Abstract

This teacher action research project attempted to answer the following question: *What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of students and teacher when the numbers of hands-on learning tasks are increased during small-group instruction in Kindergarten?* The research project started in the second week of September 2011 and continued into January 2012. In a class of fifteen at-risk Kindergartners, there was small-group instruction for literacy, writing, and math. A hands-on activity was added to the beginning of each small-group lesson. The reaction of the students and teacher to this addition was observed and recorded in a double-entry journal. Photographs of the activities were taken without showing student faces to protect their anonymity. Student work was collected when possible. Students took an initial and final survey to show their feelings about their activities. An interview was conducted to understand student opinions about the hands-on activities and their purposes. The hands-on activities increased student engagement, enjoyment, collaboration, initiative, and success. The unexpected positive outcome of this project was the way it provided tools for differentiation for students with small-motor, speech, and auditory memory difficulties and for those with limited English knowledge.