

Multisensory Methods and Alphabetic Knowledge in a Kindergarten Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to address the research question, “Does multisensory method instruction improve alphabetic knowledge?” The study was conducted in a kindergarten general education classroom with nineteen students. The intervention consisted of teaching two different sensory methods. The first group was taught using the graphic trace sensory method and learned to trace 13 target letters using their fingers on a printed letter card. The second group was taught using the kinesthetic trace sensory method and learned to trace the target letters using their fingers on the surface of the table. Both groups vocalized each letter’s sound while tracing in order to stimulate multiple sensory information processing. A third group received regular alphabetic instruction from the classroom teacher and served as the control. Alphabetic knowledge was measured through scores obtained from administration of the Head Start Alphabetic Knowledge Assessment before and after the four-week intervention. Each student’s change in score from pre to post-test was recorded then analyzed using ANOVA to determine significant differences among groups. Results of ANOVA indicated no significant difference in alphabetic knowledge gain for any group ($F=1.93$, $p=0.177$) due in part to the ceiling effect and the relatively small sample size. Though neither intervention was found to have statistically significant effects, it was noted that two participants did not make gains. They were part of the control group, suggesting students might benefit from additional, explicit, multisensory instruction in the area of alphabetic instruction.

Key words: multisensory, finger tracing, alphabetic knowledge, kindergarten