
Effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in Improving the Reading Performance of Grade 4 Learners

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ABSTRACT

To overcome the learning losses of the learners caused by the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher is motivated to conduct this study to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in improving the reading performance of grade 4 learners. The researcher employed quasi-experimental research design adopting the passages found in the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) for the grade. Further, lesson guides for Project DEAR were formulated, focusing on reading activities with weekly themes and addressing the least mastered reading skills. The forty grade 4 learners in the mentioned locale were included in the study. Simple percentage and t-test of mean difference were the statistical tools used to interpret the result of the study. After the four-week intervention activities, the data revealed a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test performances of the grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in teaching and learning. Hence, making the intervention activities effective in improving the reading performance of the grade 4 learners. The reading activities provided and the approach and strategies used by the teacher in teaching reading influenced learners to achieve more while enjoying the tasks provided. The result of the study highlights the importance of targeted reading programs like Project DEAR in educational settings, emphasizing their role in promoting literacy development and academic achievement among elementary school learners.

Keywords — *Effectiveness, Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Reading Performance, Grade 4 Learners*

I. INTRODUCTION

In line with the MATATAG agenda of the secretary of Department of Education that learners must be provided with alternative learning intervention to address the problems on literacy among Filipino learners. One of the interventions formulated by the teachers in Rizal Elementary School of Kananga I District is Project DEAR which means Project Drop Everything and Read. This project focuses on providing differentiated reading activities to be conducted every Friday. This is in line with the implementation of Catch-Up Fridays. The learners were grouped based on their reading level of which each group will be provided with varied and differentiated reading activities which will help in making every learner an independent reader.

This project was crafted before the rise of Catch-Up Fridays because it was revealed that during the previous school year where face-to-face classes have been implemented that the school suffers for the greatest number of non-readers and

frustration readers. Since then, the teachers in the said schoolwork together to come up with intervention of which all teachers in the school will implement. This project focused on improving the literacy performance of the learners.

According to Arevalo (2023) reading brings meaning to the printed page. It is the most important skill a learner should possess since it is a gateway to the development of academic skills across all disciplines. If a child cannot read, he will not be able to access the content in his other learning areas. Thus, it is very important to teach reading first before proceeding to the learning of other competencies in other learning areas.

The Department of Education Bawat Bata Bumabasa Program (3B's Initiatives) which is based on DepEd Memorandum No. 173, s. 2019, DepEd mandates all schools equip learners with reading skills to make them proficient and independent readers in their grade level which will nurture a culture of reading in the different classrooms. This is to answer the problem that there are still many early grade learners struggling to meet the learning standards in early language, literacy, and numeracy (Arevalo, 2023).

In the implementation of literacy programs, teachers play a crucial part in the education system and are essential to providing children with quality learning opportunities. They promote the development of reading skills by providing direct and explicit reading instruction that builds learner mastery through scaffolded instruction and incorporates universal design for learning principles. Reading teachers should have a solid understanding of the six components that contribute to successful beginning reading also known as the "Big Six" which are: 1) Oral Language: 2) Phonological Awareness: 3) Phonics: 4) Vocabulary: 5) Fluency: 6) Comprehension.

Teachers need to provide important insights to inform and modify program components, like professional development opportunities that address issues of language in teaching and learning. Training and professional development opportunities for teachers should be tailored to meet teacher's specific needs and develop their pedagogical skills in teaching reading. These six aspects to the process of reading work together to create a reading experience. As children learn to read, they must develop all these skills to become successful readers. Before they become successful or independent readers the reading teachers must be capacitated on the pedagogies in teaching utilized in the classroom. All school interventions must be data based accompanied with a plan which will guide the teacher. Hence, this intervention came into being which aims to address the above-mentioned problems, issues, and concerns.

To overcome the learning losses of the learners caused by the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher is motivated to conduct this study to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in improving the reading performance of grade 4 learners. A proposed improvement plan was formulated based on the findings of the study.

It is in the rationale that the researcher who is currently a grade 4 teacher in the above mentioned local, would like to delve worthy research undertaking that will benefit herself, the school she is currently teaching and that of her Graduate Program she is enrolled at.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR) in improving the reading performance of grade 4 learners in Rizal Elementary School, Kananga 1 District, Leyte Division for School Year 2023-2024. The findings of the study were the basis for the proposed improvement plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reading performance of the grade 4 learners before the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)?

2. What is the reading performance of the grade 4 learners after the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)?
3. Is there a significant difference in the reading performance of the grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)?
4. What improvement plan can be proposed based on the findings of this study?

