Nikole B. Mannherz, C’17: The Effects of Constructive Intervention Strategies on Reading Comprehension and Motivation

A mixed-methods action research design was used to investigate the effects of constructive intervention strategies on the reading comprehension and motivation of three language delayed second graders. This design was used to address the following research questions: What is the effect of a constructive intervention strategy on the reading comprehension of language delayed second graders? What is the effect of a constructive intervention strategy on the reading motivation of language delayed second graders?

Strategies included text impressions, sentence frames, and text mapping. The instruments used to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the students were the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5), Woodcock Reading Mastery Test Revised (WRMT-R), Me and My Reading Profile (MMRP), and observations. The overall findings revealed that the constructive intervention framework resulted in statistically significant gains in both comprehension and motivation for the language-delayed students.

Keywords: reading comprehension, motivation, language, constructive intervention strategies

Alia Knight-Dahl, C’16: The Effect of Technology-Enhanced Spelling Instruction on Spelling Strategy Development of English Language Learners

This study evaluated the efficacy of technology-enhanced spelling instruction in English Language Learners (ELLs). The 13 participants were part of a 5th grade class, included a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, and were below to above grade level academically. Eight students were considered ELLs, between mid-range to high ranges of English proficiency. Five students spoke English as their first and only language. Intervention lengths were two weeks long, in three phases: paper-based sorts, computer-based sorts, and computer and paper-based sorts. All interventions resulted in positive growth and contributed to a low growth effect between pre- and post-spelling inventory assessments over 6 weeks; the computer-based intervention showed large effects while paper-based and computer-based instruction showed moderate effects. Paper-based sorts alone were effective and showed moderate effects but were less effective than the technology-enhanced interventions.

Keywords: spelling, sorts, computer-based, paper-based, ELL, technology, Vocabulary Spelling City, Words Their Way, intervention, intermediate, elementary

Casey J. Keyser Keenan, C’16: The Impact of Blogging on Writing Motivation and Narrative Craft

A mixed-method design was used to investigate the development of narrative writing by 12 primary school-aged children. This study examined students’ motivation to improve their writing craft while blogging. The instruction included two phases (20 instructional days each) of narrative instruction, one with blogging and one without. The instruments used to assess the students were the Motivation to Write Scale (MWS), the On-Demand Pre- and Post-Writing Assessment and the Narrative Writing Rubric. This qualitative research was designed to address the following research questions: What is the effect of third grade students’ blogging on the craft of their narrative writing? What is the effect of blogging on the motivation to write? The study showed that the students’ narrative craft of writing improved as well as the students’ motivation to write while blogging; each had a significant effect size.

Updated 6/10/16
Kayla R. Miller Atupem, C’16: The Effect of Formative Assessment on the Reading Engagement of Struggling Fourth Grade Students

The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to examine the effects of formative assessment on the reading engagement of struggling fourth grade students. Six struggling readers participated in the investigation for five weeks of intervention. The researcher’s intervention included one-on-one conferences where descriptive feedback was given while the student read a book of their choosing out loud. Quantitative data sources included pre- and post- Motivation to Read Profile-Revised assessments (MRP-R) and pre- and post- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test Revised (WRM-R). Qualitative data included the conversational interview from the MRP-R and observational field notes. Results revealed statistically significant differences between pre- and post-testing on both comprehension and motivation measures. This investigation adds to the growing work concerning formative assessment and its impact on comprehension and motivation.

Marisa B. Kenney, C’15: Examining Teachers’ Beliefs about the Role of Technology: A Comparison of Two Professional Development Modes

Face-to-face and online teacher professional development environments provide different learning experiences for teachers, which may have an impact upon the teachers’ abilities to transfer their learning and integrate technology into their classrooms. This action research investigation compared critical outcomes of teacher professional development through face-to-face and online delivery modes. Both training groups stated that technology that was not working properly was the most common barrier causing teachers to be reluctant technology users. A significant finding from the research indicated that technology reluctant teachers became less reluctant regardless of how professional development was delivered. Additionally, qualitative interviews agreed with the quantitative data in that the most common barrier to teaching with technology is technology not working properly and not having immediate help.

Suzanne S. Connole, C’15: Preschool Poetry Program: Encouraging Parental Involvement in Order to Enhance the Early Phonological Awareness Development of Preschool Aged Children

A short term study was conducted in a preschool classroom with four and five year olds. Children were assessed for phonological awareness prior to the intervention. Parents were surveyed regarding their habits of engaging in literacy activities with their children. An intervention program titled the Preschool Poetry Program was employed. Literacy activities were sent home twice weekly for parents to work with their children in specific and explicit literacy activities. Overall children’s phonological awareness skills were strengthened by the program and parents spent time engaged in working with their children on literacy skills. Quality interactions between parents and children were noted with regards to building literacy skills and phonological awareness. The hypothesis that parental involvement in preschool is able to positively impact change in a child’s phonological development was seen in this action research investigation.

