

Notes on the following Kathleen Tribble Action Research paper:

Kathleen Tribble did the following Collaborative Action Research Project as a part of her Master's class in the 2001 – 2002 school term. Kathleen teaches first grade at Oak Valley Elementary School in Buelton, Ca. She has taught for nine years.

In her tenure teaching first grade, she has “experienced a wide variety of instructional strategies, materials and lack of materials for teaching reading...with this in mind, I have become well acquainted with what does and does not work in a classroom.... My first grade colleagues and I have had moderate success with the phonics program we supplemented our basal series with. By all accounts it was working, but we as a grade level team, we kept searching for something better. Our district had funded a phonics program at the kindergarten level called Zoo-phonics for five years. We noticed that our incoming first graders who had Zoo-phonics in kindergarten performed better in entry level testing in first grade than prior to the use of Zoo-phonics in kindergarten. Our incoming first graders were able to move more quickly into first grade level skills and spend less time reviewing kindergarten alphabet skills.... Our grade level approached our superintendent last spring about trying Zoo-phonics in first grade to build on the success and maintain the phonics continuity started in Kindergarten. My research project examines this...

In light of the specific students in my class...comprised of a large pool of at-risk students in the area of Language arts and needy students over all.... Of my 21 students, half qualified for reading special support...five had been previously retained. Six of my students are behavior problems, two severe (one with Down's Syndrome) and one student displaying extreme signs of typical of ADHD. Two are gifted but display additional behavior challenges. Five are limited English Proficient. Three see the speech pathologist, four see the counselor.

It is in this environment that I set out to use all the means offered to me through the multi-modal program of Zoo-phonics to help my at-risk students achieve grade level reading and spelling skills.”

**Collaborative Action Research Project
Kathleen Tribble**

**EDU 509
Grand Canyon University
Phoenix, Arizona**

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Introduction

The following research, analysis and action plan was designed and conducted by myself, Kathleen Tribble. I teach first grade at Oak Valley Elementary School in Buellton, California. I have taught for nine years, two in private education teaching fifth grade and seven in public education teaching one year of second grade and six years of first grade.

During my tenure teaching first grade I have experienced a wide variety of instructional strategies, materials and lack of materials for teaching reading. My transition from fifth to first grade started without a classroom. Another first grade colleague and I shared a room for six weeks with 40 first graders. To say it was crowded is an understatement! For the remainder of my first year teaching first grade reading I had only one teaching manual and no student books. Overwhelmed only begins to describe the experience. After struggling through that first year I have since attended numerous workshops, had many meetings with colleagues, participated in textbook adoption forums, taken classes, read several books, purchased several books and have had an additional six years of experience teaching reading. My knowledge and perspectives on teaching reading have really developed over this time.

With this history in mind, I feel I have become well acquainted with what does and does not work in a classroom. I have grown to see that neither “whole language” nor “phonics” is an approach that works to the exclusion of the other. Yet it seems that reading materials are often in one camp or the other. Our district adopted basal series tries to blend both approaches by tossing in phonics lessons as they match words in the whole language stories but it does not work because the approach to phonics is random and not systematic. And so it goes. There is no perfect curriculum. So it is up to the professional educator to not only be well versed in academic expectations but to be able to connect the resources from various sources to adequately prepare students to excel in the academic expectations as well. Here is where my Collaborative Action Research comes in.

My first grade colleagues and I have had moderate success with the phonics program we supplemented our basal series with. By all accounts it was working, but we as a grade level team kept searching for something better. Our district had funded a phonics program at the kindergarten level called Zoo-phonics for five years. We noticed our incoming first graders who had Zoo-phonics in Kindergarten performed better in entry level testing in first grade than prior to the use of Zoo-phonics in Kindergarten. Our incoming first graders were able to move more quickly into first grade level skills and spend less time reviewing Kindergarten alphabet skills.

Our grade level approached our Superintendent last spring about trying Zoo-phonics in first grade to build on the success and maintain the phonics continuity started in Kindergarten. Zoo-phonics was a supplement to the basal series in Kindergarten and it only made sense to have an articulated curriculum throughout the grade levels. With permission from our Superintendent to attend the two-day training in the spring and to purchase the full first grade kit of materials for each one of us, we set off on a “Zoo-per” adventure as a grade level and I set off on my Collaborative Action Research Project.

So here it is fall of 2002. We just opened our brand new campus, Oak Valley Elementary, of about 200 students in first through third grades. In addition to moving and opening a new school, four classes of first grade are field-testing Zoo-phonics for the first time. Our objective besides surviving the transition to “new everything” at a new campus is to observe how Zoo-phonics helps our students learn to read and spell and determine if this is the best approach as a supplemental phonics program for our students. My research project examines this objective in light of the specific students in my class.

My classroom, room 110, is comprised of a large pool of at-risk students in the area of Language Arts and needy students overall. Of my 21 students, half qualified for reading specialist support though there is only room to service the most needy six. Five of my students have previously been retained. Six of my students are behavior problems, two severe (one with Down's Syndrome requiring the presence of an assistant at all times and one student displaying extreme signs typical of ADHD yet has not seen a doctor for diagnosis at the time of this report.) I have two gifted students that are two to four years ahead of their peers and display additional behavior challenges. Five of my students are Limited English Proficient. Three of my students see the Speech Pathologist. Four of my students see the Counselor. Two of my students were recently promoted from special education to general education settings. And all of this does not take into account the day-to-day challenges typical of any classroom.

It is in this environment that I set out to use all of the means offered to me through the multi-modal program of Zoo-phonics to help my at-risk students achieve grade level reading and spelling skills. I intend to plan and deliver my instruction as guided by the curriculum to engage students actively in learning, keep parents connected to the curriculum so they can support their students and I will make a concerted effort to reinforce the use of sound and signaling, an essential kinesthetic component of Zoo-phonics.

Review of Literature

In preparation for my research, I reviewed the research of others. Following is a summary of my findings.

Language: The embedded curriculum in postsecondary education
“Topics in Language Disorders” November 2000

Carolyn Oliver, Linda Hecker, Joyce Klucken, Carol Westby

This article states that the early elementary years are spent learning how to read while subsequent years are spent reading to learn. Reading eventually disappears as a subject over the years of schooling and is embedded in the other academic subjects. A problem exists for students who did not acquire reading skills in the early years of their education because it is no longer explicitly taught in the latter years. The case is made in this article that reading should remain an explicit subject, as well as teaching the skills of how to grasp and organize information within other academic subjects.

Additional research shared in this article supports the use of the third dimension and movement as successful tools in helping students acquire reading skills. This is a “best practice” area incorporated into Zoo-phonics.

