

## DESCRIPTION of STUDY

This study will focus on the perceptions of stakeholders in the education of students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID), their teachers, building principals and caregivers, specifically on instructional technologies used to increase student reading fluency. Spooner and Browder (2015) state “Perhaps, the most important goal is for every young child to have the opportunity to learn to read regardless of IQ or disability label.” (p.30). Commonly, students with intellectual disabilities fail to acquire reading skills utilizing standard approaches to reading instruction (Spohner, Kemp-Inman, Ahlgrim-Dezell, Wood, & Davis, 2015). Qualitative data will be gathered using open-ended questions on questionnaires and focus group interviews to determine the perceptions of the use of an online literacy program as an instructional tool for teaching literacy fluency to ID students from the view point of important stakeholders in their education.

## PARTICIPANTS/SAMPLE SELECTION PROCESS

In a report compiled by Cornell University (2016), based on the results of the American Community Survey of 2014, New Jersey reports 3.9 percent of the population ages 5-15 as having a cognitive disability. Caregivers, teachers and principals have a vested interest in the educational development of these students. The researcher completing this study, has an extensive background working as a teacher of ID students, and through the lens of a disability advocate, views the importance of relationships of stakeholders that support student learning as vital in the learning process. Upon IRB approval, a letter of introduction will be mailed to district administrators and building principals of selected schools as the “gatekeepers of approval” (Creswell, 2012) providing an overview of the attended study, inclusive of why the site was

selected, expectations of the researcher in relation to site resources, time spent on site, possible disruptions to daily activities, how the information gained will be used and the gain for participants from the study (p.188).

Homogenous sampling, through the intentional selection of participants, from an elementary school in central New Jersey will include the building principal, teachers of ID students ages 7-9, serving students with ID in inclusive classrooms and in separate special education classrooms and the caregivers of students from the selected classes. New Jersey continues to educate ID students in separate schools for students with disabilities taking this in to account, similar participants from a specialized school serving the same age group within the same district boundaries will also be included in the study. Teachers serving ID students and subsequently student caregivers will be selected based on the age group of the students in their class, those appropriate for state testing measures PARCC and DLM, third to fifth grades.

Students with ID are considered valuable resources of information and their opinions concerning their learning is important, due to time restraints for this research not the attended respondents. The researcher is prepared to address possible concerns over confidentiality, purpose of the study and use of study findings with all potential participants prior to the start of the study. Approval from district administration and the building principal will be followed with a request of the distribution by the building principal of an introduction letter to classroom teachers and caregivers requesting their participation in a study of perceptions of the instructional technologies geared to increasing reading fluency skills being utilized with their student or child. To address teachers' possible concerns of judgement of their teaching ability, instructional choices, or potential negative effects on their job. The researcher will offer to share results and findings from the study with all respondents.

Data will be gathered through a provided link to open-ended questionnaires which will be shared with the three groups of respondents, to offer ease of accessibility and privacy for completion. Themes developed from responses will be determined to identify topics for further discussion to be addressed in focus group interviews, which will be audio and/or video recorded with participants who agree from respondents to the initial open ended questionnaires to be held at an agreed upon site. The videotaped interview will allow the researcher to remain focused on the interviewees with the ability to refer to the video for supplemental documentation to fieldnotes of responses during the transcription process.

## **Research Questions**

### **Qualitative Research Questions:**

What are the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents of ID students using an online literacy Blended Learning program designed to improve reading fluency skills?

In what way, would your participation in Professional Development/Caregiver Training impact your ID student's attainment of fluency literacy skills?

How would participation in an Online Professional or Family Support Learning Community influence your administrative, instructional and or caregiver practice?

### **NEED of STUDY**

Meeting the needs of ID student requires that school administrators, teachers and parents agree on what is best practices for instruction. Schools are utilizing blended learning instructional technologies with ID students as a strategy for reading fluency instruction (Hill & Lemons, 2015). Understanding how the major stakeholders in the education of ID students

perceive the use of BL instructional technologies can help districts, administrators, teachers and caregivers determine strategies that offer options for helping ID students gain the skills to become productive in society.

### **Type of Study-Qualitative Case Study**

Creswell (2012) relates the definition of case studies as a type of ethnography study that focuses on a program, event, or activity involving individuals rather than a group. (p.465) The researcher will utilize multiple forms of data collection to focus on the perceptions of stakeholders concerning the use of blended learning instructional technologies with ID students, to describe activities that support their use in instructional settings.

### **Sample Teacher/ Caregiver / Administrator Interview questions:**

Describe how supports for ID students are determined in your building, what are the benefit, drawback to the approach ...

Describe what guidelines are in place for the use of technology supported instruction utilized with ID students, what are the benefit, drawback to the implementation ...

Describe the approach, utilize when instructing ID students in reading fluency, what are the benefit, drawback to the approach...

- Describe the ways that you include instructional technology in your reading fluency instruction, what are the benefit, drawback with consideration of the ID student

- Describe your experience with the use of online reading programs with ID students, what are the benefit, drawback to its use ...
- Describe any experiences with Professional development in blended learning for literacy instruction with ID students that you have or would like to participate in, what are the benefit, drawback to your experience ....
- Describe your experience, participation in or knowledge of Online Professional Development or Family Support Communities what are the benefit, drawback to your participation...

#### References

- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Hill, D. R., & Lemons, C. (2015, March 9). Early grade curriculum-based reading measures for students with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 311-325. doi:10.1177/1744629515574812
- Sponner, F., Kemp-Inman, A., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., Wood, L., & Davis, L. L. (2015). Generalization of literacy skills through portable technology for students with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 52-70.
- Spooner, F., & Browder, D. M. (2015). Raising the bar: Significant advances and future needs for promoting learning for students with severe disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 36(1), 28-32. doi:10.1177/0741932514555022
- Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University ILR School. (2016). *2014 Disability status report*. Ithaca: Cornell University.