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## Effective Early Literacy Interventions for Developing Phonological Awareness, Oral Language, and Print Knowledge in Kindergarten Students

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EFFECTIVE EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPING  
PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS, ORAL LANGUAGE, AND PRINT KNOWLEDGE  
IN KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

by

Amy Lyn Tye

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University

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## DEDICATION

To my husband, family, and friends for your continuous support, understanding, love, and encouragement through this process. To my project reviewers for their commitment to my success on this project and their expertise along the way. Finally, to my friend Kelsey, I could not have completed this without you. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

As I reflect on this school year, I think about the success of my students in reading intervention. We have worked hard over the last six months and most have grown significantly. Some of that growth has been rapid and some of the growth has been a process. We have worked hard and I know we have a few months left to continue our work and try new strategies.

But each year, I wonder if I can do more to provide opportunities for growth in my students. I use several resources and interventions to differentiate my instruction. I work with students for eight to twelve weeks and most exit the intervention program. A small percentage of students will continue to receive intervention services for more than one year. Often a deficit in early literacy skills leads to students striving to meet grade-level literacy standards. I strive to meet students where they are and provide appropriate interventions that will best meet their literacy needs and set them on a path towards success. My desire was to research and evaluate *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?*

Most of these students have been identified in kindergarten and often come to school with limited literacy exposure. These are students we consider to be *struggling* students. This term has always been one that seemed to not quite fit the students I work with. It seems to put a negative label on a student. Although they are having difficulty in acquiring the skills needed to become a reader, they are continuously striving to become

better readers through teacher and family support. According to Harvey & Ward (2017), a striving reader lacks experience with text and has not yet become curious about books. They have often not had many positive experiences and come from varying levels of literacy exposure. These students continue to strive to become readers throughout their early elementary years.

This lack of experience and practice greatly impacts student success in kindergarten. “Children who are particularly likely to have difficulty learning to read in the primary grades are those who begin school with less prior knowledge and skill in certain domains, most notably letter knowledge, phonological sensitivity, familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading, and language ability” (National Research Council, 1998). Knowing students’ needs as they enter kindergarten through assessment and observation provides the opportunity to differentiate instruction and provide opportunities for students to gain experience with literacy.

### **Chapter One Preview**

This chapter will provide a background on my experience as an interventionist working with striving readers in primary grades. First, I will discuss my personal background and teaching history. Next, I will discuss the current programs and interventions that are used with our striving readers and how I use these interventions to meet the needs of students in small group intervention. Then, I will discuss my vision for strategic interventions for students in kindergarten. Finally, I will discuss my rationale and passion for this specific area of intervention.



## **Personal Background**

As a student reading and writing did not come easy for me. My life experiences and desire to *be the change* is what drew me to the teaching profession. My journey of seeking an education degree initiated when I realized my current major in Interior Design was not one of passion to me. After talking with family and friends, I decided to change my major to Early Childhood Education. The decision set me on a path to seek out my passion of teaching.

As I worked through my program, I became so excited to teach. I realized through my course work and experiences working with students that teaching was my passion. I could not wait for my practicum placement, graduation, and the start of a teaching career. I had several long term substitute positions before I received my own classroom position as a Grade 1 teacher. As I taught that year, I realized how wonderful and difficult teaching can be. I also experienced the impact I have on my students and families. I had one student who remained in communication with me for a few years after I had left my position. I learned many things the first year in my classroom, and I have grown so much as an educator since.

## **Teaching History**

The path that I had planned in this field has changed over the years. I began as a long-term substitute and taught for three years before having my first child. Having children offered the opportunity to make raising my family a full-time career and reflect on my desire to one day return to the classroom. After ten years at home, I returned to teaching as a kindergarten long-term substitute. As that placement ended, I was offered a

position as a Title I Interventionist. In this role, I would meet the needs of students in K-3 providing additional support through small group work in reading and math.

I was nervous to accept a position of which I knew very little, but I was ready to teach again and was willing to learn all I could in the position. My hope had been to accept the position, rise to the challenge learning along the way, and teach in the classroom again the following year. These plans did not come to fruition, but I would not change my journey.

It has been eight years since my return to teaching. My Title I Intervention position has provided me with the opportunity to work with striving readers using assessments to drive instruction and best meet the needs of students. My own experiences with reading and writing, combined with what I have learned as an interventionist, has provided me with perspective and insight on my instruction. As an interventionist, I can relate to my students and share experiences with them. I work with striving readers, finding the holes in their foundations of reading, and work diligently to fill them in. Spandel (2005) states, "Somewhere along the way, school became a place where it is not alright to fail, ever. What a shame. Fear of failure increases stress and minimizes willingness to take chances." I want to see students succeed by gaining new strategies and confidence in their abilities to read and write. I want to create an environment where it is safe to be risk-takers, for this is where authentic learning takes hold.

### **Current Program**

The current process in assessing students and identifying intervention needs is based on fall kindergarten assessments. For two days before school is in session, families

make an appointment with the child's kindergarten teacher to meet and conduct the assessments. These literacy assessments include concepts of print, phonemic awareness, a record of oral language, letter identification, and dictation. The outcomes of these assessments provide the team with a picture of a student's literacy knowledge and skills. The team uses the assessment data to identify students that may be at risk and could benefit from a literacy intervention. If students score below 20% on these assessments, they are considered for Title I services. These assessments are given in the fall, winter, and spring and are used to progress monitor students in an intervention.

If students qualify for Title I intervention, they are provided with 30 minutes of intervention each day to work on lacking literacy skills. This is done in a pull-out model within a small group setting, approximately four students, in a classroom adjacent to their kindergarten classrooms. Assessments are reviewed for the entire grade level and students are chosen based on need. Often students are put in a small group from various classes. Interventions run six to eight weeks as students practice and work on literacy skills within the small group. Students are progress monitored through the use of observations, running records, benchmark assessments, letter assessments, and word assessments in order to track student progress.

### **Intervention Groups**

I am an elementary educator licensed to teach students from Birth-Grade 6. I provide intervention in literacy and math daily during the grade level intervention blocks. In my classroom, I provide interventions for students in grades K-2 through the Title I program. Title I is a program that is federally funded to support students in districts with

a high percentage of free and reduced lunch. This support is given in order to provide opportunities for support in reading and math to assist students in meeting state academic standards. Typically, students that perform at 20% and below on standardized testing and assessments qualify for Title I intervention. I will occasionally meet with additional individual students for a Tier III intervention as needed or as my schedule allows.

Tier I intervention is provided by the classroom teachers differentiating their students' instruction through small groups like guided reading and math stations. Tier II intervention is when students require a bit more support from an interventionist in addition to the Tier I classroom support. This intervention is provided in small groups of three to four students to provide more individualized student needs. A Tier III intervention is for students needing intensive intervention in a one-on-one environment working on specific skills. These interventions can be provided by an intervention teacher, special education teacher, reading specialist, or math specialist. These interventions are typically in addition to or in response to interventions the child has already received. This system is referred to as the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and is used to provide intervention to general education students and a means to identify students needing special education services (Rosen, 2019).

Each grade level has a 30-minute literacy intervention block as well as a 30-minute math intervention block. During this time, teachers working with small groups provide intervention and push in or pull students from their classrooms to intervene as needed. We have multiple specialist teachers working with students during this time including English Learners, Special Education, Speech, Americorp, and Title I.

