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The Effects of Multimedia Writing Support Software on Written Productivity

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Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to measure the effects of multimedia writing support software on the quality and quantity of writing productivity for students in special education classrooms.

Objectives

1. Does the use of multi-media writing support software increase the quality of written work production for struggling writers?

2. Does use of multi-media writing support software motivate/enable the struggling writer to produce a greater quantity of written work?

3. Does specialized training and support in integrating technology and curriculum increase teacher implementation of technology into their daily teaching methods?

Methods

Participants in this study included 20 special education students in grades kindergarten through 6th grade who have mild to moderate developmental delay. Three special education teachers and their support staff were trained by the occupational therapist in the use of an interactive Smart board and use of Clicker 5 multi-media writing support software to create motivating writing lessons for their classrooms. Clicker 5 software's features include writing support grids, word banks, pictures, talking word processor and capacity to import digital pictures and videos into customized activities. Clicker 5 lesson plans were implemented over an 8-week intervention period of twice per week sessions with participating students. Teachers were also trained in administering and scoring a pre-test and post-test to measure student progress, including the Developing Writer's Assessment and an adapted version of the Writer Self-Perception Scale.

Results

The results of this research show improved quantity of writing by an average of 5 sentences per student and improved quality by increased use of precise words by 3 words per student, increased use of conventions by 47%, and improved spelling by 58%. Teachers reported improved confidence and skills in using technology to teach writing lessons.

Conclusion
This study provides evidence to support the use of multi-media software as an effective writing support and motivator for struggling writers.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

This evidence can be used to guide the decisions of OT's, educators and parents on selecting technology options that may improve their student's writing performance in the classroom and help close the achievement gap.