study will investigate which form of motivation is most successful in Kindergarten aged students. In these primary years, students are most impressionable and have

the ability to make large academic gains. Students at this level are learning how to interact respectfully amongst a class full of students, are gaining number sense, and are learning how to read. To learn how to read, students must have the desire, motivation and basic knowledge of sight words and decoding skills.

This study will address what types of motivation are most effective to help students continue to make progress on their basic knowledge of Kindergarten leveled sight words. This researcher conducting this experiment is a Kindergarten teacher in a Title 1 school. The students in the school are often distracted by a lack of basic needs. Students also lack motivation to learn unless it is guided by a video or some form of technology. It is the goal of the researcher to understand Kindergarten students and what will motivate them more basic needs aside. The researcher will evaluate the effectiveness of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to help identify optimal motivating techniques that other teachers may use in their classrooms.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify whether strategies to increase intrinsic or extrinsic motivation are more effective in motivating Kindergarten students to learn sight words

Statement of Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in mean sight word knowledge between Kindergarten students who receive an intervention to increase intrinsic motivation and those who receive a strategy to increase extrinsic motivation.

Operational Definitions

Sight word: This is a school system provided list of 63 words that are expected to be learned over the course of the Kindergarten year. Some words are decodable and some words are irregular. Decodable words are ones that students can sound out and are words that often follow

the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern. The 63 words are considered commonly used words in Kindergarten level literature.

Sight word knowledge: The number of words correctly identified from the sight word list. Sight word knowledge was checked weekly through individual meetings with the teacher.

Intrinsic motivation**:** When a student is engaged in a task for its own sake rather than to earn a reward or to avoid a punishment (Fulk, 1994).

Strategy to increase intrinsic motivation: When a student identified a sight word correctly for the first time, the teacher provided praise designed to increase intrinsic motivation, such as comments promoting the students' sense of self efficacy and comments commenting on the value of learning the sight words.

Extrinsic motivation: When a task only appeals to a student through the attainment of points, tokens, parties or other tangible reinforcers (Fulk, 1994).

Strategy to increase extrinsic motivation: When a student identified a sight word correctly for the first time, the teacher provided a sticker.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Overview

This literature review will review and discuss the ideals and support behind what intrinsic and/or extrinsic influences motivate an elementary aged student for academic success and engagement. Academic success and student engagement are commons goal for many teachers, but it has become more difficult to achieve these aspects of education in the 21st century. Students have become distracted with social media avenues, video games, movies and television, and more. It has become more common for student priorities to not be on their education. It is up

to the classroom teacher to create ways to motivate students while they are at school to help them be successful. Students can be motivated in the classroom when a teacher understands the student as a whole and what will push them to maintain their engagement as well as reach for academic success.

For the first section of this literature review, the benefits of different types of motivators in education and their effectiveness will be defined. A focus on positive motivators as well as negative motivators will be discussed and which is more beneficial to the student and the teacher. The second section of this literature review will define what academic success is and how it is determined for an elementary aged child. The third section will discuss possible intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivators that promote student achievement and success. Each section will help find an answer to the question: What intrinsic and/or extrinsic influences motivate an elementary aged student for academic success and engagement?

Motivation

All humans and creatures are motivated by something. Many of these motivators are a living thing's basic needs. These basic needs being food, water and shelter. But for a child, their motivators are much more than that. Students are motivated by many different things and each child may be motivated by something different than the next. Motivators for a student can be both positive and negative, intrinsic and/ or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is when a student is engaged in a task for its own sake rather than to earn a reward or to avoid a punishment (Fulk, 1994). This would mean that a student is willingly completing a task asked by their teacher and is content to do so. Fulk (1994) states that Extrinsic motivation in contrast is when a task only appeals to a student through the attainment of points, tokens, parties or other tangible reinforcers. In the classroom, this would mean that a student is only willing to complete a task asked by the

teacher if in the end they are to receive something upon completion of the task. Fulk (1994) explains that students are typically less engaged due to the task itself becoming secondary. For a teacher, it is ideal for their students to have internal or intrinsic motivation to have more retainment success with the academic task at hand. According to Fulk (1994), if and when a student exhibits minimal motivation, it becomes appropriate for a teacher to use external reinforcers to help foster the development of intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation is commonly broken down into four separate categories. These four categories being external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation (Guay, 2010). Within each of these categories are different aspects that will influence the type of extrinsic motivation a student requires.

