

**Whole Language Instruction vs. Phonics Instruction:**  
Effect on Reading Fluency and Spelling Accuracy of First Grade Students

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of whole language instruction versus phonics instruction for improving reading fluency and spelling accuracy. The participants were the first grade students in the researcher's general education classroom of a non-Title I school. Stratified sampling was used to randomly divide twenty-two participants into two instructional groups. One group was instructed using whole language principles, where the children only read words in the context of a story, without any phonics instruction. The other group was instructed using explicit phonics instruction, without a story or any contextual influence. After four weeks of treatment, results indicate that there were no statistical differences between the two literacy approaches in the effect on students' reading fluency or spelling accuracy; however, there were notable changes in the post test results that are worth further investigation. In reading fluency, both groups improved, but the phonics group made greater gains. In spelling accuracy, the phonics group showed slight growth, while the whole language scores decreased. Overall, the phonics group demonstrated greater growth in both reading fluency and spelling accuracy. It is recommended that a literacy approach should combine phonics and whole language into one curriculum, but place greater emphasis on phonics development.

## **Introduction**

Literacy is the fundamental cornerstone of a student's academic success. Without the skill of reading, children will almost certainly have limited academic, economic, social, and even emotional success in school and in later life (Pikulski, 2002). According to the most recent report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 33% of U.S. students in elementary schools read below the basic reading level (NAEP, 2011). Therefore, one-third of our students struggle with literacy and will likely continue to struggle as they get older. In fact, there is evidence that first-grade reading achievement is a good predictor of later reading achievement and that children who are not reading with a degree of independence by third grade are likely to have reading difficulty for the rest of their lives (Pikulski, 2002). The question then becomes, how does an educator ensure that the students develop these fundamental reading skills needed for future success?

This daunting question is one that educators have struggled with for decades. Over the past twenty years, there has been considerable controversy over the competing emphases to beginning reading known as the whole language approach and the phonics approach (Hempenstall, 2009). Whole language (also known as whole-word, look-see, or sight word) can be described as teaching reading contextually and holistically, through the use of content rich literature and a print rich environment. The premise is that teaching is child-centered and language is acquired implicitly. Phonics can be described as teaching reading explicitly and sequentially, through the relationship of letter-sound correspondence in words. Individual phoneme patterns are studied by segmenting, blending, decoding, and manipulating individual words. Simply stated, supporters of the whole language approach think children's literature, writing activities and communication activities can be used across the curriculum to teach

reading; backers of phonics instruction insist that a direct, sequential mode of teaching enables students to master reading in an organized way (Cromwell, 1997). Proponents of each maintain their particular approach is the key to engaging children in reading. Neither technique has proven truly effective and fail-safe (Brooks & Brooks, 2005).

This ongoing controversy spans over several decades and has been labeled the “Great Debate.” (Chall, 1967). The problem is that both reading theories represent exactly opposite instructional strategies. Whole language implies reading instruction using the top-down model and focuses on the overall meaning, while phonics uses the bottom-up model and focuses on word analysis skills (Block, 2001). Ultimately, phonics threatens the belief system represented by whole language, and as a result, the fight is bitter and irrational (Collins, 1997).

In *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, Jeanne Chall (1967) popularized the “Great Debate” label by reviewing research that shed light on the disagreement about whether phonics should be taught to children or whether they should be taught to read words as wholes (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, Duffy-Hester, 1998). Beginning in the 1970’s, a theory emerged defining phonics as a basic skill and intervention for struggling readers (Block, 2001). Readers with low achievement received extensive phonics practice, without focusing on meaning, creating deficits in comprehension for these low level readers. As a result, the whole language movement again gained momentum in the 1980’s and really gained a foothold around 1990 (Cromwell, 1997). Throughout the last century the pendulum has swung back and forth, sparking controversy both educationally and politically. Today, to assert that the “Great Debate” about the role of phonics in beginning reading instruction is alive and well today is an understatement (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, Duffy-Hester, 1997). Currently, proponents convincingly defend both approaches, leaving educators, administrators, and parents confused as

to the most effective way to teach beginning reading.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Is one of the two approaches more effective than the other, whole language instruction or phonics instruction? In the context of such a controversial debate, the purpose of this study is to compare the effect of whole language instruction and phonics instruction on students' reading fluency and spelling accuracy in a first grade general education classroom.

