The Benefits of Implementing Phonemic Awareness

Activities with At-Risk Kindergarten Students

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Submitted to the Masters of Arts in Education Program
of Defiance College
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education

May, 2006

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Abstract

Six at-risk kindergarten students participated in this study. They were enrolled in a racially and socio-economically diverse classroom with nineteen other students in an urban city school district in a Midwestern state. The purpose of this study was to determine if implementing phonemic awareness activities with this small group of students would increase their basic early literacy skills. The study was conducted for a one-month period. The participants were assessed before the intervention began and again when the intervention had been completed. Based on the data from the study, all of the students improved their knowledge and abilities to work with letters and sounds as shown by the data.
Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge all those who stood behind me to complete this educational goal. My deepest appreciation and gratitude is extended to my husband and my family for always being there for me and believing in me. I would also like to thank my advisor, Mr. Fred Coulter. His advice and direction during this project was very much appreciated.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Students who enter kindergarten with little or no prior knowledge about letters and sounds often fall behind in developing their early literacy skills compared to the others in the classroom. When these students fall behind it puts them at-risk for becoming poor readers and writers because they do not have the foundation that is necessary to successfully master these skills (Yopp, 1992). The researcher, a veteran kindergarten teacher, was compelled to see if implementing phonemic awareness activities with a small group of these at-risk students would improve their early literacy skills and help build a foundation that would help them become successful readers and writers.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were:

1) How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature?

2) What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature?

3) According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom?

4) Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?
The justification for choosing this action research project was based on the researcher’s desire to enhance her students’ ability to develop their early literacy skills. The researcher felt the need to examine phonemic awareness because most of her students entered kindergarten with limited literacy skills exemplified by little or no prior knowledge of letters and sounds or the relationship between the two. According to Francis, Shaywitz, Steubing, Shewitz, and Fletcher’s study (as cited in Lennon and Slesinski 1999) students who fall behind in early literacy skills in the beginning of their education continue to lack the necessary skills to make gains in relationship to their peers.

With the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001, educators had implement evidence-based practices to produce successful readers. The information and research derived from this project will assist the researcher make decisions regarding the use of phonemic awareness activities in her classroom to improve all of her student’s ability with early literacy skills so they have the necessary skills to become successful readers.

**Definition of Terms**

**At-risk students**: students who fall behind their classmates academically due to lack of prior knowledge, socioeconomic status, or learning disabilities

**Phonemic awareness**: awareness that the spoken words are made up of sounds and the ability to manipulate sounds in communication; having the ability to know that different sounds make up words and speech
Phoneme: the smallest unit of sound (for example the word cat starts with the /c/)

DIBELS: The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills are a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills (Good & Kaminski, 2001, p.1).

Initial Sound Fluency: measured the students’ ability to recognize and state the initial sounds in a word (Good& Kaminski, 2001)

Letter Naming Fluency: measured the students’ ability to identify random letters in one minute (Good & Kaminski, 2001)

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency: measured the students’ ability to hear and segment individual sounds in a word (Good & Kaminski, 2001)

Early Literacy Skills: ability to recognize, use, and state the letters and sounds of the alphabet in the early stages of reading and writing

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: this law was enacted to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed in school

Limitations

This study was limited to one kindergarten class in a Midwest urban city school district. The participant group was limited, involving six at-risk kindergarten students. Therefore, there was only one group from which to gather data from to determine the success of implementing phonemic awareness activities.

In addition, time was limited to a one-month period and the duration of the project may have contributed to the results. Due to these factors, the results of this study may not
be generalized to other settings, grades, or student populations.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Research Question 1: How Was Phonemic Awareness Defined in the Professional Literature?

In order to answer research question one, a review of professional literature was conducted. Singer (as cited in Yopp, 1992) explained that kindergarten students acquired a large vocabulary before starting school and she stated that students also brought with them the ability to communicate clearly with others. However, most kindergarten students lacked the knowledge that their own speech and other's spoken words was made up of individual sounds. Yopp and Yopp (2000) indicated that phonemic awareness was the knowledge of understanding that speech was made up of individual sounds.

According to the reviewed literature, students must acquire phonemic awareness in order to become successful readers and writers.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Research Question #1: How Was Phonemic Awareness Defined in the Professional Literature?

In order to answer research question one, a review of professional literature was conducted. Singer (as cited in Yopp, 1992) explained that kindergarten students acquired a large vocabulary before starting school and she stated that students also brought with them the ability to communicate clearly with others. However, most kindergarten students lacked the knowledge that their own speech and other’s spoken words was made up of individual sounds. Yopp and Yopp (2000) indicated that phonemic awareness was the knowledge of understanding that speech was made up of individual sounds. According to the reviewed literature, students must acquire phonemic awareness in order to become successful readers and writers.
According to Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler (1998); Yopp (1992); and Blevins (1997) phonemic awareness was defined as having the ability to understand the individual sounds that make up words. These individual sounds were identified in the professional literature as the building blocks of words or phonemes. Furthermore, Blevins (1997) and Yopp (1992) indicated that phonemic awareness was the ability to hear the sounds in spoken words. They stated that phonemic awareness activities did not involve writing words; rather it involved the ability to hear and understand the sounds in spoken words.

Equally important, Hempenstall (2003) stated that phonemic awareness involved the structure of the word, but not about the word's meaning. He continued to explain that in order for students to understand how words were constructed, they must first understand that sounds in our language were represented by letters known as graphemes. Furthermore, he stated that the alphabetic principle was the relationship between sounds and words in print. He stated that once the students were able to understand the alphabetic principle then they could start making words.