I take small groups of approximately four students from multiple classrooms. Small groups are created based on similar literacy needs. Students may need to work on specific skills or reading at a similar level. We use the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention Kit (LLI) with our students in Grades 1 to 5. These intervention kits are based on guided reading levels. Primary students are given an assessment in their classroom three times per year using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. This assessment determines a student's guided reading level and is used to provide a student's current reading level as well as place a student in the appropriate LLI intervention kit.

In kindergarten, students that do not know any letters, cannot write their name, and have low scores on the kindergarten assessments will be placed in my small group. We start the year working on the student's name through letter recognition and writing. We will work with letters using magnetic letters, stamps, writing, playdough, wikki sticks, sand bins, letter cards, sorting buckets, and sorting cards. We use these tools to provide practice and literacy exposure to our striving kindergarten students. Although I have researched and implemented many research-based activities in my classroom, there is not a consistent, systematic, and sequential plan to benefit striving readers. This is what has led me to research *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?*

### **Vision**

As an interventionist, I am striving to find ways to meet my students' literacy needs. I want to provide appropriate, consistent, and systematic interventions that will

show progress and growth in my students. The goal is to provide an intervention that will produce growth and allow the student to be successful in their classroom. Currently, we have a Leveled Literacy Intervention Kit (LLI) for our students reading at a Guided Reading Level A. Kindergarten students that are in intervention from the start of the year are in a Pre-A Guided Reading Level. This means they need interventions prior to using LLI because they are not ready for this intervention.

We do not have a current system to use as an intervention for pre-reading kindergarten students. Through the research of *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?*, research-based interventions will be analyzed and explored that will specifically meet the needs of students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure. The framework will be systematic and consistent in order to provide students with the exposure and practice they need to grow and develop as readers.

These interventions will be implemented in my classroom but also shared amongst colleagues for the best success for those in need of intervention. This would be accomplished by creating an intervention plan for kindergarten students containing research-based interventions in the areas of early literacy, phonemic awareness, oral language, concepts of print, phonics in early intervention, and assessment that will effectively meet the needs of students. It will contain a lesson model for planning and a systematic outline for lessons in a small group setting. Currently, there is not a program or curriculum in place being used to meet these specific student needs.

I will also look at supplemental programs for interventions that may benefit the needs of intervention students. I would like to share my findings with our Reading Specialist, classroom teachers, and administration to seek new ways to close the achievement gap through research-based interventions. The lessons I develop will be used in my intervention groups from the start of the academic year until they are able to show understanding and growth using progress monitoring and assessment. My hope is to grow my striving readers into thriving readers through the use of effective, systematic, consistent intervention.

### **Rationale**

We are a Title I school with a high population of English Learners and students new to the country. We have several students that come to us with little to no literacy exposure prior to kindergarten. Two years ago, the funding for preschool programming changed and the program was no longer offered to our families at no cost. From that point forward, the percentage of students entering kindergarten with literacy and classroom experience went down significantly. In order to meet students where they are, teachers need to find ways to intervene and provide our students with the experiences and practice to build phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and oral language skills.

### **Conclusion**

Striving readers will continue to work toward becoming readers until successful, research-based interventions are provided to them. Children entering kindergarten that have limited literacy exposure are at a disadvantage. These students need to have opportunities for exposure and practice in order to develop and grow as readers.

Intervention in kindergarten is essential in closing the academic achievement gap and developing thriving readers. The classroom curriculum is fast-paced and often difficult for students with limited literacy exposure. These learners need additional support through effective intervention. The research to the question *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?* will provide an answer and an outcome to meet students' early intervention needs.

Chapter two will review the literature and discuss the research of early literacy development as well as specific areas of literacy including early literacy, phonemic awareness, oral language, concepts of print, assessment, and best practices in intervention. Chapter three will discuss the early literacy intervention framework that has been created as a website to provide information and interventions in the areas of phonological awareness, oral language, print awareness, and assessment. Chapter four will discuss the outcome of the project, learnings, and how the project changed throughout the course of writing to include development of the website.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The literature review intends to answer the research question: *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?* The information and research in the review will help to guide general education teachers and staff providing interventions to students during their early literacy development. Students begin kindergarten with a wide range of skills, abilities, and exposure to literacy. For some students, kindergarten is the first school experience. For others, their environment has been rich in literacy experiences. The educator must determine a student's literacy needs and provide instruction and intervention to best meet these needs.

This chapter will consider early literacy exposure and its impact on literacy development. Phonological and phonemic awareness development in kindergarten students will be discussed as well as the impact oral language development has on a student's literacy achievement. Early print knowledge and awareness can indicate how a student will perform as a reader in elementary and beyond. Therefore, using literacy best practices to meet the needs of striving students is essential to a child's literacy development and their early literacy exposure.

#### Early Literacy Exposure

Early literacy skills are foundational in the journey of becoming a reader. "Research has shown that the early years in a child's life—when the human brain is

forming—represent a critically important window of opportunity to develop a child’s full potential and shape key academic, social, and cognitive skills that determine a child’s success in school and in life” (Obama, 2013, p. 1). A child’s literacy foundation is crucial to their educational experience. There are many ways to teach and provide experiences in phonological awareness in order to assist in building a student’s literacy foundation.

Children’s exposure to text through environmental print, alphabet, letters, songs, rhymes, and books helps to begin a child’s journey to become a reader with a positive reading identity. A parent’s involvement in this exposure is critical to a child’s literacy journey.

### ***Parent Involvement***

“Although good reading instruction in the classroom is essential, another important influence on children’s early literacy ability is their home literacy environments, which have been associated with children’s emergent literacy skills and later reading achievement” (Tichnor-Wagner, Garwood, Bratsch-Hines, & Vernon-Feagans, 2015). It is important that parents begin building the foundation during Birth-3 years. This fundamental exposure will set children up for success as they begin their academic years. Literacy rich environments and literacy-based opportunities provided in the home such as rhyming, singing songs, joint reading, and drawing greatly enhance a child’s literacy development and foster a child’s reading identity (Weigel et al., 2010). It is vital that parents are provided with resources and are supported by funded child care and preschool education programs. Evans et al. (2010) finds that a child that has access to twenty books in the home will obtain the equivalent of three more years of schooling compared to their peers without access to books regardless of parent’s

education, class, or occupation. Yet, theorists believe that it is the exposure to language, as it relates to the quantity and quality of speech, in the early years at home that is foundational in fostering phonemic awareness (Reese et al., 2015).

Children begin their schooling years with a variety of exposure and experience with language, literacy, and print. When children are given foundational literacy exposure in their early childhood years, their ability and curiosity of literacy skills will continue to grow. Research has also shown that family stress, routines, resources, finances, and social-emotional health may also impact a child's literacy development (Weigel et al., 2010). Students that do not receive this foundation will need exposure to many opportunities during school to bridge this academic gap and may have continued difficulty with literacy skills in the future. This could lead to the need for early literacy intervention in order to provide the literacy foundation needed to support them as a future reader. During the preschool years, childrens' experiences and environment contribute to literacy growth.

### ***Preschool Years***

With varying exposure to literacy, it is imperative that students are provided with high-quality preschool experiences and environments (Gonzalez et al., 2009). Early childhood professionals must provide a high-quality program with daily opportunities to immerse students in a literacy-rich environment. Activities and lessons that include reading, shared reading, letter activities, songs, books, and play opportunities help to build students' phonemic awareness. Providing opportunities to work with letters and

print through guided mini-lessons, small groups, and workstations will build literacy skills daily for students during their most opportune literacy learning.