Early Intervention in reading: Results of a screening and intervention program for kindergarten students

“School Psychology Review” 1999

James E. Lennon, Christine Slesinski

This article documents a two-year study showing that students demonstrating gaps in alphabet skills in kindergarten benefit immensely from early low-ratio intensive intervention. It was also shown that students who demonstrate these early gaps traditionally are viewed as developmentally delayed or learning disabled later in their educational careers. The authors suggest instead that these students are deficient in phonemic awareness skills. Indeed when provided with phonemic awareness skills the research group had far fewer students qualify for special assistance in first grade.

A best practice drawn from this article is the need for early systematic exposure to phonemic awareness. Zoo-phonics stresses the importance of “play” with words, sounds and language before students ever begin to read or write.

Candace Bos: Informed, flexible teaching-a key to successful readers

“Intervention in School and Clinic” May 1999

Mary T. Brownell, Chris Walther-Thomas

This article was an interview with Dr. Candace Bos, a professor, practitioner and researcher of special education. She advocates, “informed, flexible teaching” as a means to reach struggling readers and those with disabilities. Some of the characteristics of informed, flexible teaching include; making learning visible, watching students closely, creating a positive learning environment

in the classroom that supports risk taking, using a wide variety of techniques and strategies as student needs dictate, knowing students' learning styles and knowing one's own teaching style, among others.

A best practice supported by Ms. Bos's research is what we learned in Dr. Silver's class about teaching in each quadrant or thinking style. Because Zoo-phonics is multi-modal it has many of the components Ms. Bos would say is "informed flexible teaching."

Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom

"The Reading Teacher" October 2000

Hallie Kay Yopp, Ruth Helen Yopp

This article defined phonemic awareness and provided fourteen examples of how it could be taught in the classroom. The point the authors wanted to emphasize most was that phonemic awareness, though important to be taught as a specific skill, needs to be embedded in a healthy well-rounded language arts program to be effective. This also includes a linguistically rich classroom setting where print abounds and reading activities are spread throughout the day across various learning styles.

A best practice drawn from this article is how learning is never compartmentalized into isolated skills. Learning is always interconnected to other skills. Zoo-phonics gives plenty of time and ideas for phonemic awareness yet reinforces and reviews skills throughout the curriculum as well.

In search of...brain based education

"Phi Delta Kappan" May 1999

John T. Bruer

This author goes to great lengths to refute educators' ease at labeling things as brain-based when there is no scientific evidence to support such a statement. This glib reference to brain-based education by educators is often founded in behavioral science, not biological science. When considering behavioral science, there is valuable research for school and classroom change grounded in topics like types of memory and prior knowledge, but it is erroneous to attribute such topics to biological brain-based learning. Educators should be interested in how the brain works but not be quick to attribute kinds of learning to brain-based research that are not based on scientific biological fact.

A best practice taken from this article is to be skeptical of educational materials that make brain-based claims not supported with neurological research. Zoo-phonics claims to be a whole-brain approach to learning. If that claim is not biological in nature it is nonetheless multi-sensory and helps students make the bridge between the concrete and abstract.

Learning to teach early literacy skills-collaboratively
“Teaching Exceptional Children” May/June 2000

Candace S. Bos, Nancy Mather, Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, Rachel Friedman

This article describes a two-year study on collaborative teaching of literacy skills. Teachers and administrators from seven schools participated in a university course on explicit instruction in literacy as part of this collaborative project, “Reading Instructional Methods of Efficacy” (RIME). The university partnered with the participants and fostered a collaborative partnership among participants and their respective schools. The results of this study showed that teachers benefited from the course instruction and felt more confident. It was the collaborative piece, working with site administrators and colleagues as well as specialists and university professors, however, that yielded the biggest gains in feelings of teacher confidence, competency and collegial support.

The best practice taken from this research is the importance of collaboration, precisely what EDU 509 is about! Zoo-phonics provides many ideas and implementation directions, but it would be most effective when examined and reviewed collaboratively with grade level peers.

Reading about reading: Notes from a consumer to the scholars of literacy
“The Reading Teacher” April 1999

Bruce R. Joyce

The author of this article has spent over 40 years studying reading, the teaching of reading and literacy in schools. He brings a wealth of experience to this piece. Joyce spends time describing the trends in the world of reading instruction such as the whole language “look-say” methods, synthetic phonics, student as inquirer and phonemic awareness. He says that the reading community has spent time polarizing itself with one trend or another at the expense of the learner.

A best practice drawn from this research is to view reading programs as pieces, not the whole. Time spent teaching children to decode is important, but it is also important to expose children to other literature rich experiences so that a joy and purpose for reading is developed. Zoo-phonics clearly sells itself as a supplemental program designed to emphasize phonics. It needs to be balanced with literature and writing to be part of a balanced literacy program.

Reading Strategies of Beginning and Proficient Readers
Descriptive Report, July 1998

Jennifer S. Atterman

This author supports the widely held belief that reading is the most essential of all skills acquired in school. Educators, students, parents, politicians and community members all have different perspectives as to the best method to teach reading and indeed there is research on many different strategies and techniques to teach reading, the gateway skill to all other knowledge.

This article references Zoo-phonics as a strong program to teach the sound/symbol relationship and thus is a foundational means to enable students to recognize words. The author concludes that the best way to support early reading instruction is to combine the best elements determined by research of both the phonics and whole language “camps” so that students not only experience early success but acquire a lifetime love of reading that will carry them past their school years.

The best practice taken from this research is the awesome responsibility I have as a teacher of early reading skills. I need to do everything possible in my professional means to give my students the best learning opportunities. One way to do so would be to become a collaborative action researcher in addition to being an educator.

So after looking at all of this other research, I am ready to do some research of my own. It seems to me that Zoo-phonics has many of the fundamentals of a successful phonics component of a literacy program as laid out in the research. I am ready to give it a try to see how it meets the needs of my students. Here are the research questions I will seek to answer as I experiment with the implementation of Zoo-phonics in room 110.

Research Questions

1. Will the use of a variety of materials and modalities as prescribed by Zoo-phonics result in better acquisition and retention of target skills?
2. Will my efforts to keep parents informed and connected to the curriculum result in parent support of and participation in Zoo-phonics reading/spelling practice at home?
3. Will consistent use of sound and signaling help students learn spelling words and sight words better than the previous curriculum?

Methodology/Research Design

This is the matrix developed for my research.

Research Question	Data Source #1	Data Source #2	Data Source #3
1. Will the use of a variety of materials and modalities as prescribed by Zoo-phonics result in better acquisition and retention of target	Weekly Spelling Tests	Student Journals	Listen to Students Read
2. Will my efforts to keep parents informed and connected to the curriculum result in parent support of and participation in Zoo-	Communication Log	Parent Survey	Student Interview
3. Will consistent use of sound and signaling help students learn spelling words and sight words better than the previous curriculum?	Signal Assessment	Trimester Grade Level Standards Based Measurement	Weekly Spelling Tests

Data Source Rationale, Validity and Reliability

•Weekly Spelling Tests

I will use my gradebook to collect this data. I will use this data to track testing of weekly phonics skills to see if students are achieving grade level standards for specific phonics skills.