Reutzel and Cooter Jr. (2003); Blevins (1997); and Fitzpatrick (1997) added that phonemic awareness also involved the manipulation of sounds in order to form new words. In addition, Reutzel and Cooter Jr. and Fitzpatrick stated that having the ability to hear the sounds in words was not sufficient enough to be phonemically aware, students needed to be able to construct new words by deleting and adding new sounds in words. Fitzpatrick indicated that the most important part in understanding phonemic awareness was being able to form new words and manipulate the sounds. According to Calfee,
Lindamood and Lindamood, (as cited in Adams et al. 1998) “measures of
schoolchildren’s ability to attend to and manipulate phonemes strongly correlate with
their reading success through twelfth grade” (p. 2)

In summary, Adams et al. (1998), Yopp, (1992), and Blevins (1997) suggested
that phonemic awareness encompassed much more than understanding that words were
made up of individual sounds. In fact, Blevins and Yopp stated that phonemic awareness
was having the ability to hear the sounds in words through oral activities. Hempenstall
(2003) explained that phonemic awareness was about understanding the structure of the
word and how it was constructed with graphemes. In addition, Reuztel and Cooter Jr.
(2003); Blevins (1997); and Fitzpatrick (1997) stated that phonemic awareness was not
only about being able to hear the sounds in words, but also about being able to
manipulate the sounds in order to form new words. Following a review of the
professional literature pertaining to the definition of phonemic awareness, it was
necessary to find out about the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in
a kindergarten classroom.

Research Question #2: What Were the Benefits of Implementing Phonemic Awareness
Activities in a Kindergarten Classroom, According to Reviewed Literature?

The review of professional literature revealed that there were many benefits of
acquiring phonemic awareness skills by kindergarten students. Adams and Stanovich (as
cited in Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998) reported that “a child’s level of
phonemic awareness on entering school is widely held to be the strongest single
determinant of the success that she or he will experience in learning to read- or,
conversely the likelihood that she or he will fail” (p. 2). Furthermore, Adams et al. (1998)
stated that students who do not have the basic understanding of phonemic awareness often experience the most reading difficulties. Berg and Stegelman (2003) indicated that students who experience reading difficulties at the onset of entering school often had a lower percentage rate of attaining the same reading skills mastered by their peers. Furthermore, they went on to state that when students experienced difficulties in reading, it ultimately caused other problems for them in other subjects in school.

According to Yopp (1992) phonemic awareness was found to be a very beneficial skill for students to acquire in kindergarten because it formed the basis for their beginning reading skills. Yopp (2000) explained that before students could comprehend what they read or write words, they must listen to the sounds that they hear in words. She noted that it was important for students to acquire phonemic awareness skills in order to write the individual letters. In addition to phonemic awareness laying the foundation for reading, she stated that it was also necessary for students to attain these concepts about phonemic awareness in order to read and essentially make sense of the words that they were reading. Blevins (1997) added that students who did not possess the ability to perform phonemic awareness activities, for example; breaking the sounds in the word apart or understanding that certain words begin with the same sound, were the students who had the most difficulties with reading and writing because they lacked the skills that were necessary to in order to manipulate the sounds.

Students who were taught phonemic awareness in kindergarten through first grade continued to show progress beyond the initialize stages on acquiring the skills. According to Ambruster, Lehr, & Osborn (2001) students who were taught phonemic awareness before entering kindergarten continued to show adequate growth beyond first and second
grade. Students who were taught phonemic awareness skills got off to a better start in reading and writing because they understood the alphabetic principle; the relationship between sounds and letters in print. McGuinness (as cited in Stegelman, 2003) indicated that kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers had an enormous amount of responsibly placed upon them when it came to teaching reading. He indicated that the first three of school when students received reading instruction would be a major factor of whether the child is successful in learning to read. Thus being the reason that the first three years of school were the most important for students when learning to read.

Yopp (1992) indicated that students who were not trained in phonemic awareness would not have the skills necessary to perform phonemic awareness activities and would not learn to read to the best of their ability because they were unlikely to possess the basic knowledge about sounds and letters. She indicated that when reading was being taught to students who understand the relationship between letters and sounds, it reinforced the skills that encompassed phonemic awareness. She stated “phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of learning to read” (Yopp, 1992, p. 697).

In the study conducted by Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson (1988) it was concluded that when students had been taught phonemic awareness skills in kindergarten, they performed much better in reading and spelling than students who had not been trained with phonemic awareness skills. In fact, they stated that when the kindergarten students were tested again in first grade they retained the knowledge about phonemic awareness and still performed better in reading and spelling versus non-phonemic aware peers. In
the study conducted by Bradley and Bryant (as cited in Yopp, 1992) they concluded from their study that phonemic awareness was a major benefit for in order to obtain literacy skills. Yopp (1992) stated that these two studies showed that phonemic awareness “had a powerful influence on the eventual success in learning to read and write” (p. 698).

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) concluded from their research that phonemic awareness was beneficial for students to help them achieve at higher levels in reading and spelling. They explained that there were two main reasons why phonemic awareness was so beneficial for beginning readers. First, phonemic awareness was beneficial for students to master because it helped students figure out what graphemes should be associated with the phonemes in the writing process. In addition, they stated that the skills associated with phonemic awareness was hard for some students to understand and that teaching phonemic awareness to these students helped them in understanding this skill. The second benefit of phonemic awareness was that it improved the students’ ability to read. Members of the NRP, explained that students must be able to understand that words were made up of phonemes and in return the phonemes were represented by graphemes. They stated that if this concept was not understood then students would not be able to read to the best of their ability because they lacked the beginning reading skills that were necessary. In fact, they concluded that when students were taught phonemic awareness skills it improved their reading and spelling abilities that would have lasting effects on their development.

The review of literature indicated that obtaining phonemic awareness was vital for kindergarten students to learn the fundamental literacy skills. According to Adams and Stanovich (as cited in Adams et al. 1998) they reported “a child’s level of
phonemic awareness is widely held to be the strongest single determinant of whether or not a child learns or fails to read” (p.2). Yopp (1992) stated that phonemic awareness formed the basis for their beginning reading skills. She went even further to explain that phonemic awareness was needed to read and write because the students had to make the connections between the sounds and the letters. In addition, Blevins (1997) added that the students who did not possess phonemic awareness were the students who had the most difficulties with reading and writing. In the studies that were conducted by Lundberg et al. (1988); Bradley and Bryant (as cited in Yopp, 1992); and the National Reading Panel (2000) they stated that phonemic awareness improved the students’ abilities to read and write. Yopp (1992) stated that “phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of learning to read” (p. 697). Having determined the benefits of phonemic awareness, the researcher then reviewed the professional literature to find ways in which to implement it into a kindergarten classroom.