External regulation occurs when a student relates the end result of the activity with a desire to obtain a reward or punishment. Introjected regulation can be internalized within a student and they will perform based on a feeling of guilt or feeling of worthiness. Identified regulation is the most "self-determined" form of extrinsic motivation that values a behavioral goal or regulation. Students determine a value to the activity and decide what is acceptable. Integrated regulation occurs when students have processed an activity and have "brought it into congruence with the personally endorsed values, goals, and needs that are part of the self (Guay, 2010). For this study, external regulation will be one of the main focuses of extrinsic motivation due to the age and maturity of students in focus.

Positive student behavior influences whether or not a student can be motivated regardless of the type of motivation. The use of positive behavior interventions is known to result in the improvement of both school behavior as well as academic success and engagement for students (Yeung, 2015). There is plenty of research that supports the use of positive behavior

interventions such as the evidence-based multilevel approach titled, *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (PBIS). Through the use of PBIS, Yeung (2015) mentions that unproductive behavior is discouraged and all staff are able to be consistent with the implementation. With consistent implementation, student behavior is positively supported. Students are more likely to participate willingly. Though PBIS has extrinsic rewards as part of its supports, students are only supported through the tokens and tickets given. It is the goal that students will not require tokens and tickets to have positive behavior and engagement in the classroom.

In addition to the use of PBIS to increase student engagement and academic success, there are other various institutions that can be used to increase participation, motivation and success. These institutions being prizes, raffles, and even penalties in some situations. These external motivators have not always proven successful, but are other examples to increase student engagement and success (Huffman, (2011). The use of traditional games can also intrinsically motivate students to be engaged throughout the learning process. The promotion of collaboration among students increases the involvement in learning (Trajkovik, 2018). Creating and using games that are intentional and purposeful will intrinsically motivate many students. Being able to work together with one or more students instead of independently has been found to be more engaging for students. Trajkovik shares that students are able to share their own ideas and respond to others' all while sharpening their thinking skills and deepening their understanding.

Teacher classroom management is also considered a motivator for students. PBIS helps with classroom management, but in the end a teacher is the determining factor to the success of their classroom. Teacher preparation for managing behaviors is important to achieve academic

success and engagement. If a teacher lacks knowledge or skill, there will be ineffective behavior management and motivation amongst the student population (O'Neil, 2016). For students to be properly motivated, they must have respect for their teacher and trust them.

Motivation for Success

"The concept of motivation takes maintaining and guiding behaviors and innate strengths" (Cetin, 2015). Motivation towards academic success also takes maintaining and guiding behaviors and directing them to be purposeful for education. Motivation can be separated into three different categories. Two of the three categories are of the main focus for this particular study. Cetin (2015) states that intrinsically motivated students feel competent and self-determining, while extrinsically motivated students have the feelings of competency and self-determination through different sources. Regardless of the type or style of motivation that suits a student best, it is human nature for a student to thrive off of some sort of motivation. To determine a student's best type of motivation, a teacher must have the understanding that all students have "unique personalities and motivational factors that affect the way they respond to school and acquire basic educational skills" (Collision, 2000). Therefore, to motivate a student towards academic success, a teacher must recognize the learning differences amongst their students. From there they can create lessons and engaging activities that are naturally and intrinsically motivating for their students. This may require more work on the teacher's end due to the extra time getting to know their students, but in the end improving academic success of students is the goal.

Understanding that teacher support leads to student engagement and achievement is how students will become successful. Research done by Klem has linked engagement in school to higher levels of performance. To qualify a student as being academically successful, they must

meet the necessary growth and achievement that is either age appropriate in comparison to their peers or that is appropriate for their abilities. Students thrive off of high standards, meaningful curriculum, and personalized learning environments (Klem, 2004). Each of these factors plays an important role in the motivation for student success and engagement. It is up to the teacher to determine which motivator best fits their students and when, as student engagement is a predictor of achievement.