Keywords: preschool, phonological awareness, parental involvement, poetry
Claire Beccue, C’14: The Effects of Computer-based Reading, Writing, and Listening Instruction on Middle School Students’ Reading Self-perception

The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to examine the effects of computer-based reading, writing, and listening instruction on middle school students’ reading self-perception. Four classes at the sixth and seventh grade levels participated in the investigation over the course of a three-month period in which reading informational text online and use of a Web 2.0 tool, Glogster, were employed. Qualitative and quantitative data sources included pre- and post-Reader Self-Perception assessments (RSPS and RSPS2), pre- and post-random sampling interviews, and observational field notes. Amongst the sixth grade class, t-test results revealed statistically significant differences between pre- and post-testing, where the post-test revealed lower reading self-perception. Seventh grade students revealed an overall increase in reading self-perception, which was traced back to an increase in girls’ self-perception only. This information adds to the evolving work regarding technology and its impact upon student learning and motivation.

Lindsay McConnell Hoffman, C’14: Math Fact Acquisition: Best Practices for Automaticity and Accuracy

The purpose of this qualitative research was to investigate which of the instructional methods - electronic-based or paper-based flashcards - was most effective in increasing 5th graders’ multiplication math facts automaticity and accuracy; and to learn what method students preferred regardless of test scores. Data sources included student and parent surveys, pre-, mid-, and post-assessments, observational notes, teacher interview, and student and parent questionnaires. While findings did not clearly identify one method as more successful than the other, test results revealed that students scored higher on automaticity when using the electronic method, and scored higher on accuracy when using the paper method. Finally, all students expressed preferring the electronic method.

Emily Howse, C’14: The Influence of Technology Use in Content Specific Instruction on Technology Integration by Elementary Teacher Candidates During Internship

This qualitative research project examined the effects that technology use in methods courses (Reading, Math, Social Studies and Science) had on teacher candidates’ integration of the technology in instruction during internship. Data sources included methods courses syllabi, a survey, lesson plans, and an interview with a teacher candidate. Document analysis and candidate interview revealed that the nature of the internship had a larger impact on the integration of technology in each of the four subjects than did methods courses. This research contributes to the developing research on improving teacher education programs; specifically how the technology education of teacher candidates translates into their technology use during internships.
Lindsay Kearney, C’14: FSTT Math Computer Based Strategy versus Cover, Copy, Compare Strategy in Math Instruction: Increasing Multiplication Fact Automaticity
The purpose of this action research was to determine whether integrating the FSTT Math computer-based strategy in math instruction increased math fact automaticity more effectively than integrating the Cover, Copy, Compare (CCC) strategy; and which method students preferred. Twenty-four third grade students participated in the study. Data sources included pre- and post-FCPS fact assessments, weekly fact quizzes, observational notes and semi-structured interviews. Results on the pre- and post-assessments showed that FSTT Math increased students’ fact automaticity more than CCC. Weekly fact quizzes also showed that FSTT Math was more beneficial in increasing student fact automaticity. However, students’ responses to interview questions revealed that they felt that the CCC method was more helpful in increasing automaticity. This research contributes to the growing research on the uses of technology in daily instruction.

Meghan Brown, C’13: A Descriptive Study of Teacher Candidate Technology Usage in the Classroom: Factors that Affect Decision Making
The purpose of this study was to determine the rationale behind teacher candidates’ decision-making to integrate technology into their lessons during their first internship experience and to identify the role of subject area and/or P-12 learners in their decision-making. Five teacher candidates from a liberal arts university participated. Data sources included (a) technology attitude interest survey comparing participants’ technology beliefs before and after knowing their students; (b) Teacher Candidate Technology Use Checklist completed by the mentor teacher and university supervisor to record technologies used and the purpose for use during internship lessons; (c) teacher candidate lesson plans; and (d) interviews with teacher candidates. The main purpose for technology integration by teacher candidates was for presenting information to their students. The findings showed that teacher candidates’ subject matter and P-12 learners affected their decision-making to integrate technology.

Linda Goodman, C’13: The Effect of Weekly Word Strategy Interventions on Kindergarteners’ Sight Word Knowledge
This action research study was conducted to determine if weekly word strategy interventions would increase kindergarteners’ sight word knowledge. Three kindergarten students participated in the study. Data collected and analyzed consisted of field notes, journal entries and word strategy interventions. Findings suggest that students who participate in these one-on-one interventions increased their sight word base and incorporated these known words into their writings. However, this study was inconclusive whether age had an impact on sight word knowledge.
Kelly Barrett, C’12: Improving the Acquisition of High Frequency Sight Words in First Graders: The Effects of Repeated Readings and Repeated Writings

The purpose of this study was to determine if repeated readings and repeated writings improve first graders’ ability to read and spell high frequency sight words. Four first grade students participated in the eight-week study in which they took part in four different strategies. Two of the strategies involved repeated readings and two involved repeated writings. Students who were reading texts and high frequency sight words on or below grade level were selected to participate in this study. Targeted words were determined by students’ performance on weekly pre- and post-assessments. Two weeks after completing the eight-week intervention period, retention of targeted words was assessed through a spelling and reading assessment. Data were analyzed separately for each student. Results showed that repeated readings, although successful, did not have as great of an impact on the acquisition of high frequency sight words as repeated writings.