Valid- this is a valid tool because I am assessing spelling on spelling tests

Reliable- this is reliable because I follow a consistent format for each test, students are prepared in a similar manner each week for homework and classwork and I record everything in my gradebook.

•Student Journals

Students write four days a week in their journals and will use some of the basic words they have learned so far in Zoo-phonics. This is writing they are prompted to record via their own imaginations and would reveal if there has been transfer from the study for spelling tests to everyday writing. I will use October and November journals from students. They will not be returned to families like usual until I have accumulated data from them.

Valid- this is a valid tool because the focus is on student self-selected writing and examines the informal use of spelling.

Reliable- this is reliable because students are writing in journals up to four times a week thus yielding many points of data for consideration.

•Listen to Students Read

If students have acquired the phonics skills presented to date, then there are certain books in the classroom with predictable, controlled text that they should be able to read. I will choose one to use as a running record assessment.

Valid- this is valid because I am focusing on how well students decode either words that they have been taught through the Zoo-phonics curriculum or apply what they have been taught to additional words in the same word families.

Reliable- this is reliable because I can target identified skills by selecting the same story for each student with controlled vocabulary.

•Communication Log

I can keep a record of the instructions and follow-up materials I send home to families to check if I am providing sufficient support materials for families at home.

Valid- this is valid because I can maintain a thorough record of all support materials I provide to parents and thus create a comprehensive record for further review.

Reliable- this is reliable because it is easy to catalog any information I send home.

•Parent Survey

This is an anonymous survey to query parents to see if they are doing their part at home with signaling. It's also a forum for them to indicate if I am providing enough information on how to use Zoo-phonics at home as well as a means to indicate their comfort level with Zoo-phonics.

Valid- this is valid because I can obtain the parent perception of Zoo-phonics for those parents willing to respond.

Reliable- this is reliable because every family has the same opportunity to respond to the same survey.

•Student Interview

I will meet with students individually to collect their thoughts about reading. I will ask students to describe what they do at home to practice reading and see what they reveal about their home support.

Valid- this is a valid tool because I can find out students' perceptions of their learning/participation at home.

Reliable- this is reliable because I can ask the same questions to each student.

•Signal Assessment

I will assess students on a pre and post-test basis for Zoo-phonics signals. This tool helps me see who knows their signals and who has progressed since the beginning of the year.

Valid- this is a valid tool because it is a screening to see if students can identify sounds and signals for Zoo-phonics.

Reliable- this is reliable because the test is administered to all students uniformly and as a pre/post test.

•Trimester Grade Level Standards Based Measurement

I will use trimester assessments to check retention of spelling skills and ability to decode CVC words from our grade level sight word list.

Valid- this is a valid tool because the focus is on a breadth of end-of-trimester skills so it examines spelling and reading in this context.

Reliable- this is reliable because we meet as a grade level team to decide assessments, ensure we all give assessments uniformly and we grade assessments together as well to ensure fairness and accuracy. Finally, these assessments are reported to our administrator.

Presentation and Data Analysis

PART ONE

Research Question One

Will the use of a variety of materials and modalities as prescribed by Zoo-phonics result in better acquisition and retention of target skills?

Data Sources

Weekly Spelling Tests, Student Journals, Listen to Students Read

Weekly Spelling Tests

Students took 11 spelling tests during the first trimester, the research period.

I calculated the average percentage for each student. Eighteen students participated in this assessment. Three students did not participate in this assessment. Two advanced students tested out of Zoo-phonics and one special education student with Down's Syndrome does not participate in assessments though she does participate in lessons.

Here are the average student percentages for all eleven tests listed in descending order:

99, 99, 98, 97, 96, 96, 95, 94, 94, 93, 92, 90, 89, 87, 86, 86, 86, 79

Class average: 92%

Student Journals

In evaluating student journals, I collected journals from October and November. Zoo-phonics instruction during these two months focused on short vowel consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. It is transfer of this skill that I looked for in student journals. Since this is self-selected writing, students may or many not have used CVC words in their journal. I kept a log of each time they did and if it was spelled correctly. When tabulating results I noticed that we did very little journal writing in November. It was a statistically insignificant sample that would have skewed an accurate reflection of the results so I did not include November in the final analysis. These are the results. See table.

Student	October Journal # CVC words attempted	# CVC words correct	%
Aly	9	8	89
Angie	14	14	100
Austin	4	4	100
Brysen	8	7	88
Casey	9	8	89
Chase	15	15	100
Cynthia	7	6	86
Darleni	4	4	100
Erin	10	8	80
Johnathon	5	5	100
Justin	5	4	80
Kathy	8	8	100
Kevin	8	8	100
Lenny	11	11	100
Linda	9	9	100
Mary	8	7	88
Stephanie	18	14	78
Travis	5	5	100
Zach	12	11	92
Zachary	2	2	100
Average Total	9	8	92

Listen to Students Read

I did a Running Record assessment with a Zoo-phonics reader containing CVC text for each letter of the alphabet. The sample contained 78 words. Twenty students participated in this assessment. Here are their percentage scores of number of correct words in descending order: 100, 100, 100, 99, 97, 96, 96, 95, 95, 95, 95, 94, 90, 88, 87, 85, 82, 79, 71, 53
Class average on running record sample: 90% accuracy

Research Question Two

Will my efforts to keep parents informed and connected to the curriculum result in parent support of and participation in Zoo-phonics reading/spelling practice at home?

Data Sources

Communication Log, Parent Survey, Student Interview

Communication Log

This source of data cannot be presented numerically. It is simply a list of each time I sent home information about Zoo-phonics to families to help them help their student during the first trimester research period. All information I sent home, with the exception of the video, was also translated into Spanish. Twenty-five percent of the families in my class need translation services.

•Back-to-School Night presentation and take-home packet

This contained general information about the Zoo-phonics program, Zoo-phonics signals, and home literacy opportunities.

•Zoo-phonics introductory letter for families new to the district and Zoo-phonics, along with a Zoo-phonics video to borrow to see signaling in action

•Zoo-phonics word list at first trimester parent conferences

•Directions to the Maze Game

•How to signal a capital

•General information about blends and signaling a blend

•Specific cue word posters for studied blends

•Easy Zoo-phonics readers and guidelines for reading with a beginning reader

Parent Survey

I sent a survey home with each of my 21 students. Only 11 were returned. That's 52%. They were sent home in English and Spanish. Two of five Spanish surveys were returned (40%) and retranslated into English. I chose to do a survey that asked for parents to write their thoughts, which would provide more insight for me in lieu of a number rated survey. I offered the survey to parents to respond to anonymously if they chose so they could be candid in their responses. I have recorded each survey response by question. See the following.

1. Do you feel that Zoo-phonics has helped your child learn to read?

7 Yes, 1 Definitely

If so, how?

“because she can sound out the letters into words.”

