

Strong Phonics Base to Build Better Readers

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### Abstract

The biggest problem educators are encountering with emergent readers is their lack of phonological awareness. For a child to become a successful reader, they must have a solid understanding of basic and higher phonological rules. The education system has become so focused on standardized testing in the upper elementary grades they have lost focus on the primary grades. There must be a balance between the primary grades (Kindergarten through 2nd) and the secondary grades (3rd-5th). In Kindergarten through second grade a student is learning to read, by third grade that student should have all the basic phonics skills they need to know read to learn. Unfortunately, this is not the case many students have not been taught the phonics skills necessary to begin learning to read in third grade. This action research paper will focus on the importance of a strong phonics base to help build better readers.

## Strong Phonics Base to Build Better Readers

### **Demographics of Deerfield Beach Elementary School**

Deerfield Beach Elementary School (DBES) is located in Deerfield Beach, Florida. The school is in proximity to the beach as well as Dixie Highway. The school is the first elementary school in the city of Deerfield Beach. Presently, there is a section of the school that is completely vacant due to ongoing repairs and updates. While seeing the school, it was shown that the 'old' building still had the original wood flooring and chalkboard on the walls. When asked why they don't get rid of the building it was informed that due to the date of the building it is considered a historical landmark. The 'old' building it currently being worked on to eventually be used for various things.

Deerfield Beach Elementary is a fairly large elementary school with a total of 708 students. The students range from Headstart, free full day preschool provided to low-income families, to fifth grade. The students are spread across a large campus with three portables on one end of the campus. The classroom where we will focus is the last portable in the row of three.

The students at DBES are a mix of various ethnicities. 35% of the students in the school are under the ethnicity category of black. 28% are classified as white. Another 28% are considered Hispanic. 6% are classified as two or more races. The last 3% are Asian. There is a wonderful blend of cultures and ethnicities at DBES. The female to male ratio is split forty-eight percent to forty-eight percent.

A challenge the school faces is the amount of students participating in the free or reduced lunch program. Seventy-six percent of the students at DBES are participating in the

program; this is eighteen percent above the state average. Having such a large population participating in this program means there are many students coming to school hungry or going home to a house with a minimum amount of food. A hungry student is nearly impossible to teach. Another challenge is the number of English Language Learners (ELL) in the school. Twenty-two percent of the students who attend DBES are considered ALL, this simply means English is not their first language and at home they do not speak English. This also meaning it maybe difficult for the student to receive the necessary assistance at home.

The students in the class where most of the research will take place are in a regular 2nd-grade class. The students include a range of different ethnicities. There are two students who receive extra assistance due to a learning disability and language disabilities. Both receive speech services for a language based learning disability. One of the two also receives services for academic concerns. There are seven students in the class who are classified as ELL and speak no English at home. Ninety percent of the class participates in the free or reduced lunch program. The students are a broad range of academic levels. Five out of Twenty- one students read fluently and require little assistance with phonics while there are several who still do not know the sounds the vowels make.

### **Statement of Problem**

As a former Kindergarten teacher, I am well aware of what a student should know by second grade. I help prepare students for this. When a teacher becomes familiar with his/her students and quickly realizes that in second grade they are unable to read, this becomes very alarming. It became very evident that the students in this class lacked basic phonics skills. It was fairly clear because during small group reading activities the students were unable to decode

words that had blends, digraphs, or multisyllabic words. It was also clear that Phonics was the problem because of the results of various phonics assessments given over the course of a two week period. These assessments were mandated and given within the first two weeks of school. The students struggle with decoding words and using the knowledge of blends, digraphs and syllables to do so.

After these assessments it became very clear that the students struggled with basic phonics skills. The lack of phonics interfered in the student's ability to read fluently and comprehend what they were reading. The need for phonics was evident by the data collected within the first two weeks of school. The students were unable to complete simple reading tasks due to their confusion with many phonics rules.

