Kathy Temple: Differentiated Instruction and Flexible Groups

The purpose of my action research project was to look at the impact of flexible grouping and differentiated tasks on student learning. The motivation for this action research project was to increase my students’ engagement in their learning. I work in a Middle School that has low test scores. The literature that I have reviewed claims that students should be assessed often so that instruction can be adjusted to each student’s level of understanding. It also claims that students learn more when taught in small groups. I was hoping that differentiating instruction and grouping students flexibly would give students more meaning in their learning and thus help to raise their test scores.

I focused on 3 aspects of student learning: students’ abilities to explain mathematical ideas both orally and in written form, students’ self concept as mathematicians and student achievement on assessments. I used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze my goals including surveys, interviews, teacher journal, audio tape, video tape, and analysis of student work. This study involved 54 students.

My findings showed that the use of flexible grouping practices along with differentiated instruction did positively impact students’ abilities to explain mathematical concepts. These methods also had a positive influence on students’ self concepts as mathematicians, and students’ test scores. I plan to continue to use these practices in the future.