“by associating the sound to an animal helps them remember.”

“I believe they have learned a lot because Zoo-phonics makes it fun for them to learn.”

“it gives them the tools to remember the sounds better. It also helps them spell better.”

“Zoo-phonics has helped my child to read because it's easier for him to read by sounding out the sounds.”

“I feel as though the movements along with the sounds of the alphabet has made learning fun and interesting.”

“By learning the Zoo-phonics song, sounds & movements, it has given her the confidence to try.”

“identifying the letters by the signals.”

2. What do you like about Zoo-phonics?

“We like that it combines verbal & motor skills to help children learn. We appreciate the ‘animal theme.’ In Kindergarten, our daughter took an immediate interest in ‘animating’ an animal’s movement. After which, she quickly utilized the hand gestures and sounds to pronounce words.”

“It is fun and makes learning fun.”

“I like the movements. It’s kind of like sign language.”

“Each letter has its sound animal.”

“the songs & rhymes, the signals, the animals”

“The cute names you give the animals.”

“I’m less frustrated in teaching the letter & sound.”

“I like that the kids can say the sounds of the word and also do the movements of the animals.”

“Great way to introduce sounds/reading.”

“It is very interesting how each signal movement is similar to an animal.”

“The truth is I don’t understand.”-Spanish family

3. What do you not like about Zoo-phonics?

“nothing. I like everything.”

2 “nothing”

“nothing that I can see.”

“the transition is hard for the kids when sounds start changing from the original 26 to the alternate sounds the letters make.”

“I like everything about Zoo-phonics.”

“I haven’t thought of any dislikes about Zoo-phonics.”

“There is nothing.”

4. Does your child signal at home when they do their homework?

7 yes

2 sometimes

every night

5. Do you play the Maze Games with your child?

“sometimes. I focus more on reading with” my child

5 yes

yes I do

sometimes

no

“I don’t understand.”-Spanish family

6. Do you know the Zoo-phonics signals yourself?

Some

3 yes

not all of it

most of them
so-so
most of them, but not all
some of them

7. Do you think signaling is important?

7 yes

yes-to a point

yes, very important

Why or why not?

“We do not think our daughter would have mastered reading so quickly, without the use of signaling. We’ve seen a direct connection between seeing, saying and signaling.”

“Because it continually locks the sound of the letters into” my child’s “memory.”

“When my son does not recognize a word I signal and he remembers the sound.”

“So they know the sounds.”

“With the smaller words it works great-but as longer words are introduced and alternate sounds are introduced it gets clumsy & the kids don’t want to do it.”

“It helps them sound out the word.”

“It should be taught to help the child. If they can’t remember the sound they might remember the signal.”

“I think they learn faster with the signals.”

My child “was introduced to the Zoo-phonics last year & it was helpful in starting to read.” My child “uses it still but not as often as last year.”

“because it helps my son to identify letters that his is confused about like: b, or d, p, q. When I do the signal he can know which one it is.”

8. Do you feel the teacher provides enough information to help you understand how to help your child with Zoo-phonics?

6 yes

“yes, their [sic] very helpful.”

“I believe so.”

“We were not provided with adequate information when our daughter was learning Zoo-phonics. We would have liked a conference or meeting, where Zoo-phonics was explained in depth. Or, we would have appreciated access to a Zoo-phonics video.”

This last comment refers to a Kindergarten experience with Zoo-phonics and not her daughter’s current first grade experience with Zoo-phonics.

“The truth yes, but we are the ones that do not understand because we do not know English.”
Spanish family

9. What are your opinions about the Zoo-phonics homework?

“We’ve found the Zoo-phonics Maze Game to be annoying. However, we do like the writing pages-where signaling and writing (words) is required.”

“The homework is fun. It encourages” my child “to ‘want’ to do it.”

“The homework is interactive and fun.”

“It is a good way for kids to learn how to read.”

“Some of it is very good-some not so good.”

“Just to keep signaling and sounding out words the fun way.”

“I like the repetativeness [sic]. For those who are slower at learning-this helps!”

“I think it is good and I don’t think it’s hard for the kids because sometimes my daughter doesn’t need my help. She knows what to do.”

“Working fine. Only wish it was more challenging. Maybe give more words each week.”

“It is a good method to learn; it’s the base to read and write.”

“The truth in some of the homework we cannot help because we do not understand.” Spanish family

10. What do you do in addition to Zoo-phonics homework to help your child practice reading?

“Every night” my child “reads to us or we read to her.”

“I read to them, make them read back to me, say out words and then spell them back to me.”

“Lots of reading to them and asking them what something might say.”

“Read with them every night & help them sound out the words.”

“Read to him, let him read to me.”

“I help him with his silables [sic].

“We read books as well as the word list given to us by the teacher.”

“We take turns reading to each other.”

“read books to her, have her read books to us, help her read menus at restaurants, help her read street signs, help her write letters to family and friends, help her with ‘mock’ spelling tests (writing words based on sounds), look up and write words from the dictionary, word searches, we play restaurant (where our daughter takes orders and practices writing down words based on how she thinks they are spelled.”

“Have books that are interesting to him (my son) like about animals or planets.”

“Yes, we help her to practice reading with her.” Spanish family

11. Do YOU like to read?

8 yes

Very much

12. Does your child ever see you read a book, the newspaper, etc.?

8 yes

“Yes, she sees us reading books, magazines, mail, newspapers, emails, etc.”

13. What is your child’s attitude about reading?

“Loves it when it is for leisure. Puts up a little resistance when it is for a class project or something similar.”

“She is very excited about reading.”

“He likes to read when it’s quiet and there aren’t distractions and he’s not tired.”

“happy”

“He loves it- it’s fun- he’s frustrated he isn’t able to read everything yet.”

“I see him liking to read more everyday.”

“Not enough self-confidence”

“She likes reading books.”

“likes to read”

“He questions, what are you reading? What does it say in here?”

“bothered” Spanish family

14. How much TV and video game time does your child watch or play on a school day?

“1/2 hour cartoon after homework and dinner.”

“no video games, not a lot of TV like 30 min. to 1 hour before bedtime. No TV in the morning when she wakes up for school.”

3 “1 hour TV.”

“1-2 hours”

“less than 1 hour of TV average, no video games unless it is educational computer game, and homework is done.”

“30 minutes- 1 hour a day”

“1-1 1/2 hours”

“recently, none”

“She only plays outside the house.” Spanish family

Any additional comments:

“We are looking forward to our younger daughter starting Zoo-phonics. We suspect she will be reading even sooner than her sister did, given that we now have this wonderful tool to utilize (and didn't when older daughter was starting to read.)”