Modeling reading, providing opportunities for students to share in that reading experience through discussion, and guided reading groups provide students the opportunity to read and comprehend books building on a student's fluency and automaticity. In a literacy-rich classroom through exposure, lessons, guided practice, workstations, guided reading, intervention, small group work, and play, teachers can foster emergent and early literacy skills in their students (Gonzalez et al., 2009). These experiences will have a positive impact on the six variables that indicate literacy development.

### ***Determining Factors***

According to Lonigan and Shanahan (2009), there are six variables that determine early literacy skills leading to delayed literacy development in children from birth to age 5. The variables include: alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits, (RAN) of objects and colors, writing letters or name, and phonological memory. These six variables aid in determining literacy development in children and are a precursor to the child's success as a reader. With exposure and practice within these first six variables, children will have the opportunity to build a strong literacy foundation.

In addition to these six, Lonigan and Shanahan (2009) discuss the importance of concepts of print, print knowledge, reading readiness, oral language, and visual processing adding to a total of 11 variables that lead to the correlation of achievement in

later literacy skills in both preschoolers and kindergarteners. Some of these core variables will be discussed in this chapter. The journey of literacy development starts with phonological awareness.

### **Phonological and Phonemic Awareness**

Phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are often interchangeably used when discussing the foundation of literacy development in children. Many times there is confusion in knowing what phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are, how they relate to the development of reading, and what educators need to know in order to provide instruction to develop these skills. Research has shown the importance of phonemic awareness and its impact on reading development in young children. “In kindergarten, phonological awareness (i.e., the ability to distinguish sounds in words) predicts better reading outcomes across the early school years, and alphabetic understanding (i.e., the ability to recognize letters) is linked to well developed or deficit reading skills” (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2009). Therefore the following section will discuss the difference between phonological and phonemic awareness as well as discuss the three developmental phases children move through as they develop phonological awareness and begin reading.

#### ***Phonological Awareness***

The ability to understand and manipulate any size sound in words is the definition of phonological awareness. This awareness is presented through rhyming, word syllables, the ability to hear beginning sounds through onset and rime, as well as the ability to hear each phoneme separately in a word or words (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). Phonological

awareness is a broad understanding of these skills. According to Stanovich (1992), phonological awareness follows a hierarchy of learning in children. It begins with the awareness of words and syllables and then transitions to the understanding of onset and rime. Once the child understands these beginning literacy concepts, they begin to develop phonemic awareness.

The ability to recognize onset and rime had gained recognition by Goswami and Bryant (1990) and several other researchers in the early nineties as a predictor of becoming a reader. However, Muter, et al. (2004) determined that phonemic awareness in early literacy development is a better predictor of reading skills in children than rime awareness. This was in contrast to the belief that the ability to rhyme was a primary indicator of future reading success (Muter et al., 2004). There are conflicting positions on how rhyme awareness predicts future reading success. Research shows the importance of using the strengths of phonological awareness skills as a determining factor to success in the development of reading skills.

The focus of many educators of young children is using rhyme and alliteration activities as a means of developing a child's phonemic awareness. As a child works through the stages of phonological awareness, they develop a knowledge and understanding of rhyming and syllabification. The ability to rhyme and make correlations between related onset or rime of words has been stated to determine progress in reading skill development.

The ability to blend and segment sounds while identifying the onset and rime of a word requires a deeper phonological knowledge base (Schuele & Boudreau, 2008).

Reutzel (2015) discusses that blending and segmentation skills and practice are better at developing phonemic awareness and letter-sound understanding than rhyme and alliteration activities. Knowing that phonological awareness is a strong indicator of reading development, early exposure and consistent practice of phonological skills are imperative to a child's development of phonemic awareness.

### ***Phonemic Awareness***

Phonemic awareness is defined as an understanding of phonemes, the ability to recognize, hear, and manipulate the individual sounds of letters. It is a deeper level of understanding of individual sounds or phonemes that make words. Phonemic awareness is a more specific understanding of individual phonemes and is one skill set within the context of phonological awareness. "Correlational studies have identified PA and letter knowledge as the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first 2 years of instruction" (Pears, et al., 2011). Students begin to hear and recognize phonemes or individual sounds. How these sounds are manipulated and used to form words is the most complex and final stage of phonological awareness (Stanovich, 1992).

The National Reading Panel (2000) finds instruction in phonemic awareness to be very effective in preschool, kindergarten, and the onset of first grade. The International Literacy Association (ILA) provides a position statement on phonological awareness and its critical role in a child's ability to develop language and early literacy skills. Students should be provided with developmentally appropriate activities and instruction that are both efficient and purposeful. "It is critical that teachers are familiar with the concept of

phonemic awareness and that they know that there is a body of evidence pointing to a significant relationship between phonemic awareness and reading acquisition” (ILA, 2020).

“Fostering phonemic awareness is a critical aspect of emergent literacy development” (Allington, 2013, p. 522). It is important for students to understand that words derive from sounds or phonemes. Readers use these sounds to create words and word patterns. Students need to have the ability to manipulate these sounds to gain an understanding of how words work. This includes rhyming, blending, and segmenting (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015).

The sequence in which phonemic awareness skills should be taught is as follows: rhyming, syllable units, onset and rime, and finally phonemes. Introducing activities in this sequence and working toward understanding before moving forward in the sequence provides a developmentally appropriate progression for teaching phonemic awareness skills. Educators need to have an understanding of phonological awareness and their lessons surrounding phonemic awareness should be intentional. Phonological instruction is intended to be a part of a balanced curriculum that connects learning to read and write (Yopp & Yopp, 2000). As children begin to develop phonemic awareness, they are ready to begin reading and writing with understanding and will begin to move through the three-phase reading process.

### **Three-phase Reading Process**

According to Nichols, Rupley, Rickelman, & Algozzine (2004), there is a three-phase process children go through as they learn to read. The first phase children



develop is the logographic phase. In this phase, they are able to associate a picture, symbol, letter shape, or configuration to something in the memory that is stored.

Environmental print exposure is crucial in this developmental stage. Children are aware of the world around them and begin to recognize and correlate pictures, colors, shapes, and symbols to their everyday life experiences. As this develops, children begin to rely on memory and recall when they encounter something familiar.

Once students desire to learn more about letter symbols and sounds, they move into the alphabetic phase. In this phase, children begin to recognize the relationship between phonemes and graphemes. This allows readers to begin making connections with these sounds and symbols as they begin to recognize words and are able to understand the corresponding rules that apply to words.

The orthographic phase develops when reliance on rules and phoneme-grapheme relationships become more automatic. Students become more fluent in their reading, and they begin to understand the meaning of the text with automaticity. Students are able to automatically recognize words in the text without having to sound out unfamiliar words. In this phase, they rely on previous experiences with these words and word parts to instantly derive meaning. This is the phase of the proficient reader (Frith, 1985).

Although phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are foundational to literacy development, oral language plays a significant role in early literacy development. Oral language development begins in early infancy and continues into Grade one. Phonological awareness is one element of oral language development.

## **Oral Language**

Oral language is foundational in literacy development (Harvey et al., 2017). It is the ability for one to speak and express themselves. Oral language development consists of storytelling, phonological awareness, and talking about the text (Nutbrown, 2006). The knowledge of oral language includes not only receptive language skills but expressive language skills as well (Kamil, 2010).

Oral language development takes place primarily in the home before attending kindergarten. Honig (2007) discusses that oral language is not taught but learned through observation and exposure. Theorist Noam Chomsky believes that language is wired in the brain, that we are born innately knowing our native tongue (Chomsky, 1965). Storytelling and discussing text are imperative to oral language development. Experiences in reading stories, sharing picture books, discussing text, drawing, and writing provide experiences that build on oral language development. Building on these concepts leads to growth in reading development and leads to future reading success.