Research Question # 3: According to the Reviewed Literature, How Were Phonemic Awareness Activities Implemented Into a Kindergarten Classroom?

According to Blevins (1997), twenty percent of students do not possess the skills or knowledge to understand phonemic awareness. He stated that if this population of students did not gain some knowledge and learn some phonemic awareness skills, they would either be labeled as having learning problems or they would struggle with reading the rest of their lives. From his studies about phonemic awareness, he concluded that students who were lacking phonemic awareness skills could be helped in the classroom. Furthermore, he stated that studies have shown that phonemic awareness can be taught and introduced by the teacher in the classroom.
Fitzpatrick (1997) suggested that before phonemic awareness activities were introduced to the students the teacher should assess where the students were in terms of their abilities to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. He stated that after the students were assessed then the teacher would have a better understanding of what types of phonemic awareness activities needed to be taught.

According to Adams (as cited in Blevins, 1997) there were five basic types of phonemic awareness tasks: 1) the ability to hear rhymes and alliteration, 2) the ability to do oddity tasks, 3) the ability to orally blend words and split syllables, 4) the ability to orally segment words, 5) the ability to do phonemic manipulation tasks (p. 5)

Adams (as cited in Blevins, 1997) explained that there was no certain sequence in which these tasks needed to be taught in the classroom, except that orally blending words should be taught before orally segmenting words.

Yopp (1992) stated that “the objective of any phonemic awareness activity should be to facilitate children’s ability to perceive that their speech is made up of a series of sounds” (p. 699). Therefore, she concluded that the goal of any phonemic awareness activity was to focus the students attention on the sounds that they were hearing. Further, she stated that phonemic awareness activities taught in the classroom needed to be stimulating for the students. These phonemic awareness activities could include: playing games, singing songs, reading books, and interacting with their peers. She concluded that the more stimulating the activities were, the more the students would gain by their participation during the activity.

Yopp and Yopp (2000) explained that the phonemic awareness activities needed
to be intentionally taught to the students in the classroom. They stated that many teachers had been teaching phonemic awareness in the classroom for years, but had never identified a specific skill that they were teaching to the students so the instruction was not as effective as it could have been in the classroom. They concluded that teachers must intentionally teach phonemic awareness skills in their classroom for it to be effective.

According to Berg and Stegelman (2003) implementing phonemic awareness activities in the classroom did not require very much time. They stated that teachers only needed to focus approximately fifteen to thirty minutes on each phonemic awareness lesson about three times a week. In addition, Ambruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) supported this idea and added that a phonemic awareness program being implemented in a classroom should not exceed a total of more than twenty hours over the course of the school year. Berg and Stegelman (2003) stated that if too much time was devoted to developing phonemic awareness activities in the classroom that the students would not benefit as much from the instruction because they could grow tired of the activities and would not be stimulated to learn. Yopp and Yopp (2000) indicated that it was not necessary to spend large amounts of time developing phonemic awareness activities, rather it was the quality of instruction that was of greater importance.

According to Ambruster et. al. (2001), teaching phonemic awareness activities in small groups was the most beneficial to the students. They stated that students often acquired and learned more information from others in the group versus individual or large group instruction. Blevins (1997) added that when small group instruction was used it gave all of the students in the group the opportunity to take part in their own learning.

Yopp and Yopp (2000) proposed that phonemic awareness was not enough for
students to learn all of the essential skills about reading. They stated that implementing phonemic awareness activities into the classroom was only one essential part of a reading program. Ambruster et al. (2001) supported this idea and added that phonemic awareness activities that were incorporated in a regular reading program would benefit students more from the instruction than if it was being taught individually as two separate subjects.

The review of literature indicated there were many different factors to consider when implementing phonemic awareness into a kindergarten classroom. Yopp (1992) indicated that the major goal of any phonemic awareness activity was to focus the students' attention on the sounds that made up the words.

Following the assessment, Adams (as cited in Blevins, 1997) stated that there were five different types of phonemic awareness activities that could be used with the students to develop their phonemic awareness skills. The five different types of activities included rhymes and alliteration, oddity tasks, orally blending and splitting words, orally separating the sounds, and manipulating the sounds in words. Yopp (1992) stated that the phonemic awareness activities used with the students should be engaging and interesting. More importantly, Berg and Stegelman (2003) added that the phonemic awareness activities being taught in the classroom should be approximately fifteen to thirty minutes in length about three times a week. Yopp and Yopp (2000) and Ambruster et al. (2001) agreed that phonemic awareness activities should not be the core instruction for students struggling with reading skills, it had to be a part of the basic reading program.

**Conclusion**

The literature reviewed defined phonemic awareness as having the ability to
understand that words were made up of individual sounds and also being able to hear the individual sounds in words (Yopp, 2000; Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998; and Blevins, 1997). Fitzpatrick (1997) stated that the most important component of phonemic awareness was having the ability to form new words and manipulate the sounds.

There were four major benefits for incorporating phonemic awareness into a kindergarten classroom. First, Adams et al. (1998) stated that phonemic awareness was a strong predictor for students entering school to predict if the student was going to succeed or fail in reading. Secondly, Yopp (1992) stated that phonemic awareness was very beneficial in kindergarten because it formed the foundation for beginning reading skills. Third, Ambruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2001) stated that students who were phonemically aware continued to show progress far beyond kindergarten. Fourth, in the studies that were conducted by Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson (1988); Bradley and Bryant (as cited in Yopp, 1992); and the National Reading Panel (2000) they concluded that phonemic awareness was very beneficial for students to possess because it improved their ability to read and spelling.

The professional literature reviewed concluded that phonemic awareness should be taught in a kindergarten classroom. Fitzpatrick (1997) stated that the first step in implementing phonemic awareness activities into a kindergarten classroom was to assess the students to see where they were at in their understanding of the skills. Yopp (1992) explained that the activities implemented into the classroom should be engaging to the students. In addition, Berg and Stegelman (2003) and Ambruster et al. (2001) added that implementing the activities in the classroom did not require much time.
Equally important, Yopp and Yopp (2000) stated that implementing phonemic awareness activities into a classroom was not to take the place of a whole reading program, rather it was something that could be added into an existing program to help strengthen the students beginning reading skills.