“Zoo-phonics has helped my son to recognize and read in just one month. I have seen a drastic improvement. My son needs to have that interaction because he either gets distracted or bored easily and this makes it fun”

“I am finding that the coordination needed for combination signals can be hard for this age group, also they get confused with longer words and tend to be working on signals so hard that they lose track of the word. Since this is my second child going through it & I've seen it with both of them it makes me wonder. Also-both of my kids are above average students-it worries me that if they are struggling with this, how are kids who aren't at their level doing, or kids whose parents aren't as involved in the homework process who aren't practicing the signals with them. Again, this is only when they get to longer words and combination sounds and alternate sounds –not the standard stuff.”
This parent comment confuses me. This is the first time Zoo-phonics is being taught in first grade so her daughter could not have had it before as she was also at our school. Second of all, her son currently in my class is doing great with signaling and at the point in the year this survey was taken there was only one auxiliary signal for a capital letter and that is not confusing to the students. ??

“I am glad to see Zoo-phonics in the first grade. I feel this will help a lot of the students who are not at the higher level.”

“I think Zoo-phonics is a very good program for kids.”

“Only that you excuse me for not helping my daughter enough but I'm happy to see enough progress.” Spanish family

Student Interview

I met with 20 students privately during class time to ask the following questions. Some were the same questions I asked their parents and others were different, but all yielded information about what my students think.

1. Do you like to read?

16 yes

2 no (both low readers)

1 "Sometimes, but sometimes it's a little bit hard."

2. What kind of stories do you like to read or have read to you?

Book Title responses

Amelia Bedelia, Alphabakery

Rocket Power

Little Bear Goes to the Park

Junie B. Jones & the Stupid-

Smelly Bus

Little Goldilocks

Harry Potter & the Chamber-
of Secrets

2 Huggly's Christmas

General Category responses

dinosaur books, monster books, puppet books

Barbie

happy stories

Kitten books and dog books

2 Snakes

Rugrats

Dragon Ball Z books

Chapter books

Power Puff Girls

Barney books

Dr. Seuss books

Batman stories

3. Does someone read to you at home? When?

No

Not often, I read myself

12 Yes

My mom, sometimes

Sometimes

2 mom

2 mommy & daddy

Time of day responses

11 Bedtime/night

5 after school

4 weekends

1 after dinner

4. What do you like about Zoo-phonics?

"when we all stand up and signal"

"I like that it teaches us how to learn"

"I like the animals."

2 I like everything."

"It is my favorite because I like the motions."

"I can read Clifford."

2 "I don't know."

2 "I like singing it."

"signals"

"I had it for two years."

"I like that there are two Allies in our class." (one student and one Zoo-phonics character)

2 "Doing the movements."

2 "Doing the sounds."

"Sammy Snake"

"I like Lizzy Lizard."

"I like kangaroos."

5. Is there something you don't like about Zoo-phonics?

9 no

"Inny Inchworm because he always sleeps on the job."

('Sleeping on the Job' is a silly phrase I often use with students when I catch them off task.)

"Francy Fish"

"Bubba Bear"

2 "I like all of the things."

"Sometimes you get tired because it takes a long time."

"I don't like to do V or Y signals and sounds."

"I like everything. Some are kind of hard like Francy Fish and I get confused between Deedee Deer and Bubba Bear."

"Don't like doing the signals." (motor challenged student)

"I don't like doing hand motions because my hands get tired sometimes."

"I don't know."

6. Who is your favorite Zoo-phonics character? Why?

"Allie, because she's the first one."

"Allie Alligator, I don't know."

"Catina Cat, because I like cats."

"Catina Cat, because it's easy."

"Francy Fish, because they swim in water."

"Honey Horse, because I like it."

"Honey Horse, because he does /h/."

"Kayo Kangaroo, It starts my name."

"Lizzy Lizard. I just don't know."

"Lizzy Lizard, I like how she goes /l/."

"Missy Mouse, It's the letter of my name and my grandma gave it to me."

"Robby Rabbit, because I have a rabbit."

3 "Sammy Snake, because I like snakes."

"Yancy Yak, because he's a bull and I like bulls."

"Yancy Yak, because it's fun to do the signal talking on the phone."

"Zeke, because it's an easy movement to show Zeke."

"Zeke, because he's in my name."

"Zeke, just because I like Zeke."

7. Do you like to do the signals?

14 Yes

2 Sometimes

2 no (both low readers)

“It makes me tired.” (motor challenged student)

“Yes, but some of them are hard.” (student new to Zoo-phonics)

8. Do you signal when you do the homework?

15 yes

1 no

2 sometimes

“no, I do the page.”

“I might sometimes in my head do it.”

9. Does a grown-up help you with homework?

6 Yes

1 Sometimes

3 No

8 Just checks it when I’m done

“My mom helps me when I get stuck and checks it.”

“My mom reads it to me and I do it. Sometimes I do it by myself.”

10. Does a grown-up play the Maze Game with you? If so, do you signal when you play? Does the grown-up?

Plays with grown-up

Student signals

Grown-up signals

8 Yes

yes

yes

Yes

yes

sometimes

4 Yes

yes

no

Plays with brother

sometimes

yes, I teach him all the signals

‘Not really-my mom or dad don’t get it.’

‘We only played it once because we don’t have time.’

‘I just do it by myself. Nobody else wants to play.’

3 no

11. Do you think your parents know all of the signals?

6 Yes

“They know some.”

“I taught them all of them.”

“Yes, but not words” (animal names)

“I don’t think they do but I show it to them every night.”

“Not yet.”

6 No

2 “Not really”

“No, but sometimes I help her.”

12. Do you ever see your parents read their own book, the mail, a newspaper?

14 Yes

“Yes, magazines.”

“My mom, magazines and newspapers.”

“My step dad does. He reads about cowboys and dirt bikes.”

“Yes, my mom reads the Bible.”

1 no

This is my favorite quote from all of my research...

“Sometimes my dad does when he stays home from work. **When my mom’s going potty she reads magazines.”**

Little eyes are always watching!

13. Do you think your parents like to read?

Here’s another great one...

“The dictionary helps them cheat when they play the game (Scrabble). They are not just using their brain to make them smart.” I think she got this terminology from working on math flash cards. I tell my students to use their brain and not their fingers to solve problems.

14 yes

“yes they read a lot. Sometimes my mom blobs (talks) a lot.”

“Everybody but my mom (likes to read). She goes over to her friends’ (house) and parties.”

“My dad does but my mom doesn’t”

“No, but they like when I read.”

“don’t know.”

14. How much TV/videos do you watch on a school day?

2 none, 10%

9 a little, 45%

9 a lot, 45%

Additional student commentary:

A student relates that the DirecTV man told his parents “If your son watches too much TV there will be no more cartoons.” This is the same family that told their son a Down’s Syndrome student was born with their brain backwards or no brain at all and that he is not allowed to eat sugar because it will do awful things to him. *Interesting, yet inaccurate approach to parenting!*

15. How much video game time do you play on a school day?

9 None, 45%

4 a little, 20%

7 a lot, 55%

Additional student commentary:

“After Dragon Ball Z (a cartoon) I play (video games) the whole rest of the day.”