When children hear receptive language through conversation on a regular basis, they are encouraged to express themselves through talk allowing for strong oral language development (Beauchat, et al., 2012). Kindergarten students begin their school years with a vocabulary range of approximately 14,000 words (Riddle, 2009, p. 39). There are 26 letters that are representative of 44 different sounds in our English language (International Literacy Association & Bear, 2018). When students have an understanding of these sounds through phonemic awareness and oral language development, they have

access to approximately 84% of words in the English language through the ability to sound out unknown words (International Literacy Association, et al., 2019).

### ***Oral Language and Reading Success***

According to Lonigan and Shanahan (2009), “oral language was found to play a bigger role in later literacy achievement when it was measured using more complex measures that included grammar, the ability to define words, and listening comprehension than when measured using only simple vocabulary knowledge” (p.4). Language development is critical in emergent literacy learning. Young children who demonstrate oral language proficiency and early abilities in processing print do better in learning to read in Grades one, two, and three (Scarborough, 2001). According to Clay (2005), extending a child’s language is not an easy task; there is not a simple path. It takes time, exposure, and practice. Yet there are many ways to provide opportunities for children to grow in their language development (Askew & Doyle, 2008).

Conversation and encouraged self-talk provides opportunities for children to have language modeled to them and practice responding in conversation. Vygotsky (1978) theorizes that children develop an inner speech based on their early speech which allows children to then have the ability to think with words. He believes that knowledge and thought come through oral language stemming from social interaction (Gambrell & Leslie, 2014). This social interaction teaches children how to take turns when talking, be a good listener in a conversation, and gain an understanding of conversation structure. When students are provided opportunities to play with their peers, learn through center-based experiences, and experience-rich modeling of language in the classroom,

they are given opportunities to practice these developing language skills (Beauchat, Blamey, & Philippakos, 2012).

Discussing text with students, selecting texts for children to explore and discuss, as well as shared reading experiences through read-aloud models literacy conversations to students in the classroom. Talking about text through introductions of the story followed by a discussion about the story during a read-aloud will assist in building background knowledge and language development. Children who are exposed to language through conversations and interactions with parents, teachers, and peers will continue to build their oral language skills. Modeling, repetition, and practice are pivotal during this stage of oral language development. Many things coincide in language development: more language experience leads to more vocabulary development which in turn builds stronger oral language (Beauchat, et al., 2012). Oral language development should be the focus in our English Language Learners.

### ***English Language Learners***

“Since it is estimated that ELLs will comprise more than 40% of the US elementary and secondary populations by 2030, addressing the particular needs of these students is paramount to the future success of education in the US” (Gambrell & Leslie, 2014). Knowing this, it is crucial that teachers are prepared to support these students with oral language development and experiences in the classrooms.

Proficiency in oral language and vocabulary is critical to English Language Learners’ (ELL) success in literacy development and academics. As these areas develop, skills in writing and reading will likely improve (International Literacy Association,

Echevarria, & Goldberg, 2017). Teachers must not rely solely on ELL teachers to meet their students' needs, but be educated and prepared to partner with staff to provide ELL students with the support and scaffolds they need to be successful.

ELL students with low oral language can benefit from small group instruction with a focus on oral language, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development. They can also successfully integrate into the classroom environment and quickly build strong oral language skills through conversation and modeled language with teachers and peers (International Literacy Association et al., 2017). Making connections with print through oral language allows a child to gain understanding and further develop their early literacy skills.

### **Print Knowledge**

Piaget's theory on the development of knowledge can be applied to print knowledge as well. When a child recognizes print they have seen before in their schemes or encounters print that is new to them but can connect it to something they have seen or experienced in the past, Piaget refers to this as assimilation. A child can then use this new knowledge to accommodate the old learning and apply it to their new learning. Piaget refers to this as accommodation (Carpendale, et al., 2018). Having an understanding of print organization and directionality means a child has print knowledge. Through understanding concepts of print, exploring letters and sounds with inventive spelling, and exposing a child to a print-rich environment, print knowledge develops.

### ***Print-rich Environment***

Children begin to learn about print and literacy from an early age, and it starts with their environment. Print surrounds children in their environment on a daily basis. Text can be found all around inside and outside of the home on signs, packages, billboards, electronic devices, and clothing. Children become aware of print and begin their literacy development journey long before they attend the first day of school (Nutbrown, 2006). Although most of a child's print exposure occurs before entering school, the print-rich classroom environment can be beneficial in building on a student's print exposure as well as provide opportunities for print exposure in children who are at a deficit in this area of literacy.

According to Gambrel (2014), the child's physical environment helps to build a foundation for literacy learning for the child. The classroom should be a print-rich environment that is welcoming with defined areas throughout the space. A combination of centers and whole group activity spaces that include books, interactive whiteboard, anchor charts, theme-based displays, calendar, and daily schedule. Experiencing print in their world begins the process of developing concepts of print.

**Concepts of Print.** To have these concepts means that the child has an understanding of how a book works. It can determine reading readiness in a learner and is a stepping stone in literacy development. "Well before they learn to read, children form initial understandings about books, words, and letters and how they work. Collectively, these early understandings of print concepts have been referred to as 'print awareness,' 'concepts of print,' or 'concepts about print' (Nell K. Duke et al., 2013).

When children enter kindergarten, the language associated with visual and auditory learning through literacy is often a new concept that must be learned. Lack of understanding of these print conceptions can often lead to difficulty in literacy development. There are terms used to discuss print that include *Find the top of the page; begin reading the first sentence; locate the word; turn the page; and what is the title of the book?* Beginning readers must also be aware of the rules of reading such as reading left to right, top to bottom, how punctuation is used in a sentence, as well as the ordinal and spatial concepts of words (Nichols, et al., 2004). Through this understanding, the willingness to begin writing and expressing themselves through inventive spelling begins.

**Inventive Spelling and Writing.** This is the process in which children begin to write. They make connections between letters and the sounds they make, combined with what they hear, and document the symbols in their writing. This beginning writing stage does not follow correct punctuation or spelling, but it is based on how the child uses their phonemic awareness skills to document their writing (Gambrell & Leslie, 2014).

Invented spelling documents what the students know about words and sounds. As the child develops a stronger sense of phonemic awareness, their understanding can be documented through their writing. The process of inventive spelling is developmentally appropriate and aligns with Vygotsky's zones of proximal development (McLeod, 2017). While writing inventively, students are able to practice exploring words and reflect on learned word structure and understanding. This allows students to make decisions about letters and words actively instead of relying on memorization to write.

Previous research has impacted invented spelling in the classroom. Inventive spelling has been controversial in the sense that there is conflicting research with concerns and benefits to this natural writing practice. The research states that invented spelling made it difficult for students to transition to conventional spelling (Gentry, 2000).

Recent research conducted by Ouellette & Sénéchal (2017), two developmental psychology researchers from Canada, have found a strong correlation between beginning reading and writing and inventive spelling.

Inventive spelling should be celebrated in the classroom. Many students have not had the opportunity to explore the abilities they have to segment and blend the sounds they hear to create their own writing. Classrooms should provide a safe environment to explore the possibilities of inventive spelling. Allington (2013) states, “Inventive writing works...instruction in letter-sound relationships is of little value or utility unless the child is interested in using those letter-sound relationships to read or write” (p. 522). Inventive spelling and writing is considered an important best practice in exploring and developing literacy.