Christina Koerper, C’12: The Effects of Partner Reading on Struggling Readers’ Reading Fluency and Comprehension of Science Texts

Action research was conducted to evaluate the effects of the partner reading strategy on students’ reading comprehension and fluency of science texts. The intervention lasted four weeks during which time six fourth grade struggling readers completed four pre-tests, then read four science books with a partner, and finally completed four post-tests. Data sources included test scores and observations made while students participated in partner reading. Findings suggest that the strategy is effective for struggling readers a majority of the time. While the partner reading strategy was not effective for every student, the strategy did improve students’ comprehension and fluency scores more often than it did not. When comparing all students’ comprehension pre-test scores to their post-test scores, students’ overall scores were higher on 13 of the total 23 pre-post comparisons. All students scored the same if not higher on their final intonation and phrasing assessments when compared to their initial intonation and phrasing assessments across the four-weeks. In addition, all students were observed as being on-task 78% of the time. Overall, students were motivated to read, collaborated with their partners, and used a variety of good reading strategies while partner reading.

Paula Maher, C’12: The Role of Writing in Spelling

This study examined the effects of the spelling intervention Look, Say, Write, Check, and Rewrite on third grade students’ application of spelling patterns to writing. Qualitative and quantitative data sources were collected and analyzed to determine if students continued to apply taught spelling patterns to writing. The results of the study revealed that most of the students were able to apply spelling strategies when writing but that students’ knowledge of spelling patterns did not improve their spelling.
Jeffery C. Barnes, C’11: Wikis or Face--to--Face Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Developing Higher Order Thinking

As STEM education pushes to the forefront of education policy in our country, the need for students to be problem solvers and to demonstrate critical thinking skills becomes the emphasis in local school districts. The purpose of this action research was to investigate whether online instruction using a wiki increases secondary students’ test scores when compared to face-to-face instruction; and to investigate if students are more likely to volunteer higher order questions and answers during online instruction. Participants for this study ranged from grades nine through twelve. The study applied Raths’ method (1986) for integrating critical thinking skills into course instruction to support course design. The data collected included post-test scores, observational notes, survey results, and discussion responses. The Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric, created by Facione and Facione (1994), evaluated the discussion responses to provide evidence for the creation of higher order questions and answers between both methods of instruction. The results showed that the wiki did not increase students’ post-test scores, however, the results from the Facione Rubric critiqued responses showed the wiki resulted in greater increases in higher order questions and answers. The survey results as well as the observational data also supported this claim. Therefore, a recommendation for future research has been made to replicate the study over a longer period of time to further evaluate how wikis improve higher order questions and answers, and if a wiki can improve post-test scores compared to face-to-face instruction.

Amy Broomall, C’11: Students Read and Comprehend Text by Blogging: Perspectives of Third Grade Boys

This thesis shares the findings of an action research project which integrated blogging into daily instruction over the course of four weeks as an intervention for eleven boys in a third grade co-educational class to improve reading comprehension, interest in reading, and written responses to reading. Qualitative and quantitative data sources included pre- and post-comprehension assessments, pre- and post-Motivation to Read Profile Surveys, blog rubric scores, observations, and interviews. T-test results (p.05) were statistically significant for the pre- and post-comprehension assessment scores. Other findings included increased comprehension and interest in reading for some boys but not all and improved written responses to texts for all boys. Notably, reading levels did not consistently align with comprehension or reading interest. This research contributes to the growing body of research on implementing modern technologies into daily instruction.

Sara Carchidi, C’11: Teacher Candidates’ Willingness to Use Electronic Textbooks

This six-week case study examined undergraduate teacher candidates’ uses of electronic and hardbound traditional textbooks. Initial, weekly, and final surveys as well as interviews were collected to assess student preferences for electronic or traditional textbooks. Research sub-questions included: (1) What features of the eBook and traditional textbook would students like or dislike? (2) Would use of eBooks, when compare to use of traditional textbook increase student grades on weekly quizzes? Findings suggest that while teacher candidates currently prefer the traditional textbook over the eBook they believe that it will be the wave of the future, particularly for teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs where integration of technology is required.

Updated 6/10/16
Suzanne Garrett, C’11: Classroom Performance Systems, Immediate Feedback, and Academic Performance: What is the Relationship?
This mixed-methods action research examined whether the integration of the Classroom Performance Systems (CPS) infrared clickers into classroom discussion would improve fifth-grade students’ knowledge of science concepts on an end-of-unit assessment. Immediate feedback using assessment of student knowledge with CPS in an electricity science unit was compared to receiving standard feedback and discussion for a magnetism science unit. Data sources included formative and summative assessments, surveys, observational notes, and interviews. Findings suggest that using audience response systems in classroom assessment may positively affect students’ attitudes toward assessment due to the novelty of using the clickers. High achieving students perceived the discussions helpful in learning content knowledge, which may have affected student study habits. However, using the CPS clickers had no influence on the students’ academic performance.