16. Circle the face that shows what kind of reader you think you are.

Overall class breakdown:

0 Sad face, Not so good. 0%

8 Semi –smile face, I’m okay. 40%

12 Happy face, I’m great! 60%

Breakdown by reading group level:

8 High Readers

3 I’m okay. 38%

5 I’m great! 62%

6 Medium Readers

3 I’m okay. 50%

3 I’m great! 50%

6 Low Readers

4 I’m okay. 67%

2 I’m great! 33%

Research Question Three

Will consistent use of sound and signaling help students learn spelling words and sight words better than the previous curriculum?

Signal Assessment

Twenty students were given pre and post sound & signal tests for all 26 letters at the beginning of September when school started and at the end of November. Findings are summarized in the following table.

Student	Pre-Sound/26	%	Pre-Signal/26	%	Post-Sound/26	%	Post-Signal/26	%
ly	26	100	25	96	26	100	26	100
gie	25	96	26	100	26	100	26	100
tin	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
sen	26	100	24	92	26	100	26	100
sey	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
ase	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
chia	26	100	26	100	24	92	26	100
leni	25	96	26	100	24	92	26	100
in	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
nath n	23	88	26	100	26	100	26	100
tin	not enrolled				25	96	19	73
thy	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
vin	26	100	26	100	25	96	26	100
ny	25	96	24	92	26	100	26	100
nda	26	100	24	92	24	92	26	100
ry	26	100	26	100	26	100	26	100
ohan e	24	92	24	92	26	100	26	100
vis	4	15	6	23	26	100	26	100
ch	11	42	18	69	26	100	26	100
rary	25	96	26	100	26	100	26	100
ass e.	24	92	24	92	25.6	98	25.6	98

Trimester Grade Level Standards Based Measurement

All first grade students participate in a series of assessments each trimester. These assessments are graded as a grade level team and results are shared with administration. Besides aiding in report card scores for individual students, our district can monitor trends in student achievement and make recommendations for adjustment as necessary. For the purposes of this research I am using two of our Standards Based Measurement (SBM) assessments, sight word scores and spelling test scores. First trimester goals were at least 20 on sight words and at least 8 on spelling.

Student	Sight Word Score out of 100	Spelling Score out of 10
Aly	83	7
Angie	22	9
Austin	15	9
Brysen	10	8
Casey	45	9
Chase	98	10
Cynthia	64	10
Darleni	15	5
Erin	20	10
Johnathon	17	8
Justin	69	8
Kathy	98	9
Kevin	10	5
Lenny	18	10
Linda	16	4
Mary	73	10
Stephanie	34	9
Travis	19	8
Zach	28	9
Zachary	30	10
Class Average	39	8

Sight Words: 60% of students met the 1st trimester goal

Spelling: 80% of students met the 1st trimester goal

Weekly Spelling Tests

This is the same data cited for use in research question one.

Students took 11 spelling tests during the first trimester, the research period.

I calculated the average percentage for each student. Eighteen students participated in this assessment. Three students did not participate in this assessment. Two advanced students tested out of Zoo-phonics and one special education student with Down’s Syndrome does not participate in assessments though she does participate in lessons.

Here are the average students percentages for all 11 tests listed in descending order:

99, 99, 98, 97, 96, 96, 95, 94, 94, 93, 92, 90, 89, 87, 86, 86, 86, 79

Class average: 92%

Presentation and Data Analysis

PART TWO

Weekly Spelling Tests

When looking at the averages for weekly spelling tests I see a range of success demonstrated by my students. With the exception of one student scoring at 79%, all students scored greater than 85%. I interpret this as acceptable achievement levels for weekly spelling assessment. One factor to consider in this success is remembering that this success cannot be generalized to students' overall spelling ability because it is only spelling in a specific testing situation and not spelling that students have applied in their daily writing or work. What I extrapolate from this is that **generally my students are well prepared for weekly spelling tests and are performing well on this type of assessment.**

The student that scored an average of 79% is a student that exhibits a strong language weakness. She is receiving support from the reading specialist. This student appears to have very little stimulation at home and is extremely low in verbal skills in both English and her home language of Spanish. When considering this student's weakness and delay in language development, scoring 79% is a high level of achievement for her.

Student Journals

This was a particularly interesting assessment to me. I was curious to see what students transferred from the testing environment to their daily self-selected writing. Of the target CVC skill I found that the range in use was between 2 and 15 occurrences. I could find no correlation between usage of CVC words to reading level. Some low readers used several CVC words as did some high readers and visa versa. Despite the variance in usage I was pleased to see that accuracy in use was high, the class average being 92% and individual averages being between 78 and 100%. **This shows that students are experiencing success in writing self-selected CVC words by applying skills taught in early Zoo-phonics spelling lessons.**

Listen to Students Read

I enjoyed doing this assessment with my students. Our reading specialist informed me that my sample of 78 words was too long compared to the typical running record sample of about 35 words for the age and level of my students. However, because it was so long I did obtain a significant sample of students' reading. Seventeen students, 85%, scored above 80% on this assessment. The one student that scored 53% was the same student that was mentioned earlier with serious language issues. One interesting thing to note is that this reading sample was complete sentences from a storybook. **Students were largely successful in reading CVC words in a story format.**

Communication Log

At the beginning of the year at Back-to-School Night information about first grade Zoo-phonics was initially provided to first grade families. A special information packet and video were furnished to families new to the district as they came into my class. Then throughout the research period I provided explanation sheets for each new skill and signal in written form sent home to each family. Translated materials were also provided. **From the teacher's point of view, critical information to help parents help their child with Zoo-phonics was provided by the teacher at each opportune juncture.**

Parent Survey

I had hoped at least 75% of families would have participated in my survey, but only half of all families did. And of that half, not everyone answered all of the questions. One reason this may have had a low response was that parents actually had to write in answers rather than circle a number on a scale; therefore it took more effort. I chose a write-in survey because I felt it would yield more unique and specific information that would be helpful to my research. For the families that did respond, I was pleased with the amount of detailed answers. **The overall sentiment expressed in the surveys was that Zoo-phonics was a valuable and supportive tool to help students learn to read.**

Signaling is a critical component of Zoo-phonics. All parents responding said that signaling was important in some way. I found that statement to be contradictory when parents indicated that many of them only know some of the signals. If signaling is important and a parent only knows some signals, then they cannot effectively help their student with signal accuracy. I also found it odd that of these same parents that feel signaling is important only a handful have their child signal every night. What I make of this contradiction is that **parents understand and support the philosophy of signaling, but fall short in practical implementation.**

Question eight of my parent survey was particularly important to question two of my research. Parents were asked if they felt the teacher provided enough information to help them help their child. **All parents answering this question felt they had sufficient information provided from school to help their child with Zoo-phonics at home.** One Spanish speaking family expressed that enough information was being provided but they lacked the understanding of how to use it because they cannot speak English. This sentiment was expressed even though the materials are provided in Spanish too. It is more likely that this family does not have strong literacy skills in even their native language. This is a common experience at my school with the local Spanish speaking population.

