

Itchy's Kids: Effects of a multi-sensory approach when teaching the Alphabetic Principle

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The purpose of this research study was to assess the effects of using a multisensory program, *Itchy's Alphabet*, to teach letter sound associations as well as logical letter formation. Three classrooms of kindergarten students participated in the study with a total of fifty-one students. As a result of random classroom assignment, the experimental group (two classes of students) received instruction using *Itchy's Alphabet*. One kindergarten classroom was randomly assigned to the control condition.

Each child in the experimental group was taught the alphabet using the instructional teaching program, *Itchy's Alphabet*. *Itchy's Alphabet* is a multisensory program that stresses letter-sound patterns, sound-symbol relationships, and logical letter formations. Instruction with this program took place for a period lasting almost four months. Each session was conducted by the classroom teacher. Each session concentrated on a letter of the alphabet and the students learned the name, sound, picture cue, and formation of the letter. Selections of children's literature pertained each session's letter was read aloud to the children. A set of hands on teacher-made and program provided materials were used to pair with the picture cues.

Each child in the control group received the standard instructional method used by the school to teach the alphabetic principle. As part of each child's regular education program, s/he was also given the DIBELS to the child's ability to identify letters and initial sounds as well as oral reading proficiency.

At the beginning and end of this program all students were assessed using the DIBELS. The purpose of this test was to evaluate each student's ability to identify letter names, initial sounds, and blend and segment sounds. Testing all students allows for a comparison to determine the growth and progress of each student on these skills over the course of this study.