

Literacy in the United States

Abstract

Illiteracy in adults is a significant problem in the United States. Nearly 21% of American adult citizens (age 18 and older) face some level of illiteracy. The root cause of the illiteracy crisis is the unequal access to reading and writing education in the U.S., which we have investigated in our research.

Methods

In order to study the impact of disparate reading education, we traveled to both the highest and lowest overall ranking elementary schools in the state of Indiana, instructing students from kindergarten to 3rd grade. We chose West Lafayette Elementary (highest scoring) and Meuessel Elementary (lowest scoring) based on their certified Niche rankings. Since ages 6 and 7 represent the primary timeframe for language acquisition, we observed kindergarten and first grade classrooms to assess reading and writing instruction practices.

Research Questions

1. How do the teaching styles and practices at these two elementary schools differ?
2. Are there discrepancies in available educational resources? Does this play a significant role in instruction?
3. What are the differences in general classroom environment between the schools? How does this impact student engagement with writing/reading instruction?

Results

Based on our observations, we were able to conclude that student engagement in reading/writing instruction was significantly impacted by the classroom culture established by the instructor, the resources available, and the teaching practices.



Conclusions

The challenge of combating illiteracy in the United States is highly dependent on making overarching policy change in educational institutions. Based on our observations and research, we urge lawmakers to set reading and writing education guidelines in order to regulate the resources students have access to and standardize reading and writing instructional methods.

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