In the area of parent interpretation of student attitudes about reading, all parents except one said their child has a good attitude. This is encouraging to hear as I try very hard to instill a sense of self-confidence in students. Because this is the second year working with the Zoo-phonics characters (for those who had it in Kindergarten) it gives students a familiar connection to build on. This familiarity should help with self-confidence. Giving students multiple modalities to acquiring learning through can also enhance self-confidence. This is what Zoo-phonics does.

Student Interview

There was 100% student participation in this survey instrument. The initial question that queried students' enjoyment of reading (85% like to read) confirmed the parents' judgment of student attitudes about reading.

80% of students reported that someone reads to them at home. I always find it shocking that some families every year do not read to their students or listen to their students read at home. How can they expect their child to learn how to read if their practice is limited to what we can do at school? This is a glaring sign of which families value literacy and which don't.

The majority of students like doing the signals 70% consistently (15% inconsistently) and **at home 75% say they do the signals consistently (15% inconsistently.)**

When it comes to helping with homework, I found that many students have reached an independent level already and turn to parents only for checking or assistance when stuck. I think it's great that

students feel this comfortable, but if parents aren't watching them do the homework no one is verifying that students are signaling or correctly signaling. The written work could be accurate, but the signaling is just as important to ensure future success, as the skills get progressively more difficult.

One homework task that is sent home weekly is called The Maze Game. There is no writing involved at all, only signaling and playing a game. This is a great opportunity for parents to model that learning can be fun and signaling is important. **Only 65% of students report playing regularly with an adult.** Playing the Maze Game is an adult responsibility to initiate and participate in. There is no homework paper to turn in. It saddens me that adults are not modeling responsibility to do non-written homework to their students.

Of those 65% of students who play, only 61% play where both student and adult signal. This again shows me the discrepancy between what parents know is right and what is actually practiced. As the saying goes, "Your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks more than your talk talks." The walk shows me that parents are not as involved in the signaling component of Zoo-phonics yet they say they know how important it is.

A positive statistic in all this is that of the 65% of students who say they play The Maze Game regularly, 100% of the students signal at home. This shows me at least the students understand and PRACTICE the importance of signaling.

Only 35% of students could say with any confidence that their parents know all of the signals. **Students are aware of the lack of interest and parent participation in signaling.** This sets a poor example for students. Parent interest in early elementary school work is like preventative medicine. When one gets off to a healthy start there is more hope for the future for a long and fruitful (academic) life. By parents not taking advantage of the opportunity to support students now, they are only setting themselves up for more difficult challenges with their child's education in the future. This relates to comments I've shared in previous coursework. No matter how good the schools and teachers are, it is not enough if education is not supported at home. Schools cannot be exclusively blamed for lack of student achievement. Parents share in that failure too. Legislating more testing, more difficult programs for teacher education or greater funding cannot make up for the lack of parent participation in education. Educators need to educate parents about how critical their roll in their child's future is.

Signal Assessment

I was amazed at the result of the Signal Assessment. More students than ever before in my years of teaching first grade in this district remembered all or almost all of their sounds upon initial first grade screening. There was significant retention from Kindergarten. Then by the end of the trimester, even those new to Zoo-phonics scored just as well. (One student came late in the trimester and was still very new to Zoo-phonics when the assessment was given so he was the only low score.) Consistent use of sound and signaling in Kindergarten led to strong retention upon first grade entry. **Consistent use of sound and signal during the research period led to significant gains by students new to Zoo-phonics and consistent maintenance by those already strong in sound and signals upon entry into first grade.**

Trimester Grade Level Standards Bases Measurement

Two trimester assessments were considered for this research. The first was sight word scores. Students were asked to read at least 20 CVC words in isolation from pictures or context clues. I was surprised that **only 60% of my students were able to achieve this benchmark**, yet 90% met the achievement goal for reading CVC words in a story context. I am not sure why there was not comparable success on the sight word assessment. I have some possibilities but cannot say with any certainty what was the root cause:

-the sight word assessment was a brand new reading experience for students whereas the running record assessment was a format they were used to.

-students were used to working with isolated words in words families, not in an unconnected way.

-the sight word assessment was isolated words whereas the words in the running record had connected meaning as they told a story about their Zoo-phonics friends.

I am hopeful that in future sight word assessments students will overcome whatever limited their ability to showcase what they knew.

Some better scores were recorded on the spelling trimester assessment. **80% of students met the achievement goal for the spelling test.** Though this was a good score, student scores on weekly spelling tests were higher. The class average on weekly spelling tests was 92%. The spelling test for the trimester assessment was composed of an unrelated variety of CVC words whereas the weekly spelling tests were words from a particular word family. This might be one explanation as to why weekly test scores were higher. A second reason that might account for higher weekly test scores is that students studied weekly for known words on the test. Students had no advance knowledge of what was going to be on the trimester spelling test. It was a “cold” test. So in a known testing situation students scored an average of 92% and in an unknown testing situation scores slipped to 80%. With continued practice and application outside spelling tests, I am confident that the latter score would improve as the school year progresses.

Presentation and Data Analysis

PART THREE

Question One

Will the use of a variety of materials and modalities as prescribed by Zoo-phonics result in better acquisition and retention of target skills?

Short answer: yes!

Key statements from research interpretation that support this answer:

Weekly Spelling Tests

•Generally my students are prepared for weekly spelling tests and are performing well on this type of assessment. Class trimester average 92%.

Student Journals

•Students are experiencing success in writing self-selected CVC words by applying skills taught in early Zoo-phonics spelling lessons. Class CVC average 92%.

Listen to Students Read

•Students were largely successful in reading CVC words in a story format. Class average on running record sample 90% accuracy.

When interpreting these three sources of data, there is clearly evidence that suggests students are experiencing success at reaching grade level standards through the use of the Zoo-phonics curriculum.

Question Two

Will my efforts to keep parents informed and connected to the curriculum result in parent support of and participation in Zoo-phonics reading/spelling practice at home?

Short answer: yes to support and no to participation!

Key statements from research interpretation that support this answer:

Communication Log

•From the teacher's point of view, critical information to help parents help their child with Zoo-phonics was provided by the teacher at each opportune juncture.

Parent Survey

•The overall sentiment expressed in the surveys was that Zoo-phonics was a valuable and supportive tool to help students learn to read.

•Parents understand and support the philosophy of signaling, but fall short in practical implementation.

•All parents answering this survey felt they had sufficient information provided from school to help their child with Zoo-phonics at home.

Student Interview

•80% of students reported that someone reads to them at home.

•At home 75% of students say they do the signals consistently (15% inconsistently.)

•Only 65% of students report playing the Maze Game regularly with an adult.

