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Reading for Meaning: The Effects of Student Choice on Reading Comprehension in the Early Grades

Tyler Garofalo
Illinois Wesleyan University

Ana Floriani, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Poster Presentation P24

**READING FOR MEANING: THE EFFECTS OF STUDENT CHOICE ON
READING COMPREHENSION IN THE EARLY GRADES**

Tyler Garofalo and Ana Floriani*
Educational Studies Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

Controversy exists in the education world about the best way to teach reading. Although much research highlights effective methods, this study addresses whether students who struggle with decoding and fluency improve their reading comprehension when they are given more responsibility for or a lead in their reading. Using Guided Reading as a focus, first graders were observed when a teacher led the instruction of a book and then again when students choose the literature and formulated discussion. Kindergarten and first grade teachers completed a questionnaire which asked how they assessed comprehension and their overall feelings about letting students guide their own learning. The findings show that many students choose books which would not be considered at their ability level, yet still succeeded in reading and comprehending the book. Student questions and discussions were much more focused on items other than the text, such as pictures or photographs, and less concerned with factual recall.