### **Literacy Best Practices**

There is not one single method, curriculum, approach, or program that teaches children to read. What is important to remember is that each child learns at their own pace and requires differentiated instruction based on their learning needs. Evidence-based practices in the classroom ensure that students will be provided with research-based teaching in order to meet their needs and expected outcomes. To determine an



evidence-based practice, there are two things to consider. The practice must contain data that was collected and studied to determine success in student outcomes as well as expert opinion in the field who study and monitor the progress of students through the use of practice. As educators, we must seek evidence and research and rely on wisdom to determine if a program or practice will support student's instruction and best meet student needs (Gambrel & Morrow, 2015). One way to determine what skills will best support instruction and meet the needs of students is through assessment.

### ***Assessment***

Assessment is crucial in determining what a student knows and what a student needs. An assessment helps to determine the next steps to provide students with what is needed specifically to develop and build on their literacy skills. Formative as well as summative assessments are to be used together to determine a student's reading abilities and provide proper instruction that will help differentiate instruction.

Educators must strive to see the whole literacy picture of a child. Considering not only what a student shows on one test, but what they continuously show in the classroom as readers. Proper training and knowledge in literacy development greatly impacts student growth and ensures students are being provided with intentional lessons to build literacy skills.

The child's home environment, book access, and literacy experiences also play a large role in the child's literacy development. These influences need to be strongly considered during the assessment of the child's reading and literacy knowledge. Once

assessments are complete, the data can be used to determine next steps for students through intervention.

### ***Intervention***

Once data is collected and analyzed to determine a student's need for intervention, the next step is to determine what intervention best meets that student's needs. There is not one individual program that will benefit every student. Each student's needs are unique and require educators to be knowledgeable about research-based interventions. Gambrell & Morrow, (2015) states, "...the most effective literacy frameworks include a variety of instruction and activities that provide children with a balanced literacy diet" (p. 169). In intervention, emerging readers have gaps in their early literacy foundation. This causes students to struggle with the skills needed to become a reader.

The main goals are to assist in providing rich experiences and opportunities through evidence-based best practices and research based interventions that will help to fill gaps in the student's learning. Intervention with our most vulnerable emergent readers should be provided by experienced, licensed teaching staff. According to Allington (2013), "...paraprofessional-led reading interventions rarely produce the accelerated reading growth necessary if one ever hopes to turn struggling readers into achieving readers." Interventions that have been implemented with licensed educators and have shown to produce growth in student's literacy skills when used with fidelity are considered research-based interventions. These interventions prove to benefit our striving readers. Growth can be determined through the use of progress monitoring.

### ***Progress Monitoring***

As interventions are implemented, it is important to monitor a student's progress through the use of progress monitoring. Using check-in assessments to determine growth helps the intervention teacher and classroom educator determine if the interventions are successful in teaching and practicing the skills taught. Using these quick assessments can help to show growth and progress as well as determine lesson planning and next steps to meet the student's intervention needs. One important research based intervention is in the area of phonics.

### ***Phonics***

Phonics is an important element in the development of early literacy. It plays a vital role in building a student's ability to develop letter-sound relationships (synthetic), word patterns (analytic), and decoding strategies. There are many instructional approaches to teaching phonics. It is important that teachers are knowledgeable and flexible in their use, allowing for differentiation based on students' needs. Each student responds differently to the instruction provided and teachers must be able to adapt to student needs in order to find the best strategies for instructing them. Students must also be able to decode multisyllabic words as they approach the immediate grades, so providing opportunities to build larger words and break them into syllables develops decoding strategies that transfer into their reading (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015).

Phonics can be taught in many different ways, but research supports two methods that have been successful in teaching phonics. Phonics should be taught both explicitly

and systematically. When letter sounds or phonics skills are initially taught, the student should know and be told specifically about the skill or strategy in which they are working. This is considered explicit phonics teaching.

A systematic phonics teaching method contains a continuum of skills that are introduced systematically to the student from easy to more difficult. Each skill is slowly introduced to ensure understanding before moving to the next skill in the continuum (ILA & Wiley, 2019). In addition to these methods, the International Literacy Association also recommends that foundational phonics instruction should contain the following seven key characteristics.

**Key Phonics Instruction Characteristics.** There are seven characteristics that are key to effective phonics instruction according to the International Literacy Association (2019). *Readiness skills* indicate that a student is ready for phonics instruction through phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition. Alphabet recognition is the knowledge, recognition, and understanding of letter names, letter shapes, and the sounds they make. The understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds called phonemes shows a child has developed phonemic awareness.

Providing a *scope and sequence* where skills are introduced on a continuum in a way that builds on previous skills is also a characteristic of effective phonics instruction. These skills build from easy to more difficult and provide an opportunity for students to be successful in their learning.

*Blending* is yet another characteristic of successful phonics instruction. Blending is the way in which sounds are put together to create and problem solve words. It is a

strategy used to figure out unknown words by blending each sound together. This strategy must be practiced and modeled frequently.

*Dictation* is a means to verbalize words and sounds in order for students to write. This activity aids in developing spelling strategies and listening for specific sounds and patterns of sounds in words. It provides an opportunity for students to use what has been learned with alphabet recognition and put it into practice.

Using word building and word sorts provide activities for students in order to build *word awareness*. Word building involves providing letters to students allowing them to build words to recognize spelling patterns and sounds of letters in words. It causes them to become more flexible with letter sounds, word patterns, and spelling of words (ILA & Wiley, 2019). *Making Words* (Cunningham, 2013) is one approach to teaching word patterns and letter-sound relationships through word study. Word sorts provide students the opportunity to identify common patterns in words as well as provide opportunities to see larger chunks of words in repetition. Students are provided with words that contain similar spelling patterns. Words must be sorted based on the patterns and chunks the student sees in the words provided (ILA & Wiley, 2019).

*High-frequency words* are words that are most commonly used in the English language. Although some are irregular and do not follow typical English rules, most are regular and are important for students to learn by sight. Students should learn up to 300 of these words based on high-frequency word lists by the time they reach the end of Grade one.

*Reading connected text* is the goal of phonics instruction. Students use the skills they have learned and apply them to reading accountable, decodable texts. These texts are phonetically based and should be read several times to build fluency, comprehension, and provide writing opportunities for students to practice learned phonics skills (ILA & Wiley, 2019). Using research-based best practices in teaching literacy provides educators with the resources needed to aid in building literacy skills in their students’.

### **Rationale**

Research shows the need for intentional, effective, and systematic interventions early in a child’s educational journey. When student need arises, educators are to take action and make research-based decisions on how to best meet each student’s literacy needs. As all students enter school at varying levels of literacy knowledge, it is important that educators are equipped with the knowledge and resources to support early literacy learners.

The project provides a space to collaborate on best practice teaching, intervention information, and provide interventions that will specifically meet the needs of developing literacy learners. With all the information on literacy intervention, there is a growing need to provide information for educators that includes resources to educate and provide differentiated instruction for their students. This enables the educator to focus on the students and use the resource to find specific interventions to meet a students specific need through assessment and progress monitoring.

Using the research to answer the question: *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy*

*knowledge and exposure?* provides information to begin building an intervention model that will best meet students' needs in early literacy development.

### **Summary**

In summary, chapter two discussed the impact of early literacy exposure as it pertains to literacy development. Understanding phonological and phonemic awareness as they were defined to reveal their impact on early literacy development. Oral language and literacy development are impacted greatly by a child's print knowledge. Taking the next steps to determine intervention with the use of assessment leads to the purpose of the intervention project.