### **Intended Outcomes**

Due to this problem this class is becoming a part of a strong phonics intervention research project. Throughout the intervention period, the students will undergo a series of intense but engaging phonics lessons in a small group setting. Students will be separated into three groups and taught basic phonics skills to help them learn how to use phonics to decode words quickly. This process will assist the students in becoming more fluent readers. Having more fluent readers will build the students self-confidence as well as their comprehension of what they are reading. By the end of this intense phonics building, the students should become more fluent readers and score higher on the various phonics assessments previously given. With a strong phonics base the students will become more fluent readers. Having a phonics base will allow the students to decode words quickly and will increase their reading accuracy and comprehension.

## **Variables**

While researching and performing this intense phonics intervention, there will be several variables examined. Phonics is the ability to decode words that have blends, digraphs, or multisyllabic words. The first variable will be the students understanding of basic letter sounds, letter sound recognition. Once it is evident that the student knows the letter sound recognition, they will move onto the next stage of the research. The second stage is basic consonant vowel consonant words; this is a crucial stage because it helps determine if the student can blend sounds to create words. The consonant vowel consonant words are also known as CVC words. These are words that are three letters; for example cat.

Once the student has mastered this, the student will move into the blends and digraphs portion of the intervention. A blend is two letters that are blended together to make a fluid sound; for example bl. A digraph is two letters that create a new sound; for example sh. This stage will go into depth as to how to decode a word. The student will learn to look for blends and digraphs in words to break them apart to read them correctly and quickly. Lastly, the students will learn to break words into syllables. They are taught to look for words within words and how to decode the words by visually seeing the syllables within words.

## **What the Research Says**

There are thousands of research-based articles that discuss the topic of phonics and explains how and why phonics instruction helps students become better readers. Through the years, teachers have always argued about the various ways to teach a child to read. There are many different ways a child can learn to read. The two most popular ways include the whole-

language approach (with minimal phonics base) and the systematic approach (that relies solely on building a phonics base in which the student can decode unknown words). The systematic approach to reading incorporates clear phonics instruction where the child is taught specific phonics skills to assist in the reading process. The literature review will discuss the importance of reading, ways to teach reading, Phonics compared to the, whole language approach to reading, phonics as a foundation, effective ways to teach phonics, interventions, and the methods to implement phonics in the classroom according to Thomson, McKay, Fletcher-Flinn, Connelly, Kaa, and Ewing (2007).

### **Importance of Reading**

If a student is not reading material accurately, they will not understand what they are reading. When a student does not understand what they are reading, they tend to lose interest in reading (Thomson, McKay, Fletcher-Flinn, Connelly, Kaa, and Ewing 2007). A key part of reading is enjoying to read. Thomson, McKay, Fletcher-Flinn, Connelly, Kaa, and Ewing (2007), states that a student who doesn't have the phonics skills necessary will quickly lose interest in reading. If a student does not understand what they are reading, they eventually will not want to read.

A student who is exposed to early phonics interventions for reading tends to have better success later in their reading careers. It is human nature to feed off of self-esteem and success, therefore, students who are self-confident tend to perform better than their peers who lack self-confidence. The key to early phonics intervention is to level the playing field for those students who are at risk readers. Leveling the playing field allows students who are at risk for low performance to perform as well if not better than their peers Thomson, McKay, Fletcher-Flinn, Connelly, Kaa, and Ewing (2007).

Lu (2010) found that the students who were given the early phonics interventions thrived in their classroom setting because they had self-confidence in knowing they could read. The students who were not provided that early phonics intervention had more difficulty reading and knew they were poor readers. They were unable to decode words that they had not recognized before and were unsure of the many rules of phonics, therefore, they had the mentality that they could not do it. This caused behavior issues in the classroom and small group setting. It is critical that students are 'red flagged' early in their education to provide high quality reading instruction and an even playing field for all students. Self-confidence is key to building successful readers.

