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Teaching Grammar: The Most Effective Strategies to Use in a Middle School Classroom
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Abstract
This action research project explores the most effective strategies for grammar instruction to middle school students, specifically at the sixth grade level. The purpose of this research is to help myself and other educators teach grammar in the most effective way. Data consists of student work samples from differentiated lessons and surveys from students and teachers (sixth grade). The method of research is simple—every grammar lesson I taught over a two week period was differentiated and implemented a different strategy. Student work samples were taken from these lessons for analysis. Student improvement and/or declination decided the best teaching strategies. Student/teacher survey answers were also factors in the decision. Although key findings from this research were not conclusive, there was evidence that supported the project's hypothesis. It was discovered that students are more interested in grammar lessons when taught through differentiated instruction. Evidence shows both teachers and students believe grammar to be a necessary, core subject in schools. However, both groups believe the subject could use a change as to how it is taught.

Problem
This project was created due to my own personal interest in grammar instruction. When designing grammar lessons, I often struggled finding creative and engaging ideas, which I had ease with for other subjects. When I taught grammar lessons to students, I did not receive the same attentiveness I did in other subjects. Oftentimes students moaned when it was time for grammar, or they complained about the lessons being boring. After discussing this problem with other educators, I soon realized I was not alone. Their confessions of struggle with grammar inspired me to research this problem and to search for answers.

Purpose
- To evaluate student/teacher feelings toward grammar instruction.
- To compare student work from traditional grammar instruction with student work from differentiated instruction.
- To find the most effective teaching strategies for grammar instruction.

Question
What are the most effective strategies for teaching grammar to middle school students to ensure maximum student achievement and interest?

Hypothesis
The implementation of differentiated grammar instruction will increase student interest and academic success.

Setting

• City: Mid-sized, suburban city in Northwest Indiana
  Average median household income: $46,186 (www.city-data.com)
  Majority race: White
  Second highest percentage race: Hispanic/Latino

• School:
  Of two public middle schools in the city
  Grades 6-8
  Current enrollment: about 800 students

Participants Profile

Classroom:
- Sixth Grade
- Language Arts block
- 1st and 2nd period
- Honors
- Total students: 27
- Female: 19, Male: 8
- Majority race is White.
  There is one student of Asian descent and one of Indian.
  Majority of students come from middle to high household incomes.

Research Procedures

Surveys:
1. Before handing out to students, a permission form was sent home to parents explaining the surveys’ role in research.
2. Once permission forms were returned, students completed a survey consisting of ten statements pertaining to their interest in learning grammar.
3. Students answered by using a number scale—1 being ‘strongly disagree’, 5 being ‘strongly agree’.
4. Sixth grade, language arts teachers were given a similar survey.

Findings

Findings

In conclusion, although the results do not show alarming evidence toward the validity of the proposed hypothesis, there is room for possibilities. When analyzing the survey results, the desire for differentiated grammar instruction becomes clear. There is an acknowledgement from both teachers and students that differentiated instruction does make the subject of grammar more interesting and easier to learn. Both students and teachers are faced with a problem, though. Grammar has been taught the same, traditional way for years. While there is desire for change, there are no real answers or solutions as to how to make that change. This predicament is the sole reason why this research was conducted. One more step toward differentiated grammar instruction has been made. Now, the possibilities for the future are endless.

Teacher Survey Questions

1. I enjoy teaching grammar.
2. I enjoy my students.
3. My students enjoy teaching grammar.
4. My students enjoy my grammar lessons.
5. My students enjoy grammar concepts quickly and easily.
6. My students can apply my grammar concepts to real life.
7. I believe differentiating my grammar lessons will fit my students’ needs.
8. I could take a grammar unit in order to help teach grammar concepts to my students.
9. I believe grammar instruction needs to be more engaging to my students.
10. I believe that research helps me teach grammar instruction.

Student Survey Questions

1. I enjoy learning grammar.
2. Learning grammar concepts is easy for me.
3. I get good grades in grammar.
4. Throughout elementary school and middle schools, I have been taught the same way grammar is taught (i.e. just using grammar book and doing worksheets).
5. I used to enjoy grammar instruction when I was in middle school.
6. I would prefer teaching by using worksheets, video and using a PowerPoint presentation to teaching through interjection skits to the class.
7. Teaching grammar is more engaging when I am involved in learning new teaching strategies for grammar instruction.
8. I enjoy practicing new teaching strategies for grammar instruction.
9. I enjoy teaching grammar when I am involved in learning new teaching strategies for grammar instruction.
10. I enjoy teaching grammar when I am involved in learning new teaching strategies for grammar instruction.

Student Surveys

Teacher Surveys

Average

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