Chapter three utilizes the information from the literature review and applies the information to formulate an intervention model for early literacy intervention. A framework of intervention resources will be created including the areas of phonological awareness, oral language, and print knowledge. Lessons, strategies, assessments, and progress monitoring will be included in the resource. Finally in chapter four, the project will be discussed and the learning process will be shared to include changes in the project development and the rationale behind the changes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project Description

#### Introduction

The process of researching the question *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?* allowed the opportunity to dig deeper into the understanding of early literacy and factors that impact the development of phonemic awareness in students. Working as an interventionist, it is important to have an understanding of what students need to aid in the development of literacy skills in early kindergarten. The first few months of school are difficult for students that lack phonemic awareness and understanding. Knowing the impact phonemic awareness has on reading, it is important to research some interventions and create a framework to guide interventionists in meeting the early literacy needs of students.

For the past five years, I have worked in the field of intervention. The most challenging portion of this work is the lack of having a framework to follow that would provide the exposure and practice for students to grow in the development of their early literacy skills. Early literacy begins developing at home and continues through approximately Grade one. It is more than letter recognition and letter-sound connection, encompassing several elements to provide a well-rounded understanding of phonemic awareness.

In order to best meet individual student needs, a framework with interventions and strategies in phonological awareness was needed in order to provide growth and



exposure to phonemic awareness. This framework can be used by interventionists, Special Education teams, and classroom teachers to provide targeted, intentional exposure, and practice in deficit phonological awareness skills.

### **Research paradigm**

Many researchers and theorists of early literacy agree that early intervention is vital to a child's development as a future reader. Theorists like Maria Montessori and Friedrich Froebel believe that with the use of manipulatives and sensory experiences to explore and discover on their own, making mistakes and playing to learn is beneficial in literacy development (Dougherty & Morrow, 2011).

According to Piaget, a child's mind is under construction; it is constantly growing and changing. With research in oral language development, Noam Chomsky believes that language is wired in the brain from birth. Marie Clay has spent years of work and research on literacy development writing notable books and professional materials on literacy development. She acknowledges the strong connection between early language development and literacy skills (Dougherty & Morrow, 2011).

When it comes to print knowledge, there are many known theorists whose work focuses on how early literacy skill development impacts print recognition and knowledge. Vygotsky believes in the importance of prior knowledge and relying on previous experiences to process and make connections. Rousseau and Pestalozzi believe that children learn through their interests and what makes them curious. Learning should be a natural process that occurs through exploration and curiosity.

Taking all the theories into account, the created framework will provide interventionists and staff a resource for phonemic awareness development to encourage and strengthen phonemic awareness skills in kindergarten students. It is to be used with students that show the need for exposure and practice to develop and grow in early literacy. Often educators may find that not all strategies or curriculum work for all students. It is time-consuming and difficult to find the resources needed to meet each student's individual learning. This framework will be a resource for educators to use that will guide them in pinpointing students' specific needs through assessment and locating strategies and activities to teach and practice deficit skills with their students (Dougherty & Morrow, 2011).

### **Method Rationale**

The purpose of this project was to create a resource for educators to be used with students that needed exposure and practice with phonological awareness skills. The beginning of the year is a new transition for young children. Their first experience with school is likely when they enter the kindergarten classroom. Often students come to kindergarten without preschool experience. They may come from their home or a child care setting where they have had minimal exposure to phonological awareness activities or early literacy exposure.

Children's early literacy skills vary greatly. It is often difficult to hone in on the skills needed to grow a student's phonological awareness and prepare them to become a reader by the end of their kindergarten year. With English Language Arts (ELA) standards, kindergarten students are expected to make substantial growth throughout

kindergarten. Students with little to no phonological awareness come to kindergarten with a significant disadvantage to those students with developed early literacy skills.

As an educator working with struggling readers, I have seen the impact early intervention can have on literacy. Although there are resources available to support these students once they become readers, there is a lack of resources and guidance for the intervention of early literacy skills. There has been shared conversation amongst staff that there is a need for a resource containing information and activities that support the development of early literacy skills. Often we are aware of the needs of students, but we do not have the resources available to begin creating lessons to support them.

Through the research of this project, the significance of phonological awareness skills as it relates to reading development is evident. In order to provide students with the opportunity, exposure, and practice of these foundational skills, an online framework in the form of a website for educator use was researched and developed.

Using a backwards design approach, student outcomes are established, assessments and progress monitoring is determined and activities and lessons are planned. Working from a goal and back to what needs to be taught to meet the specific outcomes is a student centered approach allowing for differentiated instruction. This approach gives direction to the learning and works specifically toward meeting student outcomes.

The website is designed with the backwards design concept in mind. The site was created to be user friendly and contains a plethora of information in the areas of early literacy intervention. The design itself is simple and has many ways to navigate easily to

what the educator is looking for. There are additional resources available on the website to help guide and educate the user. It is developed to be accessible through laptop, iPad, tablet, or mobile device. Once outcomes for a student are established, the educator can find assessments and activities to use for intervention.

### **Setting and Audience**

The project setting is a small, suburban Preschool-fifth grade elementary school in the Midwest. The school's population is approximately 388 students. The demographics of the school are as follows: 45% Caucasian, 18% Hispanic, 18% Black, 12% Two or more races, 6% Asian, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The school qualifies for Title I based on a free and reduced lunch percentage of 46.78%. Title I reading and math support services are provided to students in grades k-2. Title I funding supports 1.25 FTE positions and additional funding supports 1.75 FTE creating a total of three intervention positions in the building. Of these positions, 1 FTE works with grades k-2 students, 1 FTE works with grades 2-3, and 1 FTE works with grades 3-5. A Reading Specialist is on staff as well as one full-time and one part-time Reading Recovery staff.

The framework will be a website available for use with all intervention teachers working with K-1 students, English Language teachers, Special Education Staff, and K-1 classroom teachers. The framework will primarily be used with students in kindergarten showing a need for phonemic awareness intervention either in the classroom or with an intervention teacher. But, it can also be used in the classroom with students that need additional support in these areas as well. Implementation will begin in early kindergarten for students that show a need for phonemic awareness exposure and practice. The

framework could also be implemented with late kindergarten and early first graders that could use additional practice and exposure to early literacy skills.

### **Project Description**

This project is focused on student needs as it pertains to early literacy including phonological awareness, oral language, print knowledge, assessment, and progress monitoring. These needs will be evaluated through fall assessment and determinations will be made to understand what interventions are needed for the student. The created framework is a website providing information for educators on intervention, resources for planning, and interventions that are specific to the areas of phonological awareness, oral language, print knowledge, assessment, and progress monitoring. It is divided by the pages above that include activities and strategies to build skills with the student to practice and develop early literacy skills as well as additional resources for distance learning. The framework is digital, in a webpage format, to provide access of the materials for in person or distance learning.

First, the home page of the website contains the purpose of the project, information on the three phases of reading development, and the areas of phonological awareness, oral language, print knowledge, assessment, and progress monitoring page links. Navigation is in the sidebar to provide additional support in navigation. Contact information is listed at the bottom for educators to ask questions and suggest additions to the website. A link to the writing and research behind the project from the Hamline Digital Commons is provided in the footer on each page of the site.

Figure 1

*Home page*

Next, there is a page for each area that contains information on the topic as well as additional resources for the educator. The table of contents for the page is at the top for ease of information location as well as on the side for ease of navigation.