### **Definition of Terms Used in this Study**

*Whole Language Instruction* - For the purpose of this study, whole language will be defined as child-centered reading instruction which focuses on the constant interaction and frequent exposure to real, vocabulary-rich literature. Educators must carefully organize time and space to allow students to independently and collectively engage in texts, at their own speed and often in the own ways (Church, 1996).

*Phonics Instruction* - Phonics will be defined as the systematic and explicit instruction of letter-sound correspondence. Educators must have a plan of instruction that includes a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships that are organized into a logic sequence (Armbruster, 2001).

*Reading Fluency* - Fluency is defined as the ability to read sentences smoothly and quickly. Students will have one minute to read a grade level passage aloud and the teacher will record all errors. Errors are words which are mispronounced, substituted, omitted, or read out of sequence.

*Aimsweb Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM)* - A reading fluency assessment with a passage that the students read aloud for one minute. The teacher administers the RCBM to each student individually and records the number of words read correctly per minute. RCBM

scores measured words read correctly in one minute and there is no cap to the score.

*Spelling Accuracy* – Spelling accuracy is defined as the ability to write words with correct letter sequence. The teacher will dictate one word every ten seconds for two minutes, then record the number of words that each student spelled correctly.

*Aimsweb Spelling Curriculum Based Measure (SCBM)* - A spelling fluency assessment, lasting two minutes with twelve words dictated every ten seconds. The teacher administers the test in a whole group setting and says each word aloud in a sentence, while the students write the word on their paper. The SCBM scores measure words spelled correctly and the highest possible score is fifty-two points.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Whole Language Instruction**

Research shows that whole language is a broad term and can be interpreted in many ways. In fact, studies prove that a universally accepted definition for whole language is lacking. Betty Bergeron, a university instructor and literacy researcher, conducted a meta-analysis of sixty-four whole language articles and found that each author defined whole language differently (1990). Some studies described it as a theory, an approach, a method, a philosophy, a belief, or even a curriculum. After Bergeron (1990) concluded her meta-analysis, she constructed the following definition of whole language instruction, “a concept which includes the use of real literature and writing in the context of meaningful, functional, and cooperative experiences in order to develop in students’ motivation and interest in the process of learning.” (p. 6). With this comprehensive and holistic approach, students learn to read by focusing on the meaning of words in the context of the story.

Dahl and Schrarer (2000) conducted a mixed method study, screening various whole

language schools and selected eight first grade classrooms that embodied whole language programs. These programs have an emphasis on literature, composition, inquiry, and process-centered instruction (Dahl, 2000, p. 584). In this study, all students made significant gains in decoding words, while the highest reading group jumped to a fifth grade reading level. Dahl and Schrarer believe that their study dispels the theory that whole language teachers do not effectively teach phonics.

Children from whole language classrooms seem to develop greater ability to use phonics knowledge effectively than children in more traditional classrooms where skills are practiced in isolation (Weaver, 1996). In another whole language study, Freppon investigates students' reading in two different instructional settings. One group used skill-based instruction (phonics instruction) while the other group used literature-based instruction (whole language instruction). Results showed that although the literature group attempted to sound out words less often than the skill group, they achieved a greater success rate. The literature group had a 53% success rate of correctly sounding out words, compared to 32% by the skill group (Freppon, 1988). This research implies whole language instruction produces greater phonics knowledge than explicit phonics instruction.

One prominent supporter and framer of the whole language approach is Kenneth Goodman, a professor of education at the University of Arizona. In his book *Whole in Whole Language*, Goodman (2005) argues that phonics instruction actually hinders language acquisition, primarily by breaking whole (natural) language up into bite-size, but abstract little pieces. "We took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose — the communication of meaning — and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we

sought to help.” (Goodman, 2005).

Whole language teachers are expected to create print rich environments, while using culturally diverse literature with high quality vocabulary. Instructors using the whole language approach to instruction do not teach spelling, vocabulary, and grammar as isolated events; rather whole language teaches these functions of language contextually (Brooks & Brooks, 2005). Basically, frequent exposure to words in context and the structure of language is paramount to whole language instruction (Brooks & Brooks, 2005).

