

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: November 15, 2018

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Pullman - Education Addition 202

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

**READING TO DOGS: EFFECTS ON STUDENT ORAL READING
FLUENCY, COMPREHENSION, AND READING MOTIVATION**

Chair: Darcy Miller

The purpose of this nested and layered case study was to explore the experiences of students participating in a reading to dog program. Ten student participants (nine were struggling readers) were enrolled in a sixty minute per week, ten-week reading to dog program. Participants completed a motivation to read interview and an informal reading inventory (for fluency and comprehension) and parents of the participants were interviewed before and after the ten-week program. During the reading to dog program, the participants read leveled and library books for 30 minutes to an assigned dog, with dog handlers and volunteer listeners in the reading room. The researcher took observational and anecdotal notes throughout the program. The data from the assessments and observational notes were analyzed for patterns and themes. Participants' enthusiasm, resilience and parent perceptions of satisfaction with the program were evident themes. One participant had improvements in all areas: motivation to read, fluency, and comprehension, whereas the other participants' scores were variable from the beginning to the end of the program but there were more gains than losses. This case study revealed the positive nature of a reading to dog program, the participants' enjoyment of the program, and the positive experiences of the parents. Due to the qualitative nature of exploring this case, it is unclear how the reading to dog program impacts students' reading skills. A call for future research is offered for studies that can determine what factors contribute to improving students' reading skills in a reading to dog program.