Motivators to Promote Successful Students

Mirhosseini states, "Students with high academic motivation, in comparison to other students, have better academic scores and higher educational success. It is the goal for all educators for their students to achieve educational success. To do so educators must promote successful students through research-based rewards and motivational activities. For a student to be motivated it is important for them to have self-efficacy. These students with self-efficacy have higher levels of problem-solving skills and persistent determination (Mirhosseini, 2018). These students would most likely be intrinsically motivated through engaging activities and lessons. For students to maintain their high levels of self-efficacy, continued success and progress can sometimes be enough. For those students who are extrinsically motivated, there are several different resources that may be useful for those students. Stickers, tokens, edibles, increase or decrease on behavior chart are all examples of external regulation motivators. Students can naturally boost their self-efficacy through compliments and encouragement through teacher feedback. This will motivation students intrinsically.

The promotion of collaboration and social activities will also motivate students to be more engaged and therefore have more chance of having academic success. Students will deepen their academic understanding and sharpen their thinking skills. Integrating traditional styled

games helps students through learning by doing. Hands-on authentic exercise and tasks, create experiential learning environment that increases the level of students' achievements (Trajkovik, 2018). Students will naturally by intrinsically motivated through hands on learning and play. The learning environment will be naturally encouraging, engaging, enriching and positive for all students who have high levels of self-efficacy. Student-centered activities and games will result in higher learning and academic performance and success. Collaboration will guide students to self-regulate and encourage themselves to do good for the sake of the group.

Summary

Student motivation is the key to student engagement and success. To achieve this, a teacher needs to maintain positive relationships through positive classroom engagement. Students will succeed through intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivational influences. Data will be gathered through an experimental study to determine which and if any intrinsic and extrinsic motivators produce the most academic success and engagement. Interactive engagement strategies modeled after Angela H. Martin will be used to gather such data.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine which form of motivation, whether it be intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, was most successful with Kindergarten students in promoting their learning of the Kindergarten word list. The rate in which students learn their sight words vary. The researcher wanted to study Kindergarten students and their motivation to see if words could be learned at an efficient rate for reading leveled texts.

Design

The researcher in this study used an experimental pretest-posttest control group design. The pretest was used to determine whether there were significant pre-existing differences in word knowledge between the two groups. The hypothesis evaluated whether students differed in sight word recognition skills at the end of the study; the hypothesis did not address gain scores. The study used convenience sampling and formed two randomly assigned groups of Kindergarten students from her classroom. In addition to convenience, an additional rationale for using these students, were that they were homogeneous in reading at grade level and had experienced comparable levels of exposure to the sight words in the study prior to the intervention.

The independent variable was the type of motivation—extrinsic in the form of stickers and intrinsic in the form of teacher praise. The dependent variable was the number of sight words correctly identified from the Kindergarten list at the end of the study.

Participants

The students were Kindergarten students who were reading at about grade level. The researcher conducted this study in one Title-1 elementary school, in a low-income neighborhood, in the mid-Atlantic region that consists of students with diverse ethnic backgrounds. The students who participated in this study were members of the researcher's reading class which is homogeneously grouped to have students reading at approximately grade level. There are 20 students in the class, and 19 participated in the study. Of the 19 students participating in the study, 5 were female and 14 were male. There were 12 Caucasian students, 5 African American students, and 2 Latino students. 1 student was bilingual. Five of the 19 students received special education services for speech and language services or for additional educational support. One

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student was not included as part of the study data due to the child's advanced knowledge of the Kindergarten word list.

Students were randomly assigned to conditions through a lottery type system.

Instrument

The instrument was a list of 63 words designated by the school system that are expected to be learned by the end of the school year. Students in this school system are expected to identify at least 13 sight words by mid-year (the time of the pre-test) to be considered developing.   Some words are decodable and some words are irregular. Decodable words are ones that students can sound out and are words that often follow the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern.