### **Phonics**

The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) defines phonics as a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling. The counterrevolution for phonics began in 1990 with the publication of the pioneering book, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*, by Marilyn Adams, a cognitive psychologist (Gwynne & James, 1997). Adams brought to the forefront, the principle of phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that letters make sounds and those sounds are systematically joined together to make words. According to Adams (1990), once phonemic awareness is established and some sound-letter correspondences are learned, the brain begins to recognize new patterns on its own. After demonstrating phonemic awareness, students begin to develop their phonological awareness, or their ability to rhyme, identify onset sounds, and recognize syllables (Armbruster, 2001).

In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) conducted a meta-analysis that reported first graders who were taught phonics systematically were better able to decode and spell, and they showed significant improvement in their ability to comprehend text. It has been reported that 70% of children will learn to read regardless of how they are taught, but they will



read more quickly if they are taught phonics, and without phonics the remaining 30% may have real problems with reading (Collins & Gwynne, 1997). In her landmark book, *Learning to Read* (1967), Chall found that beginning readers who were systematically taught phonics performed better than those who were not. Chall made it clear, though, that phonics instruction should not consist of mindless drills, should not be done to the exclusion of readings stories, and should not extend beyond the first half of first grade (Collins & Gwynne, 1997).

In an article analyzing explicit phonics instruction, fifty-five comparative first grade students were randomly assigned to either a literature embedded group (whole language instruction) or a literature disembedded group (phonics instruction) and measures were conducted in reading, spelling, and writing (Roberts and Meiring, 2006). Both groups used the same schedule and sequence for introducing phoneme patterns, sight word lists, pseudo word lists, and orthographic representations. The only variables were the degree of phonics that were embedded into the instruction of both groups. The study revealed the phonics group to have 20% greater gains in reading and spelling than the whole language group. Roberts concluded that teaching phonics explicitly was more effective than teaching through a disembedded phonics approach (2006).

Critics of phonics instruction argue that English spellings are too irregular for phonics instruction to really help children learn to read words. Smith (1973), for example, finds phonics instruction to be a potential and powerful method of interfering in the process of learning to read. However, in a study comparing the effects of more or less letter sound instruction, quite the opposite is discovered (Foorman, 1991). Eighty first grade students were divided into six groups, with three teachers focusing on segmenting and blending vocabulary words (phonics instruction) and three teachers studying words in the context of the story (whole language).

Results showed the groups receiving phonics instruction, spelled and read exception words with greater acceleration and accuracy, than whole language group (Foorman, 1991). This is evidence that explicit phonics instruction will improve students' reading and spelling of words with irregular spelling patterns.

A review of the literature shows that there are numerous studies with advocates on both sides who vehemently defend their approach. The evidence seems to demonstrate that both methods are advantageous to beginning readers. However, the question remains, with all factors comparable, which method is more effective? This study intended to provide a direct comparison of student achievement in reading and spelling through the use of whole language instruction and phonics instruction.

### **Research Methodology**

This was an action research project by the teacher researcher, using a quasi-experimental design of pretest and posttest group comparison. In this study, twenty-two first grade students in an already existing classroom at an elementary school were randomly assigned to either a whole language instructional group or a phonics instructional group. Stratified sampling was used to divide the participants into the two instructional groups. The subgroups included above grade level readers, on grade level readers, and below grade level readers. The subgroups were then divided by simple random sampling and drawing names from a hat. The phonics group was the experimental group because those participants received explicit phonics instruction, while the control group was the whole language group because they did not receive explicit phonics instruction.

Over the course of four weeks, each group met with the classroom teacher who is also the researcher, for five days a week in twenty minutes sessions. Both sessions focused on a specific

phonics pattern. However, the teacher adhered to the principles and practices of each specific instructional theory. In the experimental group, the teacher explicitly taught phonics patterns and students practiced segmenting, decoding, blending, and manipulating words with these patterns. The teacher did not read any stories or use any visual context clues. In the control group, the teacher used whole language principles. The group read fourteen stories from the Raz-kids reading program. The stories contained words with same spelling patterns used in the phonics group. The pattern was not explicitly introduced; instead the focus was on child-centered conversations, picture walks, story predictions, and meaning of the vocabulary.

