A STUDY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION ON CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN READING

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions of direct instruction (DI) and its ability to assist in closing the achievement gap in reading between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. This study factored in the disability categories seen in the classroom, the application of the DI model, the training and support of teachers utilizing the model, and whether the teachers felt that the DI reading program had been effective at boosting their state standardized test scores for students with disabilities. The participants for this study included teachers from one public school district in the southern region of the United States. The Special Education Direct Instruction Teacher Perception Survey (Sped DIPS) was used to measure quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. The Sped DIPS consists of standard demographic information, a set of 36 questions developed to examine teachers’ perceptions of the DI reading curriculum and its use with special education students, and four open-ended questions about the use of DI to teach reading to special education students. Follow-up interviews were conducted with six teachers. The primary research design for this study was a cross-sectional analysis utilizing a mixed-methods approach. Analysis of the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the teachers who participated in the study believed that DI is an effective reading program that works for the majority of students, but it needs to be supplemented with additional materials. The results were inconclusive as to whether or not DI has the ability to assist in closing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers in reading.