Pre-test data for this study was collected prior to the start of the study. All students were individually shown the same list of 63 sight words and were told to read and point to the words they recognized. The researcher kept track of the words the student could read. Throughout the study, the same list was administered individually by the researcher. Students were asked to identify the words they recognized. There was no time limit for students to identify words. If students misread the word and were able to independently make a correction, the word counted toward their words identified. The researcher kept a list of identified words on each administration of the sight word list. The pre-test score and the post-test score was based on the number of words read correctly at the time of administration.

Procedure

Pre-test data was collected approximately two weeks prior to the start of this study. The students did not receive any reinforcement during the pre-test. The pre-test data was used for formal student data reports that documented student progress. The researcher recorded which

words students could identify of the 63 total sight words. At the start of the intervention, all of the Kindergarten students had been introduced to 38 of the 63 sight words. Students were randomly assigned to intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation groups. The children were asked to identify the words from the 63-word list as a pre-test. The pre-test scores were compared by an independent samples t-test. The mean score of the intrinsic motivation group (Mean = 17.80, SD = 7.16) was not significantly different from the mean score of the extrinsic motivation group (Mean = 21.67, SD = 9.11) [t(17) = 1.03, p = .32]. Consequently, there was no need to control for pre-existing group differences. Consistent with the procedures taught throughout the school year, the researcher continued to introduce 2-3 new sight words that had not previously been introduced to the students. She also continued to review previously taught sight words. Sight words were introduced by showing the word in isolation then used in a sentence to help students understand how the word is used. Students had the opportunity to complete homework and classwork based around the 2-3 new sight words as well as the previously taught words. Based on the researcher's experience, she considered it likely that not all students completed homework consistently and/or received sufficient assistance. The researcher took this into consideration and incorporated sight word games during class time as well as found leveled texts to read with students that contained the taught sight words for extra repetition.

During the 4-week intervention, students were tested on the 63-word list on the last day of each week. Previous to this study, sight words were tested approximately every 2.5 months for report card data. During these assessment times, students were not given any motivational reinforcement for their sight word recognition. During the study, all students were under the same understanding that trying to learn the words to which they had been introduced was

important for becoming an independent reader. For the words that had not been introduced to students, but presented during testing, students were just told to try their best.

Students in the extrinsic motivation group received a sticker for each newly identified word. The researcher used her background as a teacher when choosing this particular extrinsic reward because she knew that students at this level can often be easily motivated by a colorful sticker. The students in the intrinsic motivation group received praise by the researcher that was worded in a manner to increase intrinsic motivation, such as comments promoting the students' sense of self efficacy and comments commenting on the value of learning the sight words. These included comments on their effort; how they were able to show what they had learned; how they were making progress; how reading would become easier and more enjoyable by knowing the word; and how they should feel proud of their accomplishment.

The post-test word list was administered at the end of the 4 weeks of the intervention. Since the students had been receiving praise for each new word identified during the previous 3 weeks, they were also given praise on any new words identified during the post-test so that students were not disappointed. Students who had been receiving a sticker for each new word identified during the previous 3 weeks, also received their stickers for new words to be consistent with motivational tactics. The post-test scores were compared by an independent samples t-test.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to identify whether strategies to increase intrinsic or extrinsic motivation are more effective in motivating Kindergarten students to learn sight words. Students

in the intrinsic group received verbal praise and encouragement for each new sight word learned. Students in the extrinsic motivated group received a new sticker for each new sight word learned.

An independent samples t-test was conducted with the independent variable being the type of reinforcement used during the study, and the dependent variable being the number of sight words correctly identified from the Kindergarten word list. The mean posttest sight word knowledge score for the intrinsic group (Mean = 34.70, SD = 10.07) was not significantly different from that of the extrinsic group (Mean = 38.78, SD = 14.49) [t (17) = .72, p =.48]. Please see Table 1. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in mean sight word knowledge between Kindergarten students who receive an intervention to increase intrinsic motivation and those who receive a strategy to increase extrinsic motivation was retained.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and t-statistic for Sight Word Knowledge Scores for Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Groups

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-statistic
Intrinsic	10	34.70	10.07	.72 (NS)
Extrinsic	9	38.78	14.49	

NS = non-significant at p ≤ .05

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The null hypothesis was that there will be no statistically significant difference in mean sight word knowledge between Kindergarten students who received an intervention to increase intrinsic motivation and those who received a strategy to increase extrinsic motivation. At the completion of the study, all students made growth on their sight word knowledge. However,

there was no significant difference in the post test data between the two groups after the intervention, so the null hypothesis was retained.