### **Research Question**

Is there any difference in the effect of whole language instruction versus phonics instruction on students' reading fluency and spelling accuracy in first grade? If there is a difference, which approach is more effective?

### **Hypothesis**

Explicit phonics instruction has more positive effect than whole language instruction on students' reading fluency and spelling accuracy, and participants receiving the explicit phonics instruction will show greater gains in reading fluency and spelling accuracy than those receiving whole language instruction.

### **Description of Participants**

Based on convenience sampling for this action research, the participants in this study were the students in the first grade class that this researcher teaches at an elementary school. The school is located in a rural area with a population of about 1,500 students. Over 75% of the students are white (non-Hispanic), 15% are Hispanic, and 10% are either black (non-Hispanic), Asian, or multi-racial. The population includes 25% receiving free or reduced lunch, 20%

receiving ESOL services, 15% enrolled in the gifted program, and 10% are special education students.

The participants in this study included thirteen boys and nine girls (n=22). Two students are served through the Early Intervention Program (EIP), two students attend the Horizons program, and one student is diagnosed with ADHD. Demographically, there is one Indian student, three Hispanic students, and eighteen Caucasian students. Using the first grade Language Arts rubric, six students were performing above grade level, fourteen students were performing on grade level and two students were not meeting the grade level standards. Students in the class were randomly assigned to either a whole language instructional group or a phonics instructional group. Stratified sampling was used to divide the participants into the two instructional groups. The subgroups included above grade level readers, on grade level readers, and below grade level readers. The subgroups were then divided by simple random sampling and drawing names from a hat.

### **Data Collection**

In January 2012, the teacher gathered baseline data with pretests scores on reading fluency and spelling accuracy, using the Aimsweb *Reading Curriculum Based Measure* (RCBM) and Aimsweb *Spelling Curriculum Based Measure* (SCBM). RCBM measures the numbers of words read correctly in one minute. SCBM measures the number of sounds written correctly in two minutes for twelve dictated words. In March 2012, after four weeks of treatment, post tests of RCBM and SCBM were administered to measure literacy changes in reading fluency and spelling accuracy.

## Data Analysis

The independent variable of this study is the instructional method and the dependent variables are reading fluency and spelling accuracy. A series of t-tests were performed to compare pretest and post test scores of the experimental and the control group. First, to determine comparability of the two groups before the experiment, an unpaired t-test was used to compare the pretest results in reading fluency and spelling accuracy respectively from both the phonics group and the whole language group. The tables below (See Table 1, 2) show comparisons of pretest results from both groups in reading fluency and spelling accuracy.

Table 1: Unpaired *t* test of Pretest Reading Fluency Results

	<b>Whole Language</b>	<b>Phonics</b>
<b>Mean</b>	77.73	75.64
<b>SD</b>	39.08	41.65
<b>df</b>	20	
t = 0.1214	p value = 0.9046	
Difference not statistically significant.		

Table 2: Unpaired *t* test of Pretest Spelling Accuracy Results

	<b>Whole Language</b>	<b>Phonics</b>
<b>Mean</b>	51.45	51.18
<b>SD</b>	4.72	4.45
<b>df</b>	20	
t = 0.1359	p = 0.8904	
difference not statistically significant.		

The t-test results indicate that there was no statistical difference between the groups in reading fluency and spelling accuracy. Both groups were performing comparably in reading and

spelling before the treatment. Despite statistical insignificance, the whole language group had slightly higher scores on both measures, which could indicate that the students in the whole language group were higher level learners.

After four weeks of treatment, the students were tested again in reading fluency and spelling accuracy. To determine the effect of the phonics method and the whole language approach respectively within each group, four separate paired t-tests were used to compare the pretest and post test results of both instructional groups in reading fluency and spelling accuracy. The tables below represent the pre and post test data from two paired t-tests in reading (see Table 3, 4) with a respective figure (see Figure 1) and analysis, followed by tables of pre and post test data from two paired t-tests in spelling (see Table 5, 6) with a respective figure (Figure 2) and further analysis.

