

Self-Select vs. Programmed Presentation: Does the Child Know Best?

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Does the child know best when it comes to selecting which fluency aim to practice? The goal of this study was to compare the effect of self-select of which skill to practice versus progression through a teacher-planned hierarchy of math facts. Three groups of students tackled arithmetic fluencies under different conditions. The behaviors reported their results.

Thirty-four students, all experienced charters, practiced their arithmetic fluencies on the Arithmetic Automizer computer program at Ben Bronz Academy. They do one-minute fluency timings on the computer up to four times per day, and are able to evaluate their progress by viewing Standard Celeration Charts, generated by the computer. The program was designed so that the student could choose his/her own level of arithmetic problem to work, even though meeting preset criteria advances the program to the next level of difficulty.

If a student is given the choice of which level or problem to work, will he/she progress as fast as when the levels are teacher chosen? We speculated that some students may not know best at the outset, but through examining their own progress, they would sharpen these skills. In this project students self-selected into the following three groups:

- (a) Start at a specific level and systematically advance through preset levels by meeting criteria;
- (b) Choose their own new level each time they meet criterion;
- (c) Choose their own problems out of a presentation screen of all the possible problems, by skipping those they did not wish to try.

Students evaluated their own progress and chose spokespersons to bring their observations to the Tenth International Precision Teaching Conference. Typically, students favored systematic advancing, unless they had already mastered most of the fluency aims. In that case, they preferred choosing their own problems.