Kelly May, C’11: The Use of the Self---Questioning Strategy to Improve ADHD Children’s Reading Comprehension Scores
The purpose of this action research was to determine if instruction on the self-questioning strategy would improve reading comprehension scores of children diagnosed with ADHD. Twenty-one second grade students, five diagnosed with ADHD, were participants in the study. Data sources included reading comprehension scores, which were collected through administering a Primary Literacy Assessment before and after each of the two three-week instructional periods, observation notes taken while students read, report card comments, and survey data also collected at the end of each three-week instructional period. Findings suggest that the self-questioning strategy does help to improve reading comprehension. Four out of the five ADHD students who participated in the study improved their scores on the summary portion of the Primary Literacy Assessment. Three out of five ADHD students improved their scores on the question section.

Colleen Regan, C’11: Teaching in the Digital Age: An Evaluation of How Teacher Candidates Use Technology in Their Student Teaching
This qualitative descriptive study explores how three teacher candidates at a small liberal arts university used technology in their student teaching, and the factors that influenced their choices. Moreover, it examined the types of technologies employed by the candidates, and the purpose for which technology was used. Data sources included (a) observational notes on a lesson from each candidate; (b) a survey about candidates’ prior experiences and technology proficiency; (c) a group interview designed to clarify survey responses; (d) teacher candidates’ portfolios; and (e) candidates’ artifacts and rationale collected from their MTTS Standard V portfolios. Rich narrative data and descriptive statistics collected from sources were triangulated and overarching themes were determined. Findings suggested that teacher candidates use technology mainly for preparation of lesson plans and to a lesser degree they utilize technology for motivation and facilitation of lesson objectives. Factors that affected their decisions included access to professional development and support resources, as well as opportunities to witness modeling of specific technologies.
Jacqueline A. Benton, C’10: The Effects of Self Regulated Strategy Development of the RAP Paraphrasing Strategy on Students’ Comprehension of a Science Textbook
Action research was used to measure the effects of a paraphrasing strategy, “Read, Ask, Paraphrase” (RAP), taught using the Self Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model on students’ reading comprehension of science textbooks. Fourteen 5th and 6th graders completed five pre-tests, were then instructed in the RAP strategy, and finally completed six post-tests. Scores, classroom observations, student reflections, and student work were analyzed to determine comprehension improvement, student feelings about the strategy, and which students benefitted most. Although improvement was not statistically significant, nine out of 14 students did raise their comprehension scores. The groups of students with most improvement were below-and on-grade level readers, while advanced readers had mixed results. In spite of comprehension gains, students did not like using the RAP strategy.

Darlene Kerr, C’10: Participation in a Voluntary Book Club and the Effect on Comprehension and Fluency
This action research examines the effect of participation in a voluntary after-school book club on elementary school children’s fluency, comprehension and enjoyment of reading. Using a mixed-method design, data were collected from standardized quantitative assessments and Likert-type surveys, along with qualitative field notes and open-ended survey questions. The sample consisted of participants in the book club who were pulled from the larger population of third, fourth and fifth grade students at a suburban elementary school on the East Coast. The quantitative results showed minimal difference between the participants’ scores on county fluency or comprehension assessments, however the qualitative data indicated a positive impact on students’ enjoyment of reading and comprehension, as reported by themselves and teachers assisting in the book club.

Aimee Martin, C’10: The Effect of Teacher Professional Development of Interactive Whiteboard Flipchart Lessons on the Number of Student Interactive Elements in a Revised Flipchart
This action research study was conducted to determine if teachers who undergo professional development in flipchart lessons would revise flipcharts more effectively to increase the number of student interactive elements in a revised flipchart. Twelve teachers from elementary through high school levels participated in the study. Data collected and analyzed consisted of field notes, teachers’ flipcharts before and after professional development, and an online questionnaire. Findings suggest that teachers who undergo professional development in flipchart lessons do revise flipcharts more effectively to increase the number of student interactive elements. However, this study showed that teachers felt that they were not given adequate time to revise flipcharts during professional development. Further research should take time spent in professional development into consideration when developing sessions.

Updated 6/10/16
**Noemy Merlos, C’10: The Effectiveness of Intensive Instruction in Phonemic Awareness and Phonics on Fluency of Second Grade English Language Learners**

The effectiveness of intensive phonemic awareness and phonics instruction on fluency among second grade English Language Learners (ELLs) at risk for reading problems is described. Four participants who were ELLs in an inner-city Title 1 public school and at risk for reading difficulties were provided an intensive phonemic awareness and phonics instruction through an intervention, Systematic Instruction in Phoneme, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS). Students received 15 weeks of intervention (55 sessions) of intensive phonemic awareness and phonics instruction for forty-five minutes per day in a small group setting. Participants’ oral reading fluency was assessed prior to and at the completion of the intervention. Students were also assessed on their phonics and sight word knowledge through mastery tests that were embedded into the scripted intervention. Participants made significant gains from pre- to post-fluency assessments on oral reading fluency.