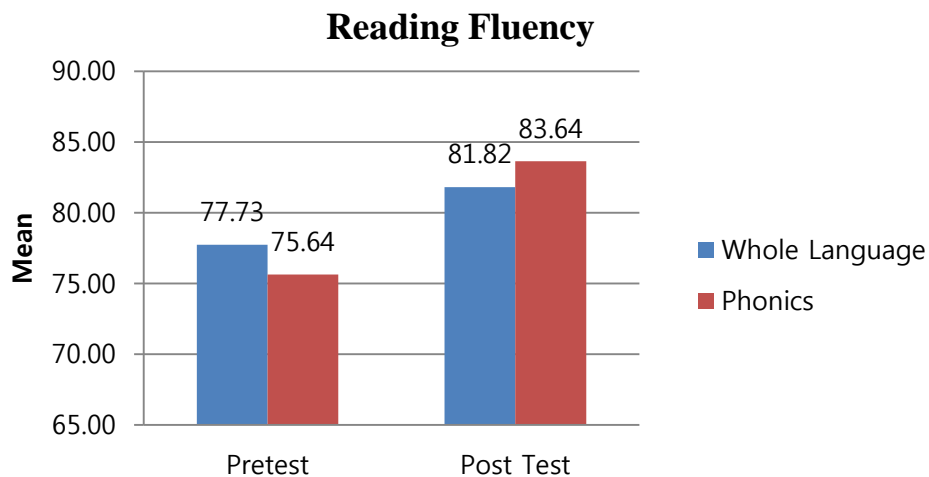
Table 3: Paired *t* test results of pretest and posttest of Phonics group in Reading

	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Post test</b>
<b>Mean</b>	75.64	83.73
<b>SD</b>	41.65	46.90
<b>df</b>	10	
t = 1.4149		p = 0.1875
Difference not statistically significant.		

Table 4: Paired t-test result pretest and posttest of Whole Language group in Reading

	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Post test</b>
<b>Mean</b>	77.73	81.82
<b>SD</b>	39.08	39.46
<b>df</b>	10	
t = 1.1480		p = 0.2777
Difference not statistically significant.		

Figure 1: Reading Fluency pretest and post test comparison of Phonics and Whole Language



The t-test results indicate there was no statistical difference in the reading fluency of either group, however there were notable changes in the results. In pretest analysis, the phonics group averaged slightly lower reading scores and in post test analysis, the phonics group had higher reading scores on average. Students in the phonics group increased their reading fluency by 8.00 points, while the whole language group increased by 4.09 points. Although statistically insignificant, these findings have practical significance to me as a practitioner. A direct comparison indicates that the phonics group made greater gains and that the phonics approach improves reading fluency more effectively than whole language.

The changes in fluency could be a result of chance or a result of enhanced decoding skills. The RCBM may have been unfairly suited for the phonics group because there were no illustrations for students to reference. The measure uses text only and offers no pictures to support the passage. This presents a possible disadvantage to the whole language group who uses picture clues to support reading and an advantage for the phonics group who practiced decoding skills without any picture clues. On a practical level, the RCBM is the same standardized measure used by all first grade teachers in the school and is considered a valid fluency assessment by the teachers. Therefore, it could be argued that the explicit phonics

instruction provides decoding skills that improve fluency.

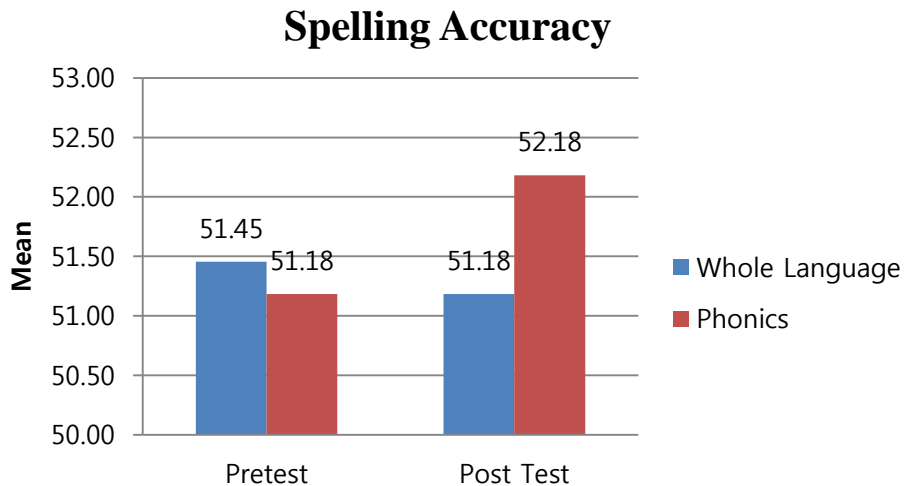
Table 5: Paired *t* test results of pretest and posttest of Phonics group in Spelling