Implications of Results

The results of this study showed that all students made progress on their Kindergarten word list recognition no matter what type of motivation was used. Both groups of students who were motivated intrinsically and extrinsically made progress on their sight word recognition. Although there was no control group of students not receiving motivational aids, these results in conjunction with observations would suggest that students are responsive to any type of added motivation.

Observations made by the researcher during this study would suggest that there are benefits to motivating students to reinforce academic progress. During the assessment window, all students were tested on their words, and the majority of students were able to increase their word knowledge each week. Researcher observations suggested that while there was no significant difference in the new word acquisition under the two conditions, the extrinsic motivation was more appealing to the students. Students in the extrinsic group were eager to earn a sticker for each new word learned each week. Some students reminded the researcher of this deal made between student and researcher. The researcher used her experience as a teacher to assign stickers as the motivator for these Kindergarten aged students. The researcher was able to see that students who received stickers were happier than those students who did not receive a sticker.

The researcher noticed that the students in the intrinsic group were not as excited when testing time came each week. Students in the intrinsic group were told to be proud of themselves which internally helped students become happier, but their outward appearance was not as happy

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as those students in the extrinsic group. Nevertheless, the researcher noted that students were encouraged by their increasing number of identified words as if they were in a competition with themselves.

Some practical implications were made based on the researcher's observations as well. The researcher completed weekly word checks with each student pulling them to the side individually each week. This caused the researcher to find time throughout the day that did not cause students to miss any instructional time. Students were tested during their rest time or during their center time. The researcher found this to be less practical as the weeks went on. Tested students were easily distracted by other students in the classroom, and what was intended to be a quick word check commonly turned into a dragged-out process. Upon finishing this study, the researcher felt that assessing students only on words not previously identified would help the process go a little quicker, rather than testing all 63 words each time. The researcher also felt that pulling the students individually out of the classroom would have helped students share their word knowledge quicker, but that would not have been practical as the researcher would have then had to have found a qualified adult to be in the classroom as the researcher was out. This would have then caused some expense to the school and the researcher, which would not have been practical.

Overall, the researcher felt that the two types of motivational strategies helped all students involved. In the end, all students were excited to share their knowledge with the researcher no matter what time of day they were tested. The researcher felt that students enjoyed the one on one time each week with the researcher even with other students in the classroom at the same time. The one on one time was something that these students did not receive on a

weekly basis prior to this study, and the researcher felt that these students thrived off of the extra attention.

Theoretical Consequences

Researchers and theorists have been studying motivation amongst students for many years. As the students and years change, the basic theories of motivation remain the same. Motivation that aims for academic success requires teachers to guide student behaviors to be purposeful for bettering their education. For this study, the researcher used her educational background as a teacher to decide how to help students become motivated intrinsically and extrinsically. The researcher has had several years of experience working with Kindergarten aged students that helped her to understand what motivates this age of student. In combination with student knowledge, the researcher understood that all students have unique personalities that affect the way they respond and therefore catered to those personalities (Collision, 2000). Using these understandings, the researcher was able to link her research to her own study. Research by others has linked a positive association between academic achievement with increased motivation. The researcher also found that to be true in her own research. Students are able to achieve academic success through additional motivation in school.

Threats to Validity

The study contained multiple threats to validity. One of the largest threats to validity during this study was the frequent disruptions to instruction due to snow days and delays. Due to the abundance of snow during this study, the researcher was unable to assess students on their word recognition after every five-day school week. The researcher was also unable to provide students with the additional sight word instruction as intended at the start of the study. The lack

of consistent instructional time for all students made an impact on their length of time between each week's testing. These concerns are threats to the internal validity of this study.