Having reviewed the professional literature pertaining to phonemic awareness, it was then necessary to develop procedures and instruments to gather data. These needed to be developed in order to collect data to answer research question number four “did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?”
Chapter III: Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were:

1. How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Data was collected using a variety of different activities to answer the fourth research question, "Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?" In the review of the literature, authors stated that having phonemic awareness was a strong indicator if the child was going to be successful in reading and writing (Ambruster, Lehr, & Osborn 2001; Yopp, 1992; Yopp, 2000; Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beefer, 1998). The researcher thought that working with a small group of at-risk students in her classroom on phonemic awareness would increase their ability to recognize letters and sounds with the ultimate goal of enhancing their early literacy skills. The researcher used several different phonemic awareness activities with the small group. The researcher gathered baseline data when she assessed her students before the intervention took place using the letter recognition assessment, sound recognition assessment, and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS: Good & Kaminski, 2001) assessment. Upon the
completion of the intervention, the same assessments were given again to assess the results after using the phonemic awareness activities in the small group setting.

Participants

Six at-risk kindergarten students participated in the study. They were enrolled in a racially and socio-economically diverse classroom with nineteen other kindergarten students in an urban city school district in a Midwestern state. There were seven African American students and four students with an Hispanic background. Ninety-six percent of the students enrolled in this kindergarten classroom received free or reduced lunch. Three of the participants were female and three of the participants were male. These students were at-risk because they had fallen behind academically in the classroom due to lack of prior literacy experiences before starting kindergarten, socioeconomic status, and/or their home life. After the first and second grading period of the school year, these students that were chosen to participate in the project were behind academically when their assessments were compared to their peers in the classroom. They were chosen to participate in the project because of the fact they are considered at-risk of not being successful in school.

Treatment/Intervention

The intervention used during this project was implementation of phonemic awareness activities with a small group of at-risk kindergarten students. Eight different activities were implemented during the month-long intervention. During that month the students meet with the researcher four times a week for twenty to thirty minutes each meeting. All of the implemented activities were intended to increase students’ phonemic awareness skills.
On February 1, 2006, the researcher implemented the first phonemic awareness activity with the small group of at-risk kindergarten students. The first two meetings consisted of establishing a routine with the students so they knew how each lesson was going to be implemented. Interventions with the students consisted of them gathering around on the carpet in a circle and taking twenty to thirty minutes teaching the activity. The researcher started each intervention by reviewing the skill that had been worked on during the last intervention. Then she introduced the activity for the next lesson. The researcher worked with all of the students during the activity to ensure that they comprehended the procedures and content of the lesson.

While the researcher was working with these at-risk students, the other students in her classroom were involved with centers in the classroom or they were in their physical education, music or art class.

*Intervention Activities*

Activities that were used during the intervention were based on the three areas of the DIBELS assessment in order to increase their phonemic awareness skills. These areas were 1) initial sound fluency, 2) letter naming fluency, and 3) phoneme segmentation fluency.

*Initial Sound Fluency.*

Three activities were used to help the students’ increase their initial sound fluency. The first activity was the bag of sounds activity developed by Fitzpatrick (1997). For this activity the researcher put twenty different objects in a bag. Examples of some of the objects were a: ruler, rubber band, glove, glue, candy, crayons, paper, and pencil. The
students emptied the bag and choose two objects that had the same beginning sound. The students had to tell the researcher why the objects they choose were a match. For example, the objects pencil and paper would be a match because they start with the same sound.

The second activity used was called the oddball out activity developed by Fitzpatrick (1997). The students were to listen carefully as the researcher said three words. The students then had to distinguish which word did not start with the same sound. For example, the researcher said cat, ball, and bat. The two words that started with the same sound were ball and bat.

The third activity was called sound domino developed by Fitzpatrick (1997). In this activity, students matched picture cards attached to the correct Popsicle stick with the same initial sound. For example, the picture cat would be matched with the picture car (see Appendix E for picture cards).

*Letter Naming Fluency.*

Three different activities were used to help students increase letter naming fluency. The first activity was an alphabet memory activity. The researcher had prepared alphabet flashcards for each student. Each flashcard had a letter of the alphabet on it. The students had to find a partner and put their cards together in a pile face down. Each student took a turn to draw two cards to see if they could find a letter match. When the students found a match they had to tell their partner the letter they had found.

The second activity used was the activity called letter around the world. In this activity one student stood next to another student who was sitting in the semi-circle. The researcher held up a flashcard with a letter on it and the students had to identify that
letter. The student who answered correctly would then be able to challenge another student who was next in the semi-circle.

The third activity was the shower curtain game. The researcher placed letters on flashcards in a grid pattern under a clear shower curtain. The researcher called a letter out and a student would find and stand on that letter. This would be repeated until all of the students had a chance to participate.

*Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.*

There were two different activities used to increase students’ phoneme segmentation fluency. An example of an activity that was used during the intervention to help the students’ increase their phoneme segmentation fluency was the alphabet house. This activity was developed by Fitzpatrick (1997). For the activity, each student had a magnetic board, magnetic letters, and a house made out of construction paper. The house was put on the magnetic board with tape so it would stay in place. The researcher asked the students to find specific letters to make certain words. When the students were finished making the word then they would sound it out together to figure out what word they had made. The researcher also extended the activity by having the students make the base word “at.” Then the students made new words from the base word. For example, if the base word was “at” the students could make the words mat, hat, fat, pat, or cat by adding the different initial letter to each word. These words that contained the base word -at would be in the same word family together. Word families were words that had the same base word. In the activity, the house placed on the magnetic board was used to make these different word families with this activity.

The second activity used was called put it together and it was developed by
Fitzpartick (1997). The students were given unifix cubes and a word to segment. As the student and researcher pronounced the word together, the student would attach a unifix cube for each sound in the word.

The eight different activities were chosen to give the students variety while increasing their skills. There are many different other activities that could be used to achieve the same learning goal. Activities should be chosen with student’s interest and ability taken into consideration.