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**Michelle Perry, C’010: Examining the Effectiveness of Systematic Reading Interventions with Special Education Students through Parent Tutoring**

In recent years, policymakers and educational communities have encouraged parental involvement within schools. While there is widespread agreement that parent involvement is a beneficial educational practice when developing student reading skills, there is disagreement as to how best to integrate parental involvement into daily reading instruction. This action research study examined the relationships between parental involvement through interactive homework and students’ reading rates and comprehension. The study examined the reading rates of four special education students before, during, and after the implementation of an interactive homework intervention. The interactive homework was designed specifically for this study and was based on the reading instructional practices employed by SRA’s Horizons systematic reading intervention. Three of the four students’ reading rates increased following the implementation of the homework intervention. This examination of students’ reading rates illustrates both the limitations and benefits of interactive homework and suggests the need for structured parental involvement.

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**Kim Fox, C’09: An Analysis of Parent and Teacher Understandings of Homework**

This study examined parent and teacher understandings of homework at a Frederick County elementary school. Data included surveys, interviews, homework examples and the Frederick County Public School’s Homework Policy. Participants were asked to express their opinions on the value of homework, types of homework assigned and scoring of homework. Findings suggest that parents and teachers agree that homework does have value. However, parents and teachers do not share the same understandings about the types of homework that should be assigned and the scoring of homework.

*Updated 6/10/16*
Jennifer Hortie, C’09: The Effectiveness of FASTT Math on Learning Disabled Students’ Math Fact Fluency
The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the FASTT Math software program on learning disabled students’ multiplication fact automaticity and to determine further if exposure to FASTT Math would lead to improved scores on the quarterly assessment. Paired sample t-tests were used to determine the statistical significance of pre- and post-intervention test scores for a small convenience sample of six students on the FASTT Math Fast Facts Assessment and Basic Number Combinations Multiplication Test; and separate paired sample t-tests were used to determine the statistical significance of pre- and post-scores on the county quarterly assessments. Results suggest that students increased procedural knowledge as demonstrated on the third quarter assessment given after the end of one marking period or 9 weeks.

Peter Kerwin, C’09: The Effects of Reading Plus on the Reading Comprehension of Four---Year College Students with Reading Disabilities
This study examined the effectiveness of the assistive technology software Reading Plus on the reading comprehension of four-year college students with reading disabilities. A total of 19 students with documented reading disabilities were involved in this study. Nine students made up the intervention group and used the reading program for a period of six weeks. All participants were given the Nelson Denny reading examination as a pre- and post-test to assess reading comprehension. Results from a paired samples t-test revealed a statistically reliable difference between the mean of the pre-test scores and the mean of the post-test scores for the intervention group (p-value: .022, α= .05). Moreover, eight out of the nine participants in the intervention group improved their reading comprehension scores.

Alicia Krauss, C’09: The Effects of Increased Oral Reading Fluency on Writing Fluency in Students with Disabilities
This study examined the effects on writing fluency of Read Naturally, a reading fluency intervention. The intervention was administered over a six week period to students who receive special education services. Paired sample t-tests were used to determine the statistical significance of pre- and post-intervention test scores. While there was no statistically significant increase in students’ pre- and post-test scores on writing fluency, descriptive data indicate increases in writing fluency.

Mandy McAteer, C’09: The Use of Word Processors for Writing by Students with Special Needs
This action research study investigated how 10 special needs students used word processors to assist their writing process. Nine out of the ten participants increased their writing output and were able to write with fewer spelling and grammatical errors. Overall, students preferred the use of technology over handwritten, and appeared more confident writing with the aid of the word processor. However, not all students improved the quality of their writing with the use of the word processor. Recommendations for future research include investigating gender differences, and focusing on specific needs for specific writers.

Updated 6/10/16
Katie Shea, C’09: FASTT Math Software Program: Influence on Fifth Grade Special Education and English Language Learners
This qualitative action research study examined the influence of the Fastt Math software program on fifth grade Special Education and English Language Learners’ attitudes toward math. Overall, attitudes of the participants were positively affected and their participation improved. Moreover, participants expressed having gained confidence in performing math tasks after the use of the Fastt Math program. However, gains in confidence did not necessarily translate into higher scores.

Carol M. Powers, C’08: Peer Assisted Learning Strategies and the Saxon Phonics Program: An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Using Two Supplemental Phonological Awareness Programs with Beginning Readers
The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of using a supplemental reading program with first-graders in conjunction with another phonics program, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) to teach phonological awareness. PALS utilizes teacher-led practice, teacher monitoring, and peer activities to teach phonemic awareness, and phonics skills in order to provide a foundation for decoding skills, text comprehension, and fluency. The Saxon Phonics program is a structured phonics program that provides a systematic and explicit curriculum to teach beginning readers phonics skills. This study evaluated the effectiveness of using a supplemental phonological awareness program in conjunction with a phonics program with beginning first-grade readers. Four first grade students from a private, Catholic elementary school participated in a five-week intervention. Data from this assessment was collected during the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases of this study. Findings reveal growth occurred in the areas of phonological segmentation, deletion, grapheme identification, decoding, and automaticity.