Figure 2

*Early Literacy Intervention Pages*

Then, research and theorists are shared in the area of early literacy and their work is briefly discussed. Assessments are provided in the framework to make determinations of student need allowing educators to pinpoint areas of concern.

Figure 3

*Research and Theorists*


**Intervention Framework for Early Literacy**

- Home
- Phonological awareness**
- Oral Language
- Print Knowledge
- Assessment and Progress Monitoring
- About me

### Research and Theorists



**Jean Piaget**

Piaget's theory is focused on a child's language development. The skills to assist feeding objects by



**Lev S. Vygotsky**

Vygotsky's theory focuses on learning occurring for children as they are exposed to new concepts

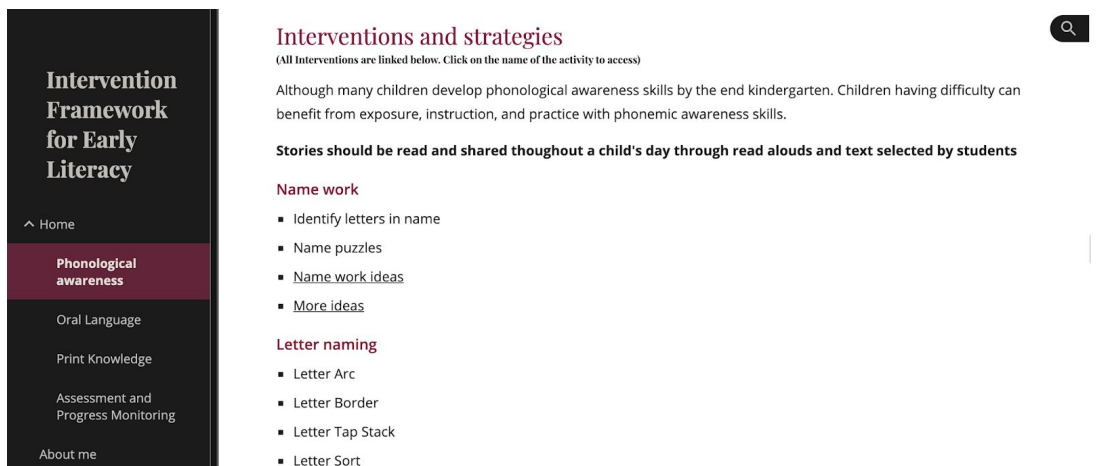


**Dr. Arnold Gesell**

Gesell believes in a systematic way of teaching reading. Beginning only when children are ready to learn

Then, early literacy interventions for each area is presented for providing students with practice and exposure to deficit skills in each section.

Figure 4

*Intervention*


**Intervention Framework for Early Literacy**

- Home
- Phonological awareness**
- Oral Language
- Print Knowledge
- Assessment and Progress Monitoring
- About me

### Interventions and strategies

(All Interventions are linked below. Click on the name of the activity to access)

Although many children develop phonological awareness skills by the end kindergarten. Children having difficulty can benefit from exposure, instruction, and practice with phonemic awareness skills.

**Stories should be read and shared throughout a child's day through read alouds and text selected by students**

**Name work**

- Identify letters in name
- Name puzzles
- [Name work ideas](#)
- [More ideas](#)

**Letter naming**

- Letter Arc
- Letter Border
- Letter Tap Stack
- Letter Sort

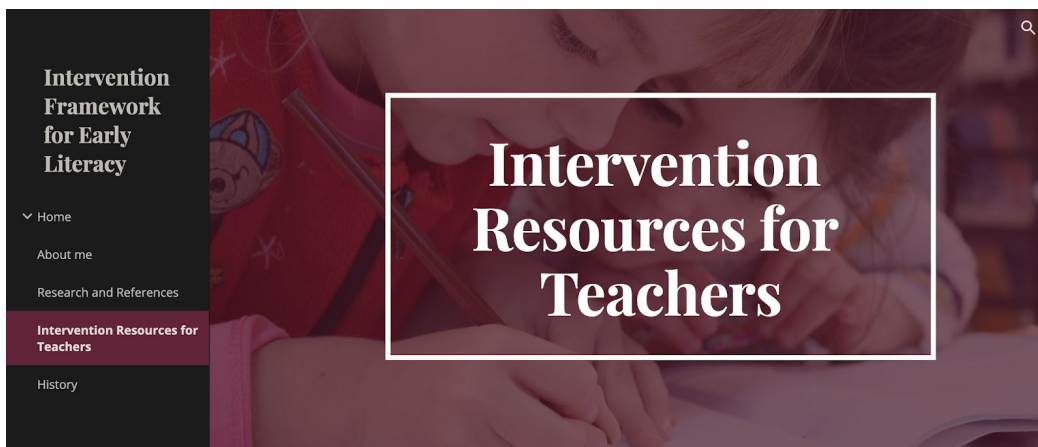
Next, a page with assessment and progress monitoring is included in order to provide educators a method to document growth and determine the next steps for intervention.

Figure 5

*Assessment and Progress Monitoring*

Finally, throughout the site there is additional information, articles, videos, websites, and distance learning lessons to provide the educator with the information needed to best meet the needs of the students.

Figure 6

*Additional Resources*



## **Timeline**

The project would begin in the fall of 2020. The framework is developed and available by the beginning of the school year to be used for intervention. The framework will be shared with kindergarten teachers, English Language staff, and Special Education teachers through a link to the website to use with their students. Teachers would be asked to use the framework for October and November 2020 to determine growth in students' early literacy development. Participation is voluntary for those interested in using the framework, but if used, educators are asked to follow the plan of implementation. This implementation would be a commitment to using the framework from October to November for 30 minutes each day with small groups determined by fall assessments. Staff will provide feedback on its design as well as the impact it had on a student's development of early literacy skills. Implementation will also include progress monitoring to determine growth and development of early literacy skills.

Once the two months are complete, participants will be asked about the framework and how it impacted their student's growth in early literacy skills. The framework would be evaluated based on feedback and use. Changes and additions will be made if needed and will be available for use in PreK-1 for students showing deficit phonological awareness and early literacy skills. The framework would be an evolving website that would change with need, shared resources, and new found research on early literacy development.

## Summary

The chapter focused on the development of a website that would provide a framework of interventions for students in need of early literacy skills. First, the purpose of the development of an early literacy framework is discussed which includes the paradigm and the rationale. Next, the setting of the framework and the specific audience that will use the intervention framework is shared. Then, the framework is presented and described discussing the plan for use as well as what will be included. Finally, a timeline for the project is presented outlining its use and follow up on outcomes from the framework.

Chapter four will lay the foundation for the framework discussing the purpose behind why this project was needed as well as share the researchers' perspectives on early literacy. The website will be presented and include information to guide educators on student needs based on assessment, specific interventions in each area of early literacy, and information on distance learning accommodations for educators. There will be four sections: phonological awareness, oral language, print knowledge, and assessment. These areas will be broken down into resources, research, activities, and assessment for use in providing targeted interventions based on student early literacy needs.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

What began as a project focused on early literacy research and creating an intervention framework for educator use, turned into something more significant and useful than I could have imagined. At the start of my research and development of this project, our classrooms were being conducted in the traditional face to face model. As I progressed through the writing and project creation process, our classrooms made a dramatic shift to distance learning during a global pandemic. I would have never been able to imagine how teaching and learning could change so drastically and so quickly.