II. METHODOLOGY

Design. This study employed a quasi-experimental research design utilizing pre-test and post-test assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR) in improving the reading performance of grade 4 learners at Rizal Elementary School, Kananga 1 District, Leyte Division. The pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted before and after implementing Project DEAR. The main locale for this study was Rizal Elementary School, situated in Brgy. Rizal, Kananga, Leyte, approximately 6 kilometers north of Kananga. It is one of the largest barangays in the municipality, located 4 kilometers from the Kananga I District office. The school is a large institution with nearly a thousand learners each school year. It comprises twenty-nine classrooms, a principal's office, a Home Economic building with a temporary school clinic, and four temporary learning spaces. Additionally, the school has a canteen, various WASH facilities, and a common comfort room. Rizal Elementary School employs twenty-nine nationally funded teachers, including three highly proficient master teachers and one SST, all managed by a School Principal. The school is one of the top-performing institutions in the Kananga I District, having received several awards in academic and non-academic contests. The school maintains a strong relationship with both internal and external stakeholders, ensuring high-quality services and good community rapport. The study's respondents were forty grade 4 learners enrolled for the School Year 2023-2024. The selection of respondents employed complete enumeration. The research utilized the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) Packages based on DepEd Order No. 014, s. 2018, to assess the reading levels of the learners. The Phil-IRI tool categorizes learners into four levels: frustration, instructional, independent, and non-reader. The frustration level indicates withdrawal from reading, while the instructional level shows learners benefiting from instruction. The independent level reflects proficiency in reading without guidance, and the non-reader level indicates difficulty with basic letter-sound associations. Lesson guides for Project DEAR were formulated, focusing on reading activities with weekly themes and addressing the least mastered reading skills. These guides, along with learning activities, were submitted to the District English Coordinator and School Heads for validation before implementation. After the pre-test, a 4-week intervention was conducted, followed by a post-test reading assessment. A matrix of activities was provided to track the progress of the intervention. This research focused on evaluating the effectiveness of Project DEAR in improving the reading performance of grade 4 learners through pre-test and post-test assessments. The study aimed to identify significant improvements in reading performance as a result of the intervention.

Sampling. The respondents of this study were forty (40) grade 4 learners enrolled in the said locale for School Year 2023-2024. Complete enumeration was employed in choosing the respondents of the study.

Research Procedure. The researcher prepared the necessary documents and tools for the study. Following approval from the research panel, a letter request to conduct the study was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent. Once approved, additional permissions from the District Supervisor and the School Principal were obtained before commencing data collection. An orientation session was conducted for the respondents, emphasizing data privacy. Parental consent was secured for the participation of their children. The pre-test was administered face-to-face during the English period. Subsequently, a four-week intervention, Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), was implemented, featuring differentiated reading activities tailored to the learners' levels. After the intervention, a post-test was administered. The results were collected, checked, tabulated, and submitted for statistical analysis. A matrix of activities was created by the researcher to monitor the data collection progress.

Ethical Issues. The researcher properly secured the permission to conduct the study from the authorities through written communication. In the formulation of the intervention materials that was used in the study, the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was avoided. The respondents' names and other personal data were not included in this study to protect their privacy. Participation of the respondents was also voluntary. Orientation was conducted for the respondents with their parents. In the orientation, issues and concerns were addressed and consent to be included in the study were signed. The researcher-maintained objectivity in analyzing and discussing the results. All authors whose works were mentioned in this study were properly quoted and were acknowledged in the reference.

Treatment of Data The quantitative responses were tallied and tabulated for analysis. Statistical methods included using Simple Percentage to evaluate the reading performance of grade 4 students before and after implementing Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), as well as employing the t-Test of Mean Difference to identify significant differences in their performance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1

PRE-TEST PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS IN READING

Score Range	Description	PRETEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	0	0
13-16	Very Good	0	0
9-12	Good	10	25
5-8	Fair	20	50
1-4	Poor	10	25
Total		40	100
Weighted Mean		6.35	Fair

Table 1 presents the pre-test performance data of grade 4 learners in reading proficiency before the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR). The table reveals that out of a total of 40 students, none achieved scores in the Excellent or Very Good categories. Specifically, 10 students (25%) demonstrated a good level of proficiency, indicating a solid grasp of reading skills prior to the intervention. The majority of students, comprising 20 out of 40 (50%), fell within the Fair category, suggesting a moderate level of proficiency. Another 10 students (25%) were classified in the Poor category, highlighting areas where significant improvement in reading skills was needed. The weighted mean score of 6.35 underscores an overall performance leaning towards the Fair category, indicating the baseline reading proficiency among grade 4 learners before the initiation of Project DEAR. In line with this, teachers need to ensure reading assessment to cater the needs and demands of the learners specifically the struggling readers who need continuous reading remediation for them to become fluent reader anchored with accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. Despite several flagship programs and reading intervention and innovative reading strategies being implemented still the result of PHIL-IRI, frustration level is still prevalent. The alarming reading status of pupils necessitates intensive reading innovation that would help them to improve their reading abilities. Massive reading innovations need to be implemented wholeheartedly to uphold quality reading education that sustain the diverse learners' needs and demands, especially the

struggling readers. It is important for the teachers to pursue their initiative in teaching reading. They should never give up on guiding and inspiring children in achieving higher reading performance level. Encouraging the pupils to embrace reading during their formative years would be of great help for them to improve their reading performance level. It helps to uplift from the cavern of ignorance.