Kimberlee M. Ballenger, C’07: Writing in the Age of Technology
The purpose of this 12-week study was to examine the extent to which the use of spell check and grammar check in a lab setting resulted in fewer spelling and grammar errors in grade 7 students’ paper and pencil writing subsequent to instruction. Nine Grade 7 students were grouped based on reading ability as well as the frequency and patterns of errors in writing. There were three groups with three students in each group. Samples of student writing were collected and analyzed at three separate points for all nine students—prior to word processor use, one following exclusive use of spell check, and one more after spelling and grammar check tools had been utilized. Red and green underlining increased student awareness of error types. A comparison of writing samples across the three collections points revealed an increase in length as well as diminished spelling and grammar errors.

Updated 6/10/16
Danica Boyer, C’07: Utilizing Student Data for Classroom Instruction
As schools strive to meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 100% proficiency mark, utilizing student assessment data to inform instruction has become a prominent issue. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a newly adopted management system to aid in meeting legislation requirements. The system houses student data, making data easily accessible for teachers to make instructional decisions and to differentiate curriculum material in order to meet the individual learning styles of their students. Educators in grades 3-8 at a public school district in Adams County, Pennsylvania participated in surveys and focus group discussions to investigate teacher perceptions of the new software warehouse for student data, Performance Tracker. Performance Tracker promised to place useful data into the hands of teachers through a user-friendly software program retrieved over the Internet. In evaluating the promise, there are mixed findings about whether technology increases teacher access to and use of student data to facilitate classroom instruction. Emerging themes that developed throughout the study include usefulness of data, technology access, student motivation, and time and support.

Elizabeth Gamber Cohill, C’07: Why Parents Choose Catholic Schools
Catholic schools have earned an important place in American education. These schools are deliberately chosen by parents over public schools to educate their children. Although research indicates that Catholic schools do not show an overwhelmingly high academic success rate over public schools, they continue to be an important choice for parents seeking a quality education for their children. The purpose of this project was to determine what factors influence a parent’s choice when deciding upon a Catholic school for their children. A study school was selected and a 15 question survey was designed to determine what aspects of a Catholic school play the most significant role in the choice of that school. All parents with children at the study school were invited to participate in the anonymous survey. The parents were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of a Catholic school in order of importance in the school decision process. The results of that survey were analyzed. The results indicated that the most influential factors for parents at the study school in order of importance were religion, academics, and structure. The findings of the study were compared with other similar studies.

Jennifer Covington, C’07: The Effect of Parental Involvement in Family Literacy Practices on a Child’s Emergent Reading and Literacy Skills
Parents (or guardians) are the first and most important teachers of their children. Prior to a child entering a formal school setting, parents and guardians are teaching their children through everyday family activities. These everyday activities have the potential to be the child’s first exposure to literacy. This study examined four main literacy activities: working with traditional print, writing, auditory exchange, and technology, that parents were involved in with their child prior to entering kindergarten. The study examined the correlation between these early literacy activities, and the student kindergarten entrance test in reading. 44 kindergarten families from a Catholic school in central Maryland participated in surveys, which were then compared to the child’s entrance test score to investigate the effect of parental involvement in family literacy practices on a child’s emergent reading and literacy skills. The majority of the findings did not suggest a significant relationship between parental involvement and emergent reading skills; however questions were raised for further research.
Denise DeLaurence, C’07: The Effectiveness of FASTT Math on Developing Basic Math Fluency
The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the computer software program FASTT Math on developing basic math fluency for fourth graders with math difficulty. Fourth graders with math difficulty are classified as not knowing basic facts fluently (Gersten, Jordan, & Flojo, 2005). Four students who scored below 70% on a multiplication test participated in this study. All students improved their fact fluency from the pre-test (m= 45.7%) to the post-test (m= 83.5%) over a four-week period.

Elizabeth Dudley, C’07: Increasing Phonemic Awareness with Technology of Students who Begin Kindergarten with Limited Phonemic Awareness
The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of computer-assisted instruction, by using the Internet program “Headsprout Early Reading,” to phonemic awareness development in students who enter kindergarten with limited phonemic awareness. Limited phonemic awareness was defined as students unable to distinguish the beginning sounds in words or rhyming patterns. Five students participated in the study. All were enrolled in full day kindergarten in a public elementary school. Three of the five students received ESL services. The action research employed the changing criterion design. Baseline data were determined prior to the start of the intervention. Following regular language arts instruction, the students worked independently for twenty minutes on the computer under the supervision of a high school student service learner. Headsprout records allowed for analysis and progress monitoring. All students made progress toward learning letter names, their corresponding sounds and word recognition.

Paul A. Fer, C’07: Looping for Success: Examining the Positive and Negative Outcomes of Students and Teachers Remaining Together for More Than One Year
The main intent of this study was to examine the results when students and teachers spend more than one year together. This strategy is called looping and generally takes place over the course of two consecutive years. Socially and academically, students were expected to improve. A convenience sample was selected of students, parents and teachers from a regional school. Students, parents and teachers were in the process of their second year of the looping experience. All participants were asked to complete a survey inquiring as to the social and academic benefits of looping as well other components such as attendance rates, discipline, parent involvement, and many others. Through the examination of the results of surveys from parents, students, and teachers looping does in fact enrich the educational environment for all involved. Future implications for research would be to focus primarily on the effect looping has on specific academic gains such as report card results as well as standardized testing.
Melissa Kearchner, C’07: What Effect Does Great Leaps Reading Have on Boys’ Reading Fluency?
This study examined the effect of daily direct instruction through “Great Leaps Reading” on the fluency scores of six male students in grades 3 and 4. Students were selected because their fluency scores fell below the expected grade level, and because they were not receiving additional support in the form of target intervention or special education. Instruction included a review of progress in the area of fluency, a timed reading, metacognitive questions (What went well? What could we do next time? Do you believe you met your goal?), and charting the day’s score. The students made sufficient gains so that all were achieving at grade level in the fluency rate category. This measure includes prosody, intonation and words per minute. Further, students expressed a greater comfort level in reading aloud.

