

Multisensory Phonics Intervention on Literacy Skills for At-Risk Children

Faculty: Jean L. DesJardin, Associate Professor, Education Department

Student: Jessica Hergenrother, 2018, Sociology-Early Childhood Teacher Education Certification; Email; hergenrotherj@moravian.edu; QPA: 4.0

Start Date: May 30, 2017 for 10 weeks

Description of the SOAR Project

This SOAR project will investigate the relationships between the home literacy environment and literacy skills in early elementary school-aged children, when an intentionally designed multisensory phonics intervention is employed for 4 weeks. This project is an extension of an Independent Study project during the spring of 2017, investigating a variety of literacy interventions for young children who are most at-risk for reading achievement under the direction of Dr. Jean DesJardin. In the Spring of 2017, the designated SOAR student, Ms. Jessica Hergenrother, has explored a variety of literacy interventions that may influence reading outcomes in young children who are most at-risk for reading achievement which culminated in a written overview of empirical research in the field. One intervention in particular, a multisensory phonics intervention, has been noted to support children's word decoding skills. This SOAR project would implement this specific current intervention with young children who attend the 4-week summer reading clinic at Moravian College. In addition, we would like to better understand the relationships between the home literacy environment and children's reading outcomes.

SOAR Project: Faculty and Student Collaborative Roles

This SOAR project extends Jessica's prior knowledge of literacy intervention for at-risk children in the area of literacy development as it relates to reading outcomes in young children. Jessica will (1) research and write a complete literature review investigating the relationships between the home literacy environment, multisensory phonics intervention, and reading skills in early-school aged children, (2) write three research questions to investigate these relationships, (3) choose appropriate measures to assess these constructs (e.g., the Home Literacy Scale; DesJardin, 2007; Phonics Screener), (4) collect data during the summer reading clinic, and (5) create a user-friendly guide and presentation for classroom teachers on the importance and application of the

multisensory phonics intervention in the general education classroom (see Table 1 for a complete listing of student and faculty tasks).

Jessica has been very successful in her Independent Study project with me this spring. I have the most confidence that she is well prepared to work on a prospective research project (i.e., library research creating a thorough literature review, research hypothesis to statistical summary and results), and be able to create a useful guide and presentation for classroom teachers. Jessica demonstrates excitement for the project, initiative to seek out resources and literature, and is also eager to work with Dr. Elizabeth Conard (Director of Reading Clinic and Professor for the graduate reading assessment summer course) and myself in the 4-week summer reading clinic at Moravian College. I have obtained permission from Dr. Conard for Jessica to work with her and myself in the reading clinic. Dr. Conard is very excited for the project as it is cutting-edge research in the field of reading disabilities, and she would like Jessica to present her findings to her graduate students attending her future graduate courses.

Summary of Benefits to the Student

The benefits of participation in this project for the student are numerous. This opportunity provides Jessica with very clear, specific, scholarly activities that align directly with the field of early childhood education. As Jessica prepares to student teach this fall, it is essential for her as an effective teacher, to identify students who are at-risk for significant reading delays in order to plan efficient and intentional intervention in a Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtII) model found in all elementary schools. The opportunity to conduct direct prospective research in the reading clinic at Moravian College is an incredible hands-on experience to truly understand how young children respond to a empirical-based reading intervention in a classroom setting. The presentation in the summer (SOAR students) and this fall (student teachers in a senior seminar course), as well as, to graduate students next spring, provides Jessica with the opportunity to discuss her findings with the greater education audience who are invested in learning new innovative ways to support young children's reading process. I have had seven successful SOAR projects in the past at Moravian College and am very eager to continue collaborating with students, instilling the love of learning and scholarship through this faculty-student relationship.

Budget

Jessica will work 40 hours per week for 10 weeks; \$300 per week x 10 weeks = **\$3,000**. She is not requesting on-campus housing for this SOAR program.

DesJardin SOAR Proposal – Summer 2017

Table 1. Proposed Timetable and Project Milestones (start date: May 30th, 2017):