**Instruments/Protocols**

The researcher used five different instruments to collect data during this project. They were: 1) sound recognition assessment, 2) letter recognition assessment, 3) initial sound fluency, 4) letter naming fluency, 5) phoneme segmentation fluency. The first two instruments were developed by the researcher. The last three assessments were components of DIBELS. The researcher chose to administer the letter and sound assessments along with the DIBELS because of the fact that the DIBELS assessment was a timed assessment. The DIBELS assessment was an instrument developed by Good and Kamniski to assess early literacy skills and has been made available to researchers without the necessity of additional permission of the authors. The researcher felt that giving five different assessments to her students would show the most accurate results.

**Initial Sound Fluency.**

One of the two instruments that were used to collect data for initial sound fluency was the sound recognition assessment that was developed and administered by the researcher. This instrument measured the student’s ability to know the sound of each letter of the alphabet. The student had to state the sound that the letter made when the
The results, which were the number of sounds that were correctly identified, were recorded in the grade book. The researcher developed this assessment tool after she first started teaching. She felt that the tool has been very effective with her students over the past five years that she has taught kindergarten.

The second instrument was the initial sound fluency (ISF) component of the DIBELS assessment. ISF measured the student’s ability to recognize and state the initial sound in a word. The assessment consisted of presenting the student with four different pictures and then asking him or her to point to the picture that makes a certain sound. For example, the researcher would say this is a picture of a glove, bat, kite, and cat; which one of the pictures starts with the /k/ sound. The researcher used a stopwatch while administering this test. After the researcher asked each question, the stopwatch was started. When the student pointed to a picture the stopwatch was stopped until the researcher was done asking the next question. This procedure continued until the student answered all sixteen questions.

**Letter Naming Fluency.**

One of the two instruments used were used to collect data for the letter naming fluency was the letter recognition assessment that was developed and administered by the researcher. Each student was individually called upon to be given the assessment. The letter recognition assessment consisted of the student pointing to and naming each letter of the alphabet that was printed in random order on a piece of paper. The researcher recorded the number of correct responses in a grade book.

The second instrument that was used to collect data was the letter naming fluency (LTF) component of the DIBELS assessment. During this assessment each student was
given a paper with letters of the alphabet presented in random order. The student had one minute to name as many letters of the alphabet that he/she could identify. The student’s score was then calculated by the number of correct answers given in one minute. The scores were recorded in the student’s DIBELS test booklet.

*Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.*

The phoneme segmentation fluency (PSF) component of the DIBELS assessment measured the student’s ability to segment individual sounds in a word. The student told the researcher how to break apart each word. For example if the word was cat, the student would be able to separate each sound c-a-t. The researcher counted the number of correct sounds that were identified in each word in one minute.

*Procedures*

Before the project started a letter of explanation was sent to principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent (see appendix B, C, and D for a copy of these letters) to inform them of the purpose and nature of the project. In addition, parents received a letter of explanation and signed a permission form (see appendix A for a copy of the letter/permission slip). The researcher explained that she was involved in a Masters of Arts in Education degree program and would be implementing a phonemic awareness program in her classroom to help enhance the students learning of early literacy skills.

The researcher conducted this project in her kindergarten classroom. The activities were conducted with at-risk students four times a week for a length of approximately twenty to thirty minutes each day. The at-risk students were identified
with a pre-test. The assessment instruments were administered to the entire kindergarten class. Each student was pre-tested individually using the teacher made instruments and the DIBELS. After the pre-test, six students were identified to be at-risk.

Following the intervention, the six at-risk students were administered the post-test. The assessment was conducted in the kindergarten classroom. The assessment instruments were the same for the post-test as they were for the pre-test.

**Timeline**

The project began in January of the 2005-2006 school year. The researcher met with building administrators during the first two weeks of January to explain the project. Parents of the students in the kindergarten class were notified by mail during these same two weeks. Parents returned the permission slips by the end of January. The pre-test was conducted at the end of January and the intervention group of six was established.

The intervention began during the first week of February and ended the last week of February. During that month, the students met with the researcher four times a week for twenty to thirty minutes each meeting.

The letter recognition, sound recognition, and the DIBELS assessment were given at the end of the second grading period. The researcher recorded the data for each student. From these scores, the researcher identified the at-risk students. She began meeting with the small group of at-risk students on first day of February. The intervention lasted for one month. Following the completion of the intervention, the post-test was administered. Following the post-test, the data from the post-test were reviewed and analyzed.
Data Analysis

Initial Sound Fluency.

The data from the DIBELS and the teacher-made assessments pertaining to initial sound fluency were reviewed. The data consisted of individual raw scores for the teacher made test. For the teacher made sound recognition assessment, the researcher determined a raw score by the number of correct responses. An average score was determined from the six individual scores. The DIBELS assessment was a scaled score. To determine the scaled score the researcher then calculated the number of correct answers given and multiplied it by sixty. That number was then divided by the number of seconds it took the student to answer all of the questions. For example, if student #5 correctly identified fifteen sounds in thirty-five seconds the results would be calculated by multiplying fifteen by sixty and then dividing that number by thirty-five. The score 25 would be recorded. This student would be considered to be established in this area according to the Good and Kaminski (2001). For the initial sound fluency part of the DIBELS assessment, the middle of the year benchmarks and indicators of risk were established by DIBELS standards. A student who scored lowered than a 10 was considered to have a deficit. A student who scored between 10 and 25 was considered emerging and a score of 25 or more was considered to be established in this area.

Letter Naming Fluency.

The data from the teacher made assessment was a raw score determined by the number of correct answers. An average score was determined from the six individual scores. For the letter naming fluency part of the DIBELS assessment, the middle of the year benchmarks and indicators of risk were established by DIBELS standards. A
score of 15 or lower was considered to be at-risk. If the student score was between 15 and
27 then he/she was considered to be at some risk. A score of 27 or more was considered
to be low risk. For example, if student #3 correctly identified twenty-five letters in one
minute then a score of twenty-five would be recorded. This student would be considered
to be at some risk in this area.

*Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.*

For the phoneme segmentation fluency part of the DIBELS assessment, the
middle of the year benchmarks and indicators of risk for PSF were as follows. A score of
7 or less means the student is at-risk. A student who scores 7 to 18 is considered to have
some risk and a score of 18 or more is considered to be low risk. If the student scores in
the at-risk section of the test that means that the student is at-risk for not being able to
learn how to decode words in reading and writing. For example, if student #1 correctly
identified 10 sounds in the words given in one minute then the score recorded would be
10. This student would be considered to have some risk in this area.

The data that was collected from January assessment was used as a pre-test to
identify at-risk students according to the benchmarks and indicators stated above. Data
collected at the conclusion of the intervention was used as a post-test to analyze student’s
progress.

*Summary*

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of
phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve
their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How did
the review of literature define phonemic awareness? 2. What were the benefits of
implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills? After a thorough analysis of the data gathered, the researcher was able to determine what the results were of the project.
Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Through the review of literature it was determined that it was beneficial for students to acquire phonemic awareness in kindergarten because its formation was the basis for their beginning reading skills (Yopp, 1992). Through the review of literature the researcher found that having phonemic awareness was widely held to be the strongest single determinant that a child would be successful in learning to read (Adams and Stanovich as cited in Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998). After the literature review was conducted, the researcher looked at the methods by which phonemic awareness was taught in early elementary classrooms and incorporated these methods into her own classroom.

In order to answer research question #4: “Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?” data was collected and analyzed.
The three areas that were assessed using DIBELS were 1) initial sound fluency assessment, 2) letter naming assessment, and 3) phoneme segmentation fluency assessment. Each of the students were assessed using the DIBELS before the intervention and after the intervention.

Initial Sound Fluency.

The first instrument used to collect data was a sound recognition assessment. Each student was shown a flashcard with a letter on it; the student had to correctly make the sound for each given letter of the alphabet. The researcher collected data and compared the data as a group. As a group, the students knew an average of 11.1 sounds at the time of the pre-test. As a group, the students knew an average of 15.6 sounds at the time of the post-test. The results are shown in Figure 1.

![Sound Recognition Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Group Averages](image)

**Figure 1.** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores average scores as a group on the sound recognition assessment.
The data showed that as a group, the average scores on the sound recognition assessment were 11.1 sounds identified on the pre-test and 15.6 sounds identified on the post-test. The group increased their scores on the sound assessment by an average of 4.5 sounds.

The data from the sound recognition assessment was also analyzed for each individual student who participated in the project. The researcher assessed each student with a pre-test and a post-test prior to the intervention and after the intervention was completed. The researcher compared the scores from the pre-test and the post-test. The data showed each student’s individual scores from the pre-test and the post-test. The results are shown in Figure 2.

![Sound Recognition Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Individual Scores](image_url)

**Figure 2.** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores on sound recognition assessment for each student.
The data revealed that each of the six of the students increased their score on the sound recognition assessment after the intervention had been completed.

The initial sound fluency was a component of the DIBELS assessment. The initial sound fluency assessment measured the student’s ability to correctly identify the beginning sounds in words using pictures. According to Good & Kaminski (2001) on this assessment for the middle of the year in kindergarten a score of 10 or less was considered to be deficit, a score between 10 and 25 was considered to be emerging, and a score of 25 or more was considered to be established in this area. The data showed each student’s individual scores from the pre-test and the post-test. The results are shown in Figure 3.

![Initial Sound Fluency Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores](image)

**Figure 3.** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores for in the initial sound fluency assessment.

The data showed that five out of six of the students increased their scores on this particular assessment. The average score on the pre-test was 10 points and the average
score on the post-test was 12.4 points. On the average, each student increased their score by 2.4 points.

**Letter Naming Fluency.**

For the purpose of this project, the researcher collected the data from the letter recognition assessment and compared the pre-test and post-test scores as a group of six and also individually for each student. The researcher compared the scores prior to the intervention taking place to the scores recorded after the intervention had been done. As a group, the students knew an average of 27.1 letters at the time of the pre-test. As a group, the students knew an average of 38.3 letters on the post-test. Results are shown in Figure 4.

![Letter Recognition Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Group Averages](image)

*Figure 4. Comparison of pre-test and post-test average scores as a group on the letter recognition assessment.*

The results indicated that as a whole, the participant group increased their knowledge of identifying letters. The group average on the pre-test was 27.1 letters and
the group average on the post-test was 38.3 letters. The group’s mean score increased by 11.2 letters from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

Data from the letter recognition assessment was analyzed for each individual student who participated in the project. The researcher assessed each student prior to the intervention and at the completion of the intervention. The researcher compared the scores from the pre-test and post-test. The data showed the student’s individual scores at the time of the pre-test and post-test. The results are shown in Figure 5.

![Letter Recognition Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Individual Scores](image)

Figure 5. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores on the letter recognition assessment.

The data showed that all six of the students increased their scores on the letter recognition assessment as shown in Figure 5.

The DIBELS was used for the letter naming fluency assessment. The letter naming fluency assessment measured how many letters the students could correctly identify in one minute. According to Good & Kaminski (2001) on this assessment for the
middle of year in kindergarten a score of 15 or less was considered to be at-risk. A score between 15 and 27 was considered to be some risk. A score of 27 or more was considered to be at low risk for not being able to identify letters of the alphabet. The data showed the student’s individual scores at the time of the pre-test and post-test. The results are shown in Figure 6.

![Letter Naming Fluency Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores](image)

**Figure 6.** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores for the letter naming fluency assessment.

The data showed that five out of the six students increased their score on the letter naming fluency assessment on the post-test, but three of the students were still considered to be at-risk. One student did not increase his/her score and retained the same score on the pre-test and post-test. On this assessment the students average score on the pre-test was 10.6 points compared to 21.8 points on the post-test. Most students in the group increased their score by an average of 11.2 points.
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.

The DIBELS assessment was used to assess phoneme segmentation fluency. The phoneme segmentation fluency measured the students’ ability to segment individual sounds in a word. The student had one minute in which he/she must verbally separate the sounds in as many words as possible. A score of 7 or less met the student is at-risk. A student who scores between 7 and 18 is considered to have some risk and a score of 18 or more is considered to be established to be low risk. The data showed the student’s individual scores at the time of the pre-test and post-test. The results are shown in Figure 7.