•Of those 65% of students who play, only 61% (40% of all students) play where both student and adult signal.

• Of the 65% of students who say they play The Maze Game regularly, 100% of the students signal at home.

•Students are aware of the lack of interest and parent participation in signaling.

When interpreting these three sources of data there is clearly evidence to suggest that parents feel they are informed about how to help their child with Zoo-phonics. Parents are philosophically supportive of Zoo-phonics but many do not provide a significant level of follow-through with the application of that philosophy, i.e. signaling at home with their student or knowing/monitoring the signals themselves.

Question Three

Will consistent use of sound and signaling help students learn spelling words and sight words better than the previous curriculum?

Short answer: yes on spelling words and no on sight words!

Key statements from research interpretation that support this answer:

Signal Assessment

•Consistent use of sound and signal during the research period led to significant gains by students new to Zoo-phonics and consistent maintenance by those already strong in sound and signals upon entry into first grade.

Trimester Grade Level Standards Based Measurement

•80% of students met the achievement goal for the spelling test.

•Only 60% of students met the achievement goal for sight words,

Weekly Spelling Tests, Same data source as question one

•Generally my students are well prepared for weekly spelling tests and are performing well on this type of assessment. Class trimester average 92%.

When interpreting these three sources of data there is clearly evidence to suggest that students consistently perform well on multiple spelling assessments, including the trimester grade level test. What is not clear is why students did not perform as well on the sight word assessment for the trimester, yet students performed well on reading CVC words on other research assessments. To be fair this is why I have answered no to the sight word component of this question. It also needs to be stated that I do not have the specific data from last year's testing and the comparison of curriculum is based on my recollection of student progress. Data from this research shows students have performed better on spelling assessments when compared to my recollection of spelling assessments with the previous curriculum. Data from this research shows students have performed comparably or slightly less when compared to my recollection of sight word assessments with the previous curriculum. These statements are made in association with the data sources for research question three only.

Research Problem Statement

Students in first grade, room 110, at Oak Valley Elementary School need to learn to read and spell well while engaging in the Zoo-phonics curriculum.

Zoo-phonics is new to our first grade and therefore none of us have tried it before.

This class of first graders has a large pool of at-risk students in the area of language arts. Therefore, through the use of the multi-modal program of Zoo-phonics I will use all of the means offered to me to help my at-risk students achieve grade level reading and spelling skills. I will do this by planning and delivering my instruction as guided by the curriculum to engage students actively in learning, keep parents connected to the curriculum so they can support their students and I will make a concerted effort to reinforce the use of sound and signaling, an essential kinesthetic component of Zoo-phonics.

When considering the answers to my research question in light of this problem statement, I feel that through the variety of data sources, student achievement with Zoo-phonics is helping students achieve grade level standards. I have planned and delivered my instruction as guided by the curriculum to engage students actively in learning (as their signal skills testify!). I have done my part to keep parents connected to the curriculum so they can support their students, but sadly some parents are falling short on doing their part to support their students in applying what I have shared. Finally, I have made a concerted effort to reinforce the use of sound and signaling, an essential kinesthetic component of Zoo-phonics which students are doing very well at, even those new to the district.

Presentation and Data Analysis

PART FOUR

Drawing Conclusions:

Zoo-phonics has been a valuable tool in helping students acquire reading and spelling skills. Zoo-phonics offers multi-modal ways of learning that students are experiencing success with and parents are supportive of. Students are having a good time acquiring the skills to read and spell accurately. Though not all data sources confirmed growth for all students, the overall trend was indicative of success that students were experiencing with Zoo-phonics.

The only strong weakness was lack of consistent parent application of what parents know they need to do to support Zoo-phonics at home. This concerns me because a child's learning success is a combination of what happens at home and at school. If one part of that is missing or weak it is the child who loses out.

Education is not some magic experience that happens at school. Education happens all of the time. It's just a question of what children are learning. Are they learning that reading is important? Are they learning that mom and dad don't value getting schoolwork done on time? Are they learning it's okay to skip some assignments because they take more effort? Are they learning to do their best for intrinsic reasons? Are they learning that character counts? Children learn from what we do even more than what we say.

In Room 110 we "do" Zoo-phonics as much as we "say" Zoo-phonics and it is having a positive impact on Language Arts education. I am proud to be part of that.

So what happens next?

The appropriate and logical action that is legitimized from this research is:

- stronger supports in place to encourage parent participation
- continue comparing data for a full school year on the effectiveness of Zoo-phonics
- petition the District to keep and support funding for Zoo-phonics should annual results be as positive as those from the first trimester

Zoo-phonics has an event called a Home Literacy Night when families are invited at the beginning of the year to an evening at school to experience Zoo-phonics in stations the teachers run. We did not try it this year because we were all still too new to Zoo-phonics and wanted a year to experience it to know what we are talking about in addition to the chaotic state the school was in upon opening. I feel a valuable next step in addressing the need for parent participation would be to implement a Home Literacy Night, maybe twice a year.

I would like to continue my data collection for the remainder of the school year. Zoo-phonics introduces skills far earlier than our previous curriculum and I am curious to see how well students do. It is also a learning experience for me as I learn new signals for things like digraphs, silent e and long vowels and find the best way to support student learning.

Finally, Zoo-phonics is a pilot program this year. The district will be expecting a report on how well students did with Zoo-phonics and if it's a worthwhile supplemental phonics program to continue to fund. We are in a new Language Arts textbook adoption cycle and the budget in the State of California is woeful at the moment. The District will be very cautious about how it spends its funds so the opportunity to represent an opinion of Zoo-phonics supported by accurate research is paramount if our grade level determines this is a program we'd like to keep.

Personal Commentary

This has been a difficult journey for me. I have had an unusually challenging class in addition to moving and opening a new school with inconsistent administration. This creates a climate difficult for study and research to the level required of Grand Canyon University. I am grateful to have been granted an extension on my research so I could complete the job well.

Despite these difficulties, I have succeeded. I am proud of my Collaborative Action Research Project. It is amazing to think I have just completed the same process a professional researcher does. The experience is empowering. I realize I can bring change to my district because of my careful academic study. The School Board may not act if I say we need Zoo-phonics in first grade. However they'd be hard pressed not to act if I made the same statement supported by months worth of evidence presented in a careful research format.

I climbed a mountain last summer. I completed a 71-mile backpacking journey to summit the tallest mountain in the continental United States. It was beyond what I thought I could do. I have found many parallels between my Mount Whitney trip and this research experience.

-Each step of the research process is like a different stopping point on the trail, and each one completed gets you closer to the goal.

-The difficulty makes the success sweeter.

-Self-esteem increases when you realize the depth of your accomplishment.

-You see things along the way you'd never see unless you embarked on the journey through the wilderness.

-The view from the top is amazing and worth the climb.

Thank you for the opportunity to take this journey and show myself what I am capable of.