Elizabeth A. Miller, C’07: Connecting Reading and Writing Concepts in Early Childhood
This study examined the relationship between preschoolers’ letter recognition and concepts about print, both reading skills, and their independent writing ability. The study included eight children from a private, Methodist preschool. All eight children were evaluated on their reading skills through Marie Clay’s assessment, An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. The children were given the letter recognition assessment, as well as the Concepts About Print assessment. During this time, writing samples were collected from all eight of the participants. These samples were rated according to rubrics provided by the Kid Writing assessment. The samples were also evaluated by a second rater. Three of the children showed that they would benefit from an intervention, however, only two were selected because they provided more writing samples. Two students participated in a three week intervention. Following intensive reading and writing practice, both children’s writings showed growth. These findings support the idea that reading storybooks with the purpose of identifying letters can increase the writing development of four-year-old children.

Elaina Moore, C’07: Utilizing a School Website to Facilitate Home---School Communication
Many parents do not know how to communicate with their child’s school. Educators must reach out and invite parents to be active members in their child’s educational partnership. The qualitative study was designed to discover the effects that a new Website and socio economic status has on home-school communication. Parents of children from a public school in a historic downtown area in Maryland completed two surveys to provide insight into their perceptions on increasing home-school communication. Follow-up interviews were conducted with eight parents. Findings suggest that the school Website would not increase home-school communication as designed. Parents see the potential of the Website but prefer to use face-to-face communication.

Updated 6/10/16
Kathryn Posner, C’07: Direct Vocabulary Instruction and its Effect on Students with Special Needs’ Retention
Success in school is strongly connected to a student’s knowledge of words. Because instruction is composed of descriptions, explanations, definitions, and demonstrations that presume a relatively sophisticated vocabulary, learners with a limited vocabulary find themselves at a considerable disadvantage. Lack of vocabulary knowledge can have detrimental effects on achievement. Teaching children to read as well as teaching them to comprehend new information while they read is a necessary part of learning. As the text levels increase, the vocabulary within the text becomes more challenging. Children need to learn strategies to help them when they come across unfamiliar words. The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of explicit, direct instruction of the vocabulary curriculum increased the knowledge of words for each student. Vocabulary instruction in this study involved direct instruction and the relationships of such instruction to comprehension and word meaning. Eight fourth grade students were exposed to 40 new vocabulary words during a nine-week period. The findings of this study supported previous research on direct vocabulary instruction. Students were able to learn more words when they were directly instructed, not just read to them. The use of weekly word posters and word walls supported the ability of children to recognize words in the study.

Kathleen Reifschneider, C’07: Oral Reading Fluency Instruction in a 7th Grade Language Arts Classroom
The intent of this study was to determine the effects of oral reading fluency instruction on reading comprehension through the use of Choral Reading and Reader’s Theater. The study looked at two 7th grade regular education Language Arts classrooms. There were 21 students in Class A, and 21 students in Class B. Before the study began, the students were given the SRI Interactive and San Diego Quick Assessment to determine both a silent oral reading comprehension lexile range and an oral reading comprehension grade level equivalency. The results of this comparison showed that the majority of participants steadily improved their expressive oral reading fluency skills. Because both silent and oral reading comprehension scores were obtained, the comparison showed that the largest improvement was with the San Diego Quick Assessment test; the oral reading comprehension measure. Therefore, this study implies that oral reading fluency instruction holds promise for further research and investigation.

Updated 6/10/16
Matthew R. Sweigart, C’07: Utilizing an Online Learning Environment to Facilitate Student Learning in a High School Setting
High school settings are faced with the challenge of developing teaching that infuses technology into the classroom and learning expectations. This environment has come to incorporate the reality of Distance Education and online resources into learners’ repertoires. This research was conducted in a high school setting in which the online source of Blackboard™ was introduced into the learning environment for an extended period of time. Data were collected through surveys that utilized Likert Scales and qualitative responses presented to students both pre- and post-introduction of the medium. Qualitative responses were also presented to instructors who utilized the online source on a daily basis. The evidence was analyzed and evaluated to determine the students’ and instructors’ perceptions of the online source and its incorporation into the learning environment. It was found that over half (58.82%) of the students did not utilize the medium, while those who did utilize the medium (41.18%) found it to be beneficial to their learning repertoire. The instructors also noted that the online medium proved beneficial and positive for students’ learning. The overall perception was that the online source of Blackboard™, if utilized, was beneficial to the learner and may have a positive outcome that would increase student perceptions of learning and may increase student scores and the completion of assignments.