![Phoneme Segmentation Fluency Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores](image)

**Figure 7.** Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores on phoneme segmentation fluency assessment.

The data showed that three out of the six students increased their score on the
phoneme segmentation fluency assessment, but three of the students were still considered to be at-risk. The other three students’ scores stayed the same. On this assessment, the group average score on the pre-test was 6.2 and the group average score on the post-test was 8.8. The three students who increased their scores on this assessment averaged an increase in their score by 2.6 points.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How did the review of literature define phonemic awareness? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills? The pre-test and post-test data indicated student scores.

In summary, on the sound recognition assessment the students as a whole group increased their scores by an average of 4.5 points (see Figure 1). All six of the students individually increased their scores on the sound recognition assessment (see Figure 2). On the initial sound fluency, five out of six students increased their scores (see Figure 3). On the letter recognition assessment the students as a group increased their scores by an average of 11.2 points (see Figure 4). All six of the students individually increased their scores on the letter recognition assessment (see Figure 5). Five out of six students increased their scores on the letter naming assessment (see Figure 6). On the phoneme
segmentation fluency assessment three students increased their scores, while the other three students had no change in their scores (see Figure 7).
Chapter V. Discussion

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How was phonemic awareness defined in the professional literature? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Meanings of Findings

After reviewing the collected data, the researcher felt that using the intervention with the at-risk students might be an effective way of helping them to increase their knowledge of the basic early literacy skills. All six of the students increased their scores on the letter recognition and sound recognition assessment. On the DIBELS assessment for the initial sound fluency assessment, five out of six students increased their scores. The researcher felt that the one student who did not increase his/her score on the post-test was due to inaccurate pre-test score. According to the researcher it was apparent that this student engaged in guessing behavior during the pre-test.

On the DIBELS assessment for the letter naming assessment, five out of six students increased their score; while the other student maintained the same score. The researcher considered that this might have occurred because the student was distracted during the intervention or on the post-test.
Regarding the DIBELS assessment for the phoneme segmentation fluency assessment, three out of six students increased their scores while the other three students maintained the same score. The researcher felt that if the intervention would have been implemented for a longer period of time that the other three students would have also increased their scores.

It appeared that the implementation of the intervention not only increased students' knowledge of basic early literacy skills, but also increased their social skills and self-esteem. While the intervention was taking place the researcher observed the students becoming more familiar with their peers while in the group. The researcher believed that developing relationships and building social skills is a beneficial component of emergent literacy program in kindergarten. In addition, it appeared that the students also gained confidence throughout the intervention. The researcher observed the students when they had mastered a concept that was being taught, such as when the students realized that they could make a new word when they changed the beginning letter in a word to a different letter. The researcher observed that the students felt more confident while in this small group setting because they could openly answer questions without feeling like they were going to be embarrassed by giving a wrong answer in front of the entire class. Further, the researcher observed that the students in the group could relate to each other and in turn help each other when they were struggling for an answer. Finally, it was also observed that many of the students for the first time felt like they could learn and understood what was being taught to them.

The researcher believed that perhaps the intervention produced positive results with these students because she was able to work with a small group of students who
were struggling in the same area. The researcher felt that the students gained more from a small group setting with a teacher/student ratio of 6:1 instead of the large group with a ratio of 25:1.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students would improve their early literacy skills. The research questions that guided this project were: 1. How did the review of literature define phonemic awareness? 2. What were the benefits of implementing phonemic awareness activities in a kindergarten classroom, according to the reviewed literature? 3. According to the reviewed literature, how were phonemic awareness activities implemented in a kindergarten classroom? 4. Did the implementation of phonemic awareness activities with at-risk kindergarten students improve their early literacy skills?

Through this project, the researcher sought to determine if at-risk kindergarten students could increase their basic early literacy skills by working in a small group setting that focused on phonemic awareness activities. The project included six at-risk kindergarten students in an inner-city school in a Midwestern state. Before the intervention occurred the students were assessed on letter recognition, sound recognition, and three different areas of the DIBELS assessment; which included initial sound fluency, letter naming fluency, and phoneme segmentation fluency.

The intervention was implemented with this group of students for a one-month period. The researcher worked with the group of students four times a week for thirty
minutes. The implemented intervention consisted of different types of phonemic awareness activities. The researcher wanted to see if the students’ knowledge of basic early literacy skills would increase. After the month long intervention students were assessed again using the same assessments before the intervention took place. According to the data, all six of the students increased their scores on the letter and sound recognition assessment. On the initial sound fluency assessment five out of the six students increased their scores. On the letter naming fluency assessment five out of the six students increased their scores. On the phoneme segmentation fluency assessment three out of the six students increased their scores. The results of the data confirmed that most of the students increased their basic early literacy skills.

**Recommendations**

It would be the recommendation of this researcher to extend this project over a longer period of time. Implementing the intervention of phonemic awareness activities with a small group of at-risk kindergarten students over a longer period of time might produce different results; especially when using the DIBELS assessment. This might happen because as the DIBELS assessment was quite different than the teacher made assessments. The students might perform differently on the teacher made assessments when the intervention occurred over a longer period of time.

In addition to using the assessments that the researcher chose, it would be suggested to use other testing criteria. The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation would be an excellent instrument to measure the student’s knowledge of letters and sounds and the ability to segment words. Another instrument that could be used to
measure the students' knowledge of letters and sounds would be The Test of Phonological Awareness.

This project was implemented in kindergarten classroom with six at-risk students. This project could also be continued into the next school year with the same students to see if they make greater improvements in their early literacy skills next year in first grade. It could also be implemented in a kindergarten classroom where all of the students were struggling with their early literacy skills, so each student in the classroom would receive additional help. It could also be implemented in a first or second grade classroom to see if the intervention would show the same improvements as was shown with the at-risk kindergarten students. The researcher would also be interested in doing the project again next year with her students who were at-risk and not only see if the students improved individually, but also compare their scores with the students in the classroom who did not receive any additional help.

