Technology: a Tool Supporting Teacher Change in the Context of the Targeted Reading Intervention

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Abstract

The Targeted Reading Intervention (TRI) is a technologically-mediated professional development program and early reading intervention for teachers in rural areas (Ginsberg, Amendum, Mayer, Fedora, & Vernon-Feagans, 2006). Technology is central to the design of the program as it facilitates distance delivery of literacy coaching from a university-based reading specialist to the classroom of a participating teacher as she instructs one struggling reader at a time. The design of the program assumes technology to be supportive of change as it mediates university/teacher interactions. Indeed, the successful use of technology in providing effective webcam-based literacy coaching to TRI teachers has been well documented (Amendum, Vernon-Feagans & Ginsberg, 2011; Ginsberg, Vernon-Feagans & Amendum, 2010; Vernon-Feagans & Ginsberg, 2010; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2011; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012; Vernon-Feagans, Kainz, Hedrick, Ginsberg & Amendum (in press). The present study demonstrates technology offers more support than a means to implementation in the TRI. This study describes the unanticipated ways technology came to support important teacher-belief changes while also facilitating the greater program. A collective case study design (Merriam, 1998) was employed. The participants were an exemplary first-grade teacher and five of her students during their participation in the TRI. Data for this study were collected for one school year and archived for a larger investigation. The data include video-recorded iChat interactions, emails, instant messages, phone interviews and a survey. Results of this study indicate the participating teacher made important changes in her beliefs that positively impacted her experiences at work and her effective teaching of reading to her first-grade students. These changes include teacher beliefs concerning: acceptance in the workplace, self-efficacy and identity. Technology was flexible in its support to the teacher in these changes. This study demonstrates that in the context of a content-driven, student-focused intervention, the technology may support a teacher’s professional growth in ways leading to improvements in students’ reading abilities. Implications for program designers conclude this work.

References

Instruction for Struggling Readers: The Targeted Reading Intervention. Journal of Educational Psychology.