	Pretest	Post test
<b>Mean</b>	51.18	52.18
<b>SD</b>	4.45	3.98
<b>df</b>	10	
t = 0.8621		p = 0.4088
difference not statistically significant.		

Table 6: Paired *t* test results of pretest and posttest of Whole Language group in Spelling

	Pretest	Post test
<b>Mean</b>	51.45	51.18
<b>SD</b>	4.72	6.40
<b>df</b>	10	
t = 0.1542		p = 0.8805
difference not statistically significant.		

Figure 2: Spelling Accuracy pretest and post test comparison of Phonics and Whole Language



The t-test results indicate there was no statistical difference in the spelling accuracy of



either group, however there was a change that is worth further investigation. In Figure 2, results indicate that the phonics group increased spelling accuracy by 1.00 point, while the whole language group decreased their spelling accuracy by -0.27 points. This change is miniscule, but it is important to note that SCBM measures a small scale with a cap of 57 points, so any change is relevant. The data shows the phonics group had positive results while the whole language group regressed. This change could be a result of chance or a consequence of the fact that the whole language group received no phonics instruction. During whole language instruction, when students came to an unfamiliar word, the teacher did not encourage students to use decoding skills. Instead, students were encouraged to either look at the picture or read it again in the context of the sentence. These results suggest that the absence of any phonics instruction is actually detrimental to spelling development.

Finally, to determine the effect of phonics versus whole language, one unpaired t-test was used to compare the RCBM and SCBM post tests in reading fluency and spelling respectively between the two groups.

Table 7: Unpaired *t* test of Post test Reading Results

	<b>Whole Language</b>	<b>Phonics</b>
Mean	81.82	83.64
SD	39.46	47.30
df	20	
t = 0.0783	p value = 0.9384	
Difference not statistically significant.		

Table 8: Unpaired *t* test of Post Test Spelling Results

	<b>Whole Language</b>	<b>Phonics</b>
<b>Mean</b>	51.18	52.18
<b>SD</b>	6.40	3.89
<b>df</b>	20	
t = 0.4427		p value = 0.6627
Difference not statistically significant.		

These post test results (see Table 7, 8) indicate that both groups made gains in reading fluency and spelling accuracy, however the difference was not statistically significant. Despite the statistical analysis, practical analysis reflects change that was consistent with the hypothesis. The phonics group showed greater growth and had more of a positive effect on reading fluency and spelling accuracy. These findings are consistent with those of Jeanne Chall (1967), Roberts and Meiring (2006), and the National Reading Panel (2000.) Chall’s research provided evidence that young readers who have practiced reading in terms of code emphasis, performed better than those who practiced reading for meaning (1967). These findings support the research that explicit phonics instruction improves spelling accuracy (Roberts & Meiring, 2006). Furthermore, it supports the meta-analysis from the National Reading Panel, indicating that systematic phonics instruction enhances children’s success learning to read (NICHD, 2000).

**Discussions**

The results of the analyses show that although there were no statistical differences between the groups, the phonics group demonstrated greater growth in both reading fluency and spelling accuracy. This data contradicts previous research (Freppon, 1998; Goodman, 2005) that suggest decontextualized phonics instruction is ineffective, rather it suggests that such phonics instruction actually improves literacy development. It reflects a need for teachers to use direct

instruction to explicitly teach decoding skills. The exact phonics skills being taught will vary depending on the needs of the students but ultimately, all first grade students should receive at least 15 minutes of direct phonics instruction per day.