An additional threat to the validity of this study was the amount of distraction in the researchers' classroom when assessing students. The researcher assessed the students in each group during the school day all while other students remained in the classroom. Other students could interrupt or distract any student in the study at any time. Some students in this study were easily distracted by their surroundings making the assessment long. This is a threat to internal validity.

Additional internal validity threats to this study relate to the independent variable. During this study, students received one on one attention between themselves and the researcher. This type of attention between teacher and student is not a common occurrence in the day to day Kindergarten schedule. Many students at this age level, thrive on the attention of their teacher. This sort of attention threatens the internal validity because students could have been solely motivated by the individual attention rather than the extrinsic or intrinsic motivation used in the study.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher perceives that students in this age group appear to be motivated to make academic gains by stickers and by statements promoting a sense of self-esteem. However, the results can be generalized only to students in the primary grades. The students in intermediate grades and above may not have the same academic achievement after being given a sticker like the students received in this study. This is a threat to external validity. For older children, it may be necessary to modify the type of extrinsic motivation and affirming phrases.

Connections to Previous Studies

The researcher found research that supported guiding student behaviors and student strengths to improve motivation in school. A similar study done by Cetin (2015) focused on different styles of motivation to increase student performance. Cetin understood that a person engages in intrinsically motivated behaviors in order to feel competent and self-determined, but also understood that extrinsic motivation has many facets. Cetin's study similarly focused on the ideas of learning and academic motivation going hand in hand with one another. The students in both studies were of primary school aged children, both male and female. Cetin's study found a relation between extrinsic motivation and student achievement. Cetin's study researched both styles of motivation and went into great detail with both styles. Through Cetin's research, he found extrinsic motivation to have more of an influence on students than the intrinsic motivation that was studied. Cetin studied the overall academic growth of students through their Grade Point Average (GPA) and compared these GPAs. Differences between the studies would be the number of students and the specific strategies used to extrinsically and intrinsically motivate students as well as assess their motivation. Although students in both the Cetin study and the current study made academic gains under both types of motivation, the current study differed from Cetin in not finding extrinsic motivation to be more powerful. It is possible that differing motivational methods contributed to the varying results.

Implications for Future Research

The researcher could easily continue future research on motivation and student success. If the research would be able to continue, the researcher could study a wider range of students at the primary level. Students could be in Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade, as all of these grade levels have a grade level word list to master. This would give the researcher a greater

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number of students of a wider age range to examine which motivational style is more successful for a young student.

For future research, it would be beneficial to have the duration of the study over a longer period of time. The researcher was limited on the length of time for this study, but could have benefited from a longer period of time. A longer duration would help to counter-balance snow days and other unexpected weather delays. It would also examine whether the effectiveness of either type of motivation declines over time.

Future studies should examine other subject areas to see if students are more motivated and engaged in their learning in subjects other than reading. The research could continue with the same set of students but with their math facts or unit test scores. Since other researchers like Guay (2010) have carried on research across subjects, this research could potentially do the same.

Using different types of extrinsic or intrinsic motivation could also be something to consider for future research. For example, a study could examine whether students are motivated more by edible treats as compared to stickers or tokens. If different motivational tools were used, it could potentially yield differing results in the comparison of the effectiveness of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Consequently, an ideal study would have multiple types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators so that one particularly powerful motivator would not skew results.

Conclusion

Kindergarten aged students participated in this study to determine if intrinsic or extrinsic motivation has more of an impact on academic success. Students were assessed on their Kindergarten word list knowledge on a weekly basis. Students in the extrinsic group were given a sticker for each new word learned each week, where students in the intrinsic group were not.

Students in the intrinsic group were told that they should be proud of themselves as their word knowledge would help them become an independent reader. The results of this study found no significant difference between the two motivational styles, but all students in this study did make progress on their learning. Observational data indicated that both types of motivators were effective. Future research on this topic could examine the most effective motivational strategies for early learners. This could be done to help educators understand what motivates their students and therefore could make the necessary changes in their classroom to meet these needs of student motivation. It is important for educators to help early learners, especially in the areas of reading as their foundational skills are key to being independent and successful readers later on.

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