Kimberly A. Wivell, C’07: Effects of Kurzweil 3000 on Comprehension and Vocabulary with Special Education Middle School Aged Students
The ability to independently identify sight word vocabulary, understand the meaning of vocabulary, and comprehend what is read are critical skills for readers to develop. Teachers and other educators are using assistive technology to assist special education students who are mainstreamed and accessing the general education curriculum (Weickle, Bobbie et al., 2003). This study examined the effect of incorporating a text to speech computer software, Kurzweil 3000, on the reading abilities of three middle school special education students, specifically sight word vocabulary, vocabulary achievement, and comprehension. The action research used a single subject design model across multiple baselines. Three participants were involved in the study, each working and monitored on their own individual abilities in the areas of sight word vocabulary, vocabulary achievement, and comprehension. All participants showed an increase in their sight word vocabulary, general vocabulary achievement, and comprehension when Kurzweil 3000 was part of their daily reading instruction throughout the four weeks of the study. Another observation was that students worked with greater independence.
Robert Wolfe, C’07: Using Virtual Manipulatives in the Classroom
The purpose of the quasi-experimental study was to investigate the effect of virtual manipulatives on students’ mathematical procedural and conceptual knowledge as well as attitudes towards using virtual manipulatives. Participants were 16 grade 3 students in the same class as the control group and 15 grade 3 students in another intact class as the experimental group. Both classes were instructed on the same fraction concepts prior to the experimental group using virtual manipulatives in an attempt to identify gains or losses attributed to using virtual manipulatives. The pre- and post-test showed that the experimental group had larger gains in total score, processes, and conceptual knowledge. Student interviews and a student survey indicated that most students thought that using virtual manipulatives was a positive experience. The majority of students indicated that they would prefer to use virtual manipulatives over traditional manipulatives. Students reported that virtual manipulatives were fun to use, easy to use, and helped when solving mathematics problems.

Claire O. Gudewich, C’06: Perceptions of Year---Round Education from Faculty, Staff, Parents and Students from St. John Regional Catholic School
Mentioning the words “year-round schooling” can cause physical reaction from administrators, faculty members, parents, and students. While there are numerous school systems that have attempted or are currently running a year-round education format, the traditional nine-month agrarian schedule is still predominant in most school systems throughout the country. New research conducted each year investigates the advantages and disadvantages of year-round education (YRE) for all involved. This thesis research study was conducted at St. John Regional Catholic School in Frederick, Maryland to determine the perceptions of year-round schooling among the faculty, staff, parents, and students of the school community. A survey was created for the faculty and staff, one for the parents and one for the students. All surveys ask similar questions to determine perceptions of the participants. Survey results found that the overall attitude towards year-round schooling was positive.

Michelle C. Lebo, C’06: Vocabulary Through Read---Alouds
As education evolves, it is faced with what areas in which to put its emphasis and effort. How does that decision get made? In today's society the need for proof is often the driving force. Therefore, how do educators show what areas they need to focus on? The answer is found in President Bush’s education initiative “No Child Left Behind.” Data from state and county level assessments are examined and analyzed so that educational decisions can be made. Teaching children to read as well as teaching them to comprehend new information while they read is a necessary foundation for future learning. As the text levels increase, the vocabulary within the text becomes more challenging. Children need to learn strategies to help them when they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary. The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of explicit instruction of the vocabulary curriculum and building of new vocabulary through read-alouds would increase the knowledge of words for each student. Results showed that second graders could learn and retain new vocabulary when it was explicitly instructed and they were provided multiple opportunities to work with the words.
Ellen Santucci, C’06: Class Size and Student Achievement at St. John Regional Catholic School
Research has shown that small class size has proven to increase academic and social growth among young learners, especially when they have been in small classes for several consecutive years (Handley, 2002). The primary objective of this study was to research how class size affects student achievement in the Primary grades at one school based on the opinions of parents, teachers and students who have experienced a recent reduction in class size. Teachers, parents, and students were questioned about their perceptions/feelings on the effects of small class size. The findings indicated that teachers, parents and students feel that students learned more in small classes.

Kimberly J. Wawer, C’06: The Effects of Vocabulary Instruction Incorporated Through Read---Alouds
Teaching requires knowledge of how students are progressing and mastering material. Students must be assessed to determine how well they are grasping and applying taught concepts. Assessments can range from daily classroom observations to a more global picture from an achievement test and anywhere in between. The results of assessments can clearly demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses the students possess. From the results, teachers are able to determine a direction for their teaching. At the time of the study, elementary school children in grades 3 through 5 were assessed in the state of Maryland using the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) to measure achievement. In addition, achievement was measured by administering the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10) to second graders in Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS). The results of these achievement tests found vocabulary instruction to be a weakness for schools throughout the county. This study determined if the incorporation of vocabulary instruction through read-alouds with a comprehension focus lead to an increase in vocabulary acquisition and retention when primary-aged students were exposed to new words multiple times and given the ability to determine meaning for themselves. Results found that explicit vocabulary instruction increased student vocabulary and retention.