This study does not argue the value of the whole language approach. Research has shown (Brooks, 2005; Manning, 1989) that a whole language approach allows students to develop meaning from the text and build comprehension skills. However, this study indicates that there should be greater value placed on phonics instruction. Decoding is a valuable literacy skill that should not be taught casually or implicitly. Explicit phonics lessons should be systematically planned and connected to daily literacy activities. Early readers need to learn how to decode unfamiliar words because it will build fluency and ultimately comprehension. This research shows that phonics is an important literacy tool and must be explicitly and directly taught to beginning readers.

Based on these results, the whole language approach would be most effective with explicit phonics integrated and emphasized into the language arts curriculum. A literacy approach should combine phonics and whole language into one cohesive curriculum. Educators are encouraged to build a whole language environment with authentic and meaningful text, but also integrate explicit phonics lessons into daily reading instruction. Students need to learn specific phonics patterns that will help them decode more efficiently. When readers come to an unfamiliar word, they need to know how to begin decoding and deciphering that word. They need to identify different phonetical word patterns and apply them as they read.

Reading instruction should include daily, specifically planned, teacher-directed, phonics activities. It is recommended that the teacher begins a literacy lesson by introducing a specific phonics pattern, followed by a brief demonstration of how that pattern is used in various words.

Then the teacher would conduct a guided reading lesson with preselected text that includes the new spelling pattern. The emphasis of the guided reading lesson is to develop comprehension, while also providing an opportunity to apply the knowledge of the new phonics pattern. This instructional design would offer a more wholistic approach to literacy. For specific phonics lessons, see Appendix B. Ultimately, a curriculum that combines both approaches and truly emphasizes phonics instruction will most effectively build literacy skills for all young readers.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

Although this study offers unique insights into two very different literacy approaches, it presents limitations that affect the validity and reliability of the results. For instance, convenience sampling was used on an intact existing classroom with a very small sample size. This makes it difficult to generalize the results to all first grade students and it is possible that the results could vary with different populations in different geographic areas. Another limitation is the fact that the teacher is the researcher. This means there could be unintentional, experimenter effects that resulted in differential treatment of the participants. Such a threat presents the potential for experimenter biases in instruction or data collection. In future studies, probability sampling should be used with a larger sample size and someone other than the teacher should conduct the research. Despite these limitations, this study supports the need for explicit phonics instruction in the literacy curriculum. Although, further research is needed to make any definitive conclusions about which literacy approach is most effective for improving reading fluency and spelling accuracy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Sequence of Phonics Skills and Whole Language Stories

	<b>Phonics Pattern</b>	<b>Whole Language Story</b>
Lesson 1	<u>VCe Long /a/</u>	Snake and Ape
Lesson 2	<u>VCe Long /o/</u>	Rose's Birthday
Lesson 3	<u>VCe Long /i/</u>	The Nice Mice
Lesson 4	<u>VCe Long /u/</u>	No More Sad Tunes
Lesson 5	<u>Long /e/</u>	The Bee and the Flea
Lesson 6	<u>Short /e/</u>	Bread for Breakfast
Lesson 7	<u>Long /a/ Part 1</u>	Jake and Gail go to Spain
Lesson 8	<u>Long /a/ Part 2</u>	Jake and Gail go to Spain
Lesson 9	<u>Long /o/ Part 1</u>	Joan's Goats and Moe's Crows
Lesson 10	<u>Long /o/ Part 2</u>	Joan's Goats and Moe's Crows
Lesson 11	<u>Long /i/ Part 1</u>	The Kind Knight
Lesson 12	<u>Long /i/ Part 2</u>	The Kind Knight
Lesson 13	<u>/oi/</u>	Toys for Boys
Lesson 14	<u>/ou/</u>	The Clown Who Lost Her Smile
Lesson 15	<u>/ô/ (as in corn)</u>	The Roaring Storm
Lesson 16	<u>/ar/ (as in car)</u>	Clare's Sharp Car
Lesson 17	<u>/ur/ (as in curl)</u>	Curls that Swirl



## Appendix B: Sample Lesson Plan for Phonics Instruction

**Phonics Lesson:** R-controlled /ô/ words with *or*

### Student Objectives:

- Introduce r-controlled /ô/
- Blend r-controlled /ô/ words
- Blend onset and rime
- Sort words
- Practice decoding