Based on the results attained from this project, the researcher will implement the phonemic awareness activities used in this project with future students who are struggling with early literacy skills. The researcher plans on continuing to use this intervention with students because the data collected supported its use with at-risk students.

**Conclusion**

The results of the data in this project suggested that when phonemic awareness activities were implemented with a small group of at-risk kindergarten students that most of the students improved their basic early literacy skills. The data suggested that the phonemic awareness activities provided this particular set of students the additional instruction that they needed to improve their basic early literacy skills.
References


Appendix A
Explanation/Permission Slip to Parents

Dear _______________,

I am currently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master’s degree. As part of my requirements I am doing a project in the classroom to help enhance the kindergarten program. Starting on February 1st, I am starting the project in the classroom. I am going to be working with a small group of students to build their knowledge of letters, sounds, and the ability to put them together when they are reading and writing, which is also known as phonemic awareness. I will be working with this small group of students four times a week for thirty minutes each time during the whole month of February. Before I start working with the group, I will test them on the letters, sounds, and use the DIBELS assessment, which measures different skills using both letters and sounds. At the end of the month I will test them again on the same skills to see what happened as a result of the project. All of the scores will be kept confidential. I will not be using any names during the project so I will be the only one to know who they students are. My goal during this project is to enhance the students learning of phonemic awareness through the use of small group instruction and activities. I need your permission for your child to be a part of the project. Please sign the form below and return it school tomorrow in the Monday folder. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to stop in and see me or call me at 419-996-3320.

Thank you,

Mrs. Dowler

I give my permission for my child to participate in the project.
Appendix B
Explanation Letter to Principal

Jan. 4, 2006

Dear Mr. Shanks,

I am presently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master of Arts in Education degree. During the fall, I began researching and writing my final project which focuses on helping at-risk students increase their phonemic awareness skills in a kindergarten classroom. My goal is to implement methods with my at-risk students to increase their skills in the area of phonemic awareness so that when they enter first grade they will have a good foundation to build upon in the areas of reading and writing.

There are five sections to my action research project. The first and second sections of my project were completed in December, 2005. They consisted of telling why the project was important and researching the subject of phonemic awareness to gain more knowledge on the definition, benefits, and methods of how to incorporate phonemic awareness into the classroom. I will start section three of my project in February/March by gathering data as to know what levels of phonemic awareness my at-risk students possess and then I will start incorporating various phonemic awareness activities with these students for a one month period.

Sections four and five of my action research project will be completed in April and May. They consist of charting the results and reviewing the findings. I want to thank-you in advance for being supportive of my goal to earn a Masters of Arts in Education degree.

Sincerely,

Casey Dowler
Dear Mrs. Oxley,

I am presently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master of Arts in Education degree. During the fall, I began researching and writing my final project which focuses on helping at-risk students increase their phonemic awareness skills in a kindergarten classroom. My goal is to implement methods with my at-risk students to increase their skills in the area of phonemic awareness so that when they enter first grade they will have a good foundation to build upon in the areas of reading and writing.

There are five sections to my action research project. The first and second sections of my project were completed in December, 2005. They consisted of telling why the project was important and researching the subject of phonemic awareness to gain more knowledge on the definition, benefits, and methods of how to incorporate phonemic awareness into the classroom. I will start section three of my project in February/March first by gathering data as to know what levels of phonemic awareness my at-risk students possess and then I will start incorporating various phonemic awareness activities with these students for a one month period.

Sections four and five of my action research project will be completed in April and May. They consist of charting the results and reviewing the findings. I want to thank-you in advance for being supportive of my goal to earn a Masters of Arts in Education degree.

Sincerely,

Casey Dowler
Appendix D
Explanation Letter to Assistant Superintendent

Jan. 4, 2006

Dear Mrs. Ackerman,

I am presently enrolled at The Defiance College to earn a Master of Arts in Education degree. During the fall, I began researching and writing my final project which focuses on helping at-risk students increase their phonemic awareness skills in a kindergarten classroom. My goal is to implement methods with my at-risk students to increase their skills in the area of phonemic awareness so that when they enter first grade they will have a good foundation to build upon in the areas of reading and writing.

There are five sections to my action research project. The first and second sections of my project were completed in December, 2005. They consisted of telling why the project was important and researching the subject of phonemic awareness to gain more knowledge on the definition, benefits, and methods of how to incorporate phonemic awareness into the classroom. I will start section three of my project in February/March first by gathering data as to know what levels of phonemic awareness my at-risk students possess and then I will start incorporating various phonemic awareness activities with these students for a one month period.

Sections four and five of my action research project will be completed in April and May. They consist of charting the results and reviewing the findings. I want to thank-you in advance for being supportive of my goal to earn a Masters of Arts in Education degree.

Sincerely,

Casey Dowler
# Appendix E

**Picture Cards for Sound Domino Activity**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Bee</th>
<th>Flower</th>
<th>Peanut</th>
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<td>🧸</td>
<td>🍯</td>
<td>🧵</td>
<td>🍯</td>
<td>🖤</td>
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<th>wing</th>
<th>Mouse</th>
<th>Bucket</th>
<th>Duck</th>
<th>Pencil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🎾</td>
<td>🦋</td>
<td>🐭</td>
<td>🍼</td>
<td>🦆</td>
<td>🆕</td>
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<table>
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<th>Lock</th>
<th>Milk Carton</th>
<th>Snake</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Hat</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>🗝️</td>
<td></td>
<td>🐍</td>
<td>🏡</td>
<td>🗑️</td>
<td>🧢</td>
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<table>
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<th>Cat</th>
<th>Horse</th>
<th>Snail</th>
<th>Mouse</th>
<th>Candles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>🧠</td>
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<td>🐎</td>
<td>🐌</td>
<td>🐭</td>
<td>🎂</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boot</th>
<th>Deer</th>
<th>Tree</th>
<th>Bat</th>
<th>Dog</th>
<th>Pie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🧦</td>
<td>🦌</td>
<td>🌳</td>
<td>🧢</td>
<td>🐶</td>
<td>🥧</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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