As I have considered my research question *What are effective research-based literacy interventions for supporting kindergarten students with limited literacy knowledge and exposure?*, it has been a time of reflection and rethinking how teachers teach our students, intervene, and how educators can best meet their needs through various platforms of learning. Finding ways to connect, teach, differentiate, and provide intervention in ways we had never thought. What remains is students rely on us to teach them, but they also need our response to differentiated social, emotional, and academic support. Our early literacy learners need us, now more than ever. But this can look very different for each child, each school, and each district. We are embarking on new ways to teach and new ways to learn as never before.

Yet, as educators we are still aware of the needs of our students whether in our classrooms or at a distance. So how do we continue to intervene and meet students' needs as we transition to these new ways of learning and teaching? Using the research and

information that was gathered, I was able to look at the plethora of resources, information, and research around early literacy. The impact of this research, as well as the changed education structure we are currently experiencing, has greatly broadened my understanding of early literacy and caused me to be flexible and challenged through the knowledge I have gained and the experiences I have had. The way I have taught and the way I will teach has been forever changed.

### **Personal and Professional Growth**

Through the research I have had the opportunity to expand my early literacy knowledge and read about the history of the research in early literacy development. This research has provided a greater understanding of a child's literacy development as well as ways to focus in on areas of need providing exposure and practice in a classroom or intervention environment.

As I have reflected on my previous intervention practices and student outcomes, I have grown in the knowledge that there are many ways to teach and practice early literacy skills. A child developmentally moves through the stages of literacy development at their own pace. It is the job of an educator to provide exposure and opportunities for students in the area of early literacy based on formal and informal assessments. No longer are we teaching to the midline of the class and following curriculum directly. We are seeking to learn what our students need and differentiating the instruction to best meet their early literacy needs.

It has been over twenty years since I was first in college working toward my undergrad degree. During that time my research was minimal and my writing was in a

completely different format. The learning that occurred during the process of writing, researching, and developing has significantly impacted my knowledge and understanding of early literacy as well as provided confidence that I am using best practices when providing interventions to my students. After staying home with my children for ten years and then returning to the profession, I previously felt that I was behind my peers in experience and expertise in the field of education and literacy. I have gained a better understanding of literacy and feel equipped to teach among my peers and provide insight and relevance to planning and collaborating.

### **Literature Review**

As the project progressed, I found the research and theorists to be beneficial to the development of the website. Using multiple learning opportunities to provide intervention is crucial in early literacy development. From the works of Montessori and Froebel with the focus on sensory and hands on activities to the work of Gesell believing in a systematic approach to learning to read, their research influenced the sources used providing an assortment of activities and strategies to practice early literacy skills.

When researching the theorists and connecting with the resources found, the realization that a variety of activities was needed on the website to provide ample opportunity to practice and explore skills. I realized the importance of the work of these theorists and how they have influenced the way we teach and assess early literacy.

Through the reading and research, the framework created itself through their work and the awareness of the developmental process of early literacy learners. The ability to make connections with the research and the need for the intervention I provide made the

work from the educators and theorists before me more valuable. To be able to connect our work back to research and theory allows educators to understand best practice and strive to meet our students' needs through research based practices.

### **Implications**

Through this time researching, teaching, and creating the project, I realized as our classrooms began to change, my project needed to adapt to the changes as well. What was once planned as a printable resource is now a website providing resources for teachers not dependent on a specific platform of teaching. Through these changes and challenges during the pandemic, an unexpected need to provide resources digitally became a quick reality. Teachers have a need to have resources available to us wherever we may be. The abrupt transition to distance learning was difficult as we realized we may not have access to the physical texts and plans we typically resource for our lesson planning. Literacy resources were in the classroom including manipulatives, engaging books, posters, and read alouds. This change to a digital resource was a needed one in the sense that we are embarking on unprecedented times as educators. Using research on early literacy and best practice, the framework in the form of a website was created for this purpose.

Through my work professionally as well as a learner, I have discovered that many educators are unsure about how to provide an intervention to their students in their classroom. Often schools determine a time during the day for teachers to meet with their striving students to provide additional pre-teaching, teaching, and reteaching. Often referred to as What I Need or WIN time, educators are expected to provide an

intervention to their striving students without many resources to do so. I have found in my work that teachers have a need for a source that can help provide them with research based interventions in order to plan for these small group times.

My research and project can provide resources to classroom teachers, interventionists, reading specialists, and special education teachers. The website is a working resource that will allow for teachers to gain insight and information on early literacy skills as well as locate interventions to best meet their students' early literacy needs. Colleagues will be able to contribute to the site by providing resources, sites, and information on phonological awareness, oral language, print knowledge, assessment, and progress monitoring.

Knowing through research the amount of information and resources available, it was difficult to provide a comprehensive resource in a limited period of time. Although limited on time, the potential for this to become a comprehensive resource is there. It is possible for this resource to be used across the building and potentially district wide as a resource for educators. With input from other educators, this resource has the potential to provide educators with a comprehensive resource for intervention in early literacy.

### **Moving Forward**

The purpose behind the project developed as I was researching ways to provide intervention to kindergarteners that I provided intervention to in the fall. I discovered that the resources I typically use were in the form of hard copy, digital, textbooks, etc. My desire was to find a way to have the resources in one place that were available anywhere

for lesson planning. Although they are not all there yet, the plan is to use this platform to house the information used to provide early literacy intervention to students.

The experience of distance learning last spring was a realization that many of our students will be starting out the school year behind. The need for a resource providing interventions arose at just the right time for this project. With the unknown start of the school year, my hope has been to provide a resource for myself and for those providing intervention to our early literacy learners. The resource became a website that was accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime containing the resources and information needed to provide interventions to early literacy learners.

The website containing the framework for intervention will be published and shared online as well as with colleagues. It is designed as a continually evolving resource that will provide research based interventions, resources, and distance learning information for educators. As the year progresses, my desire is to continue to add to this resource for personal use as well as the use of others.

With all of the research and information available on early literacy, it is possible that many things could be explored in the future. Researchers must continue to research early literacy and how it has been impacted by distance learning. Finding better ways to reach our students digitally and connect during hybrid and distance learning has become essential in our work as educators. Taking the resources we have and providing a means to teach through a new platform will be continued throughout this year and the years to come.



## **Professional Impact**

Through my research on early literacy, it became evident to me the importance of phonological awareness and its strong connection to reading success. Although we have great strategies in place, things are not how they used to be. It is important that early literacy is comprehensive to include many aspects of literacy development. In order for the developed framework to be comprehensive, it will be shared with educators within my building as well as online to access information and interventions. Resources will be added throughout the year through further use and suggestions from educators that rely on the source.

The rush to push students along when they are not developmentally ready or have not been provided with proper literacy exposure makes early literacy learning more difficult and frustrating. The understanding that not all students learn at the same pace and that some need more time and exposure was very evident in the research. Instead of pushing a child along, the need to continue the work, trusting the process, and providing students with multiple experiences and practice proves to be the best scenario in successful literacy development. Having the information, resources, and patience to continue to try new strategies and activities, inform parents on ways to support their child, and providing positive feedback helps to break apart the frustration in learning. It is imperative to build positive relationships with students and families to collaborate and best meet students' literacy needs.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the reflection of creating a web-based intervention resource. First, the reasoning behind the resource is discussed and reflections on the changes made to the original intent of the project are discussed. Next, the personal and professional growth from the project is shared as well as implications of the project on myself and other educators. Next, a review of the literature that drove the project is discussed and shared. It includes research work and theorists that impacted the project. Finally, the plans for the resource moving forward are discussed as well as the potential professional impact from the sharing and growth of this project into a comprehensive resource.

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