**Materials:** r-controlled /ô/ word cards, consonant letter cards, workmat, dry erase board, marker

### Procedure:

- Explain that the *or* letter combination is one of the letter combinations that stand for a group of sounds called r-controlled vowels. These vowel sounds are neither long nor short, and are sometimes difficult to hear in the word.
- Show the word card for *corn* and say the word aloud. Point to the letters *or* on the card and tell them that the letters *o* and *r* together stand for the vowel sound they hear in the word *corn*.
- Say the words *cord* and *cod* aloud. Ask students which word contains the same vowel as in *corn*. Make sure students can differentiate between the two vowel sounds.
- Write the word *fork* on the board. Point out the letter combination that stands for the r-controlled vowel sound and ask students to blend the letters *o* and *r* together to make the vowel sound as in *corn*. Run your finger under the letters as you demonstrate how to blend the letters. Point out that even though there are four letters, there are only three phonemes or sounds. Then have the students blend the word aloud as you run your fingers under the letters.
- Repeat blending with other words *horn*, *stork*, *short*. Take one word at a time and, pointing out the letter combinations that stand for the r-controlled /ô/ vowel sound. When students have blended the words, ask volunteers to come up and circle the r-controlled vowel spelling in each word. Have a student point to each r-controlled vowel spelling as the rest of the group says the sound.
- Have the students use the letter workmat, an r-controlled /ô/ card, and the letter cards to blend the words above. Have them line up the card for each sound in each word under the boxes on their workmat. Model how to push up the letter cards into the box as they say each sound and indicate the sound the r-controlled /ô/ vowel spelling makes.
- When students are able to blend the sounds, say the word *cork* aloud and have students spell it on their work mat with the letter cards. Once they have spelled it and sounded it out. Ask them to switch the *c* to an *f* and blend the new word.
- Repeat the process by asking student to switch different letter cards and blend the new word. For example, change the ending sound in *fork* to a *t*, change the beginning sound

of *fort* to an *s*, or add a *p* after the *s* in *sort*. Continue until students are able to identify and blend new words with the r-controlled /ô/.

- Finally, dictate r-controlled /ô/ words and have students write or spell them on a dry erase board. Once all the words are written, ask students to read each of their words aloud.

## Appendix C: Sample Lesson Plan for Whole Language Instruction

### Whole Language Lesson: Summarize

#### Student Objectives:

- Make, revise, and confirm predictions
- Use the reading strategy of summarizing while reading
- Identify the main idea and details
- Sequence events

**Materials:** Book-The Roaring Storm (copy for each student)

#### Procedure:

- Before reading, build background by asking students to brainstorming different types of storms. Then ask students if they are familiar with hurricanes.
- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what the book might be about.
- Preview the illustrations in the book. Invite students to share their thoughts on the problem in the story and possible solutions to the problem.
- Introduce the strategy of making, revising, and confirming predictions. Explain to students that a strategy readers use to better understand a story is to make predictions as they read. When readers make predictions about what they are reading, they can connect with the story and pay closer attention to details.
- Model making and revising predictions.  
**Think-aloud:** Before I read I will use the title and the illustrations in the book to make a prediction about what might happen. The book is called The Roaring Storm and I see a damaged house on the cover. That makes me think there was a bad storm which caused the damage to the house. As I continue to look through the pictures, I see a family standing around the house. I predict it is their house that gets destroyed in the storm.
- Invite students to use the illustrations in the book to make their own predictions about what the book might be about.
- As students read, remind them that there are strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example they can use illustrations to help figure out a word.
- Have students read the story to find out if their predictions about the story were correct.
- Have students take turns reading until the end of page 6. Have them revise or confirm their predictions, as necessary.
- Model confirming predictions.  
**Think-aloud:** Before I read, I predicted that a bad storm who damage the house that belongs to the characters on the title page. After reading, I can confirm that the storm did damage their house. However, I did not know that it was a tree that fell down on the house. Based on what happened so far, I predict that the family will work together to

repair the damage to their home. I will continue reading to see what happens next and find out if they fix their house.

- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to make, revise, and confirm their predictions as they read.
- After reading, ask students to share important predictions they made while reading the book. Invite students to share which predictions were confirmed in the book, and explain the predictions they chose to revise.