TABLE 2
POST-TEST PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS IN READING

Score Range	Description	POST TEST	
		Frequency	%
17-20	Excellent	15	38
13-16	Very Good	23	58
9-12	Good	2	4
5-8	Fair	0	0
1-4	Poor	0	0
Total		40	100
Weighted Mean		15.80	Very Good

Table 2 presents the post-test performance data of grade 4 learners in reading proficiency following the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR). The scores are categorized into five ranges: Excellent (17-20), Very Good (13-16), Good (9-12), Fair (5-8), and Poor (1-4). Among the total sample size of 40 students, the majority achieved scores in the higher ranges: 15 students (38%) scored in the Excellent range, and 23 students (58%) scored in the Very Good range. Only 2 students (4%) attained a good rating. No students scored in the Fair or Poor categories. The weighted mean score of 15.80 indicates an overall performance at the Very Good level. This data reflects significant improvement in reading proficiency among grade 4 learners after the implementation of Project DEAR, demonstrating a notable shift towards higher levels of achievement in reading skills. Learning English is crucial since it is the language of communication worldwide. It plays a vital role in our life because it is linked with opportunities for a better living. Learning English indicates that we are taking the best steps towards the present and the future since it is the language that everybody needs to keep up with the information age (Hijazi, 2012). That is why it is very important to provide intervention projects for the pupils to improve their literacy levels and teaching performance of teachers being the reading teacher.

TABLE 2
TEST OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SCORES IN THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS IN READING

Aspects	Test Scores		Computed T	Critical T	Decision	Interpretation
	Pre	Post				
GRADE 4 Learners in Reading		6.35	3.442	1.621	Reject H ₀	Significant
	Post	15.80				

Table 2 presents the results of the test of difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of grades 4 learners in reading proficiency. The pre-test mean score was 6.35, while the post-test mean score significantly increased to 15.80. The computed t-value was 3.442, exceeding the critical t-value of 1.621. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating a significant difference in reading proficiency before and after the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (Project DEAR). This interpretation underscores substantial improvement in reading skills among grade 4 learners following the intervention. The present study was supported by Krashen (2004), "The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research". Krashen emphasizes the importance of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), such as DEAR, in developing literacy skills. The study found that students who engage in FVR have better reading comprehension, vocabulary, and overall academic performance. Project DEAR encourages FVR, making it a practical application of Krashen's findings. Likewise, Miller's (2013) work supports the idea that consistent reading habits, cultivated through programs like DEAR, lead a lifelong reading engagement and improved literacy. She highlights practical strategies for implementing effective reading programs in school. DEAR aligns with Miller's recommendations for fostering a reading culture and developing strong reading habits among students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained from the study, it is evident that the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) has significantly enhanced the reading proficiency of grade 4 learners. The substantial increase in post-test scores, from a mean of 6.35 to 15.80, underscores the effectiveness of this intervention in fostering improved reading skills among students. The rejection of the null hypothesis further supports these findings, indicating a clear and statistically significant difference in reading performance before and after the intervention. This study highlights the importance of targeted reading programs like Project DEAR in educational settings, emphasizing their role in promoting literacy development and academic achievement among elementary school learners.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Utilize the proposed instructional supervision plan formulated.
2. Teachers must implement the Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in teaching and learning reading to improve the performance of the learners especially in comprehension skills.
3. School Heads must formulate training design and conduct such to the teachers to acquire knowledge and competencies in teaching reading among learners integrating the strategies and approach used in the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in teaching and learning.
4. School Heads must assist and provide technical assistance to the teachers in the formulation of reading passages, stories and activities used in the class especially in the implementation of Project Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) in teaching and learning.
5. School Heads must provide resources and other materials needed to produce reading materials and resources used in teaching reading.
6. Teachers must create a classroom where learners have more materials and learning resources use during teaching-learning process.
7. Teachers must encourage learners to love to read through modelling and showing to them how to read, and

8. Future researchers should replicate this study to include different locales and include different variables aside from the mentioned in this study.

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