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The National Reading Panel Summary

02/14/21

The National Reading Panel was formed in 1997 in the United States. Congress asked the “Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and also the Secretary of Education to bring about a national panel brought about research results to show readiness for application” (National Reading Panel, 2000). The Panel was brought into effect to find the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach students to read. The National Reading Panel was built up of six subgroups that would intensively study: methodology, alphabetics, comprehension, fluency, teacher education, and technology/next steps. Each subgroup was built of a panel; some members of the panels were a part of multiple committees. As a group, they came up with questions that they would address when determining the readiness of reading approaches in the classroom. The groups used many different types of research to determine if a reading strategy should be adopted to improve reading achievement. The panel decided that experimental or quasi-experimental studies should be conducted to support the findings. The methodology panel included Timothy Shanahan and Sally Shaywitz and they discussed the five subgroups that they found and how these groups helped students read and the people that contributed to each panel. In the six subgroups, none of the members' names ring a bell with me, but I’m looking forward to diving into what they found about helping students to read.

The alphabetic subgroup included Linnea Ehri, Gloria Correro, Timothy Shanahan, Dale Willows, and Joanne Yatyin.  Alphabetic topic focused on phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction. One of the main reasons phonemic awareness instruction was decided on was because it’s one of the best early predictors on how well a child will learn to read during their first two years in school. The studies showed that teaching students how to manipulate phonemes in words was highly effective (National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonemic Awareness was found to be very effective in helping students learn to read. There is still more research that needs to be completed to identify what teachers need to know to be able to teach Phonemic Awareness effectively in the classroom. The second part of the alphabetic subgroup is phonics instruction. When phonics was introduced before first grade, it was found to be more successful. Phonics should be taught with other reading instructions to create a balanced reading program. We can’t forget about phonics; students need to practice decoding, but it also can’t be the main focus of the classroom.

Next is fluency: the panel included S.J. Samuels, Timothy Shanahan, and Sally Shaywitz. The purpose of the National Reading Panel was to review the changing concepts of fluency and consider the effectiveness of two major instructional approaches to fluency development (National Reading Panel, 2000). The first that was reviewed was activities like repeated reading, radio reading, paired reading, and other similar reading activities. The second technique that was reviewed was activities that increased the amount of independent reading like Accelerated Reader (National Reading Panel, 2000). The panel found that activities like repeated reading and Accelerated Reader both are great tools in helping students increase fluency and reading in general. The more oral practice students can get the better readers they will become.

Comprehension panel included Michael Kamil, Gwenette Ferguson, Norma Garza, Thomas Trabasso, and Joanna Williams. Compression focused on vocabulary instruction, text comprehension instructions, and teacher preparation and comprehension strategies instruction. The National Reading Panel stated it the best “comprehension is just essential to academic learning but to life-long learning” (National Reading Panel, 2000). Vocabulary instruction is very important to improve student’s comprehension. The National Reading Panel found many methods of students learning vocabulary through explicit teaching. Vocabulary can be taught directly and indirectly: students should be actively engaged in the learning task. Computers can help students learn vocabulary. Taking time to pause in class when a vocabulary teaching moment arises is a great way to help students learn their vocabulary. There are many other ways to help students learn vocabulary, but that was a few to help students. The next area is text comprehension instruction. The panel found that “when readers are given cognitive strategy instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension over students trained with conventional instruction procedures” (National Reading Panel, 2000). Types of instruction include: graphic organizer, listening activities, mental imagery and use of prior knowledge, story structure, summarization, and question answering are a few listed by the National Reading Panel (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teacher preparation focuses on two areas: Direct Explanation and Transactional Strategy Instruction. Direct Explanation (DE) focuses on the teacher teaching the different strategies to students. DE is great for increasing student’s awareness of how they need to think while reading but the benefits to comprehension weren't found by the panel. Transactional Strategy Instruction is similar to DE, but the role of the teacher focuses on guiding discussion with students. The more teachers can teach students comprehension strategies and how to use them, the more successful students will be when comprehending text.

The Teacher Education panel included Gloria Corerro, Michael Kamil, Gwenette Ferguson, Norma Garza, and Cora Marrett. The panel came up with three questions that they used to analyze the data: how teachers were taught to teach reading, what do studies show about the effectiveness of teacher education, and how can research be applied to improve teacher development. The panel found that when teachers are educated correctly, this can bring about higher achievement in students (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Technology/Next Steps panel included Michael Kamil and Donald Langenberg. Computers can be beneficial to helping students learn to read. Just like all the groups, this needs to be done correctly or it can have negative effects on students’ progress in learning how to read. At the time, there were few studies done but the ones that were done showed successes. Technology brings about many ways to deliver reading instruction.

In conclusion, there was a lot of research put together by the National Reading Panel to justify and find the best practice to use in classrooms to help students learn to read. Today we still have the big five in the classrooms. It shows that reading instruction is still improving and utilizes instruction methods from the past. It was shown to help students learn to read and still works today.

Work Cited

National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of

the scientific research literature of reading and its implications for reading instruction.