Dates	Student Project(s) and Purpose	Faculty Role Descriptions
June, 2017	<p><u>Literature Review</u> – In order for Jessica to establish a strong foundation for the subsequent project, it will be valuable for her to read current literature in the field regarding the home literacy environment and reading skills in elementary school-aged children. <u>Jessica will:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a brief, yet thorough, literature review combining her Spring literature review (3-5 pages); 2. Write three research questions for summer inquiry. 3. Design multi-sensory intervention phonics lessons. 	<p>Dr. DesJardin will familiarize Jessica with the literature to support this project in order for her to write a complete and thorough literature review with at least three research questions.</p>
June, 2017	<p><u>Implementation of Project:</u> Jessica will submit the appropriate protocol to HSIRB at Moravian College; Meet with Dr. Jean DesJardin and Dr. Elizabeth Conard to go over the summer reading clinic protocol (i.e., classroom set-up; reading assessments, weekly goals, meet graduate students in the reading assessment class)</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will assist in the writing of the HSIRB protocol; Set up meeting with Dr. Conard (Director of reading clinic); and go over all reading clinic protocol with Jessica.</p>
July, 2017	<p><u>Four-Week Summer Reading Clinic</u> – Upon approval of HSIRB, Jessica will conduct multi-sensory lessons in the model classroom (PPHAC 302) with small groups of children; Collect reading scores from Dr. Conard; and input data into SPSS-20; Work with Dr. Jean DesJardin on statistical analyses and summary of findings; and present project to the summer SOAR students.</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will mentor Jessica during data collection process and data analysis in SPSS on a weekly basis and guide statistical summary. She will guide Jessica in her presentation for SOAR.</p>

DesJardin SOAR Proposal – Summer 2017

<p>August, 2017</p>	<p><u>Development of Teacher Guide and Presentation</u> Jessica will use the literature review above to write a user-friendly teacher guide on the importance for multi-sensory phonics intervention for young children at-risk for reading achievement in an RtII framework.</p> <p>Faculty and student submit a 1-2 page report to the SOAR director assessing the project.</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will collaborate with Jessica on the development of a teacher guide and presentation for students in the fall seminar course.</p>
<p>October, 2017</p>	<p>Jessica will share the results of the study and teacher guide with the students in EDUC 370 - Student Teaching Seminar</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will facilitate presentation in EDUC 370.</p>
<p>April, 2018</p>	<p>Student participates in the Moravian College Scholar's Day.</p>	<p>Faculty and student participate in Moravian College Scholar's Day with other SOAR students.</p>

The Influence of Multisensory Phonics Intervention with Young Children at Risk for Reading Challenges

Jessica Hergenrother, Junior, Sociology & Early Childhood Education

Dr. Jean DesJardin, Associate Professor and Director of EC, Education

Date of Project: May 30, 2017 for 10 weeks

Rationale:

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the effects of multisensory phonics lessons on students' progress in overall literacy achievement, specifically in word decoding. Students' standardized test scores from literacy assessments will be used as a baseline for this project when looking at literacy achievement over time. The subjects of this intervention study will be the students who are attending the summer reading clinic at Moravian College. Students who are struggling with phonics/decoding will be the focus of this intervention group. Students in this group will be identified based on their formal literacy assessment scores from the previous spring (2017). Through intentional phonics instruction, that targets and stimulates multiple senses (e.g., visual, tactile, and kinesthetic), rather than simply the traditional visual/auditory methods, these students will be exposed to an alternative way of learning relationships between sounds, syllables, and letters within words. Informal assessments will be used in combination with the baseline test scores to plan instruction that is appropriate and effective. Data will be collected throughout the duration of this project through formal and informal literacy assessments such as Phonological Awareness Skills Test, Phonics Skills Assessment, as well as, anecdotal observational records. Additionally, I am interested in the children's home literacy environment. A parent questionnaire, The Home Literacy Scale (DesJardin, 2007) will also be quantified and total scores will be used in the data analyses. At the end of this study the data collected from the reading clinic will be compared with the baseline test scores to examine the relationships between pre and post assessments to investigate relationships between the use of multisensory phonics instruction and the home literacy environment on students' literacy achievement/growth.

I am very passionate about early childhood education, especially in the area of literacy development. I have witnessed many young children, in my field placements in the Bethlehem area schools and personal experiences, struggle with basic phonemic awareness and decoding of words at upper and lower elementary ages. As an educator, I feel that every child deserves equitable opportunity to learn, and this is especially important in core areas such as literacy. Many times in literacy instruction, the teaching practices are centralized around traditional lessons that often times work for the average student. The majority of students who are reading on-level are able to learn through these traditional instructional practices, and are strong visual and auditory learners. However, my passion for *all* students to learn leads me to wonder how the children who are not learning adequately from traditional teaching strategies might be taught differently to improve retention and understanding of these fundamental skills. Through this

research project, I hope to learn more about specific instructional strategies that can better support young children who may be most at-risk for literacy achievement. My hope for this project is to break through a barrier that might be preventing these children from mastering the basics of phonics/decoding through a multisensory approach that will engage and support even the most diverse learner. I am eager to apply my findings to my own future classroom as an Early Childhood Educator and share my findings with the future educators this fall (e.g., student teaching seminar class and Dr. DesJardin's graduate literacy course).