### **Ways to Teach Reading**

There are many different programs that teach phonics to children. Regardless of all these programs they all focus on the same basic principles. The programs all focus on letters and sounds and how they are sequenced before anything else. Each program paces the exposure at a different rate, some programs introduce each letter separately while some introduce them all together. All phonics programs have an oral drill practice component in which the students recite the phonics rules. Most beginning readers are exposed to reading decodable books with limited vocabulary but include words with familiar sight words and word families.

The components of phonics programs used in schools differ in one major way. Some programs suggest keeping phonics separate from their normal literacy block while other intertwine it into their literacy block. Either way the students are still being exposed to phonics. Another principle in phonics instruction is direct instruction, teacher centered learning, or if the students are left to self explore, student centered learning. No matter how you teach phonics, the instruction must be interesting and motivating for the students and the teacher. If the instruction is not interesting no one will benefit from the phonics lesson. Although these are the key



principles of a phonics program, they all differ. They differ in the ways in which they are implemented and used in classroom. Each program has their own way of implementing the standards that students need to be taught to be phonemically proficient (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows 2001).

### **Phonics Vs. Whole Language**

Whole language is a method of reading instruction in which students are taught how to read by the words in its entirety. Whereas phonics teaches students the skills needed to break apart a word that they do not know by memory. Not all teachers believe in the phonics approach to learning. There are some teachers who believe the whole language method is the better way to teach students how to read.

Children who have not been taught the phonological tools to decode words, or have been instructed using the whole language method, tend to use context clues to determine what a word means. This process causes the student to spend time determining how to pronounce a certain word and is in turn not comprehending what the passage or story is about. These students might be able to read at the same pace as a child who was taught the phonics skills to decode. However, they tend to have more difficulty with the comprehension aspect of reading which is critical as the child begins to move into reading to learn rather than learning to read according to Thomson, McKay, Fletcher-Flinn, Connelly, Kaa, and Ewing (2007).

Not only are these students having a difficult time with reading comprehension they are also found to suffer in the fluency aspect of reading. When the student is unable to decode a word, they often wait to be told and skip the word in its entirety. This causes the student not to read fluently. Fluency in reading is crucial in many ways. A student must read fluently to comprehend what they are reading, but it also affects the student's reading accuracy.

A study was done by Roberts and Meiring (2006) that followed sixty-one first graders through to fifth grade. The research was based on the success of students in fifth grade whether they were exposed to direct phonics instruction or not. The study found that students who had direct phonics instruction were more successful in decoding large words as well as spelling success. They found that although all of the students were on the same level throughout the primary grade, when they reached upper elementary the phonics skills came into focus. The students were able to use the skills they learned in phonics to decode new words and become better overall readers. It became very important for the students to comprehend successfully what they were reading they needed a strong phonics base. Students who did not receive clear phonics instruction had more difficulty reading words they were never faced with before.

### **Phonics as a Foundation**

According to Connelly, Johnston, and Thompson (2001), there is a direct correlation between phonemic awareness and reading comprehension. Students who have a phonics base to reading tend to read more fluently. Fluency in reading directly affects how a student understand what they are reading. Students who were not exposed to phonics interventions but rather a whole language approach have lower reading comprehension skills. The research states that if a student is unable to read fluently they will not understand what they are reading. They are spending time concentrating on a particular word rather than the text as a whole.

Those students who had difficulty with the phonics skills in the lower grades were the students who had difficulty with reading comprehension in the higher grades. It became very evident that students need a strong phonics base to become better readers as they are required to read more difficult text. The research conducted by Roberts and Meiring (2006) also mentioned that it was evident that students in lower socioeconomic areas needed a more stable and direct

method to teaching phonics, in order for the students to be successful in the later years of their education.

The research did find that the students who were not exposed to structured phonics were not hopeless in terms of academic achievement. There were many ways to implement phonics into the students reading the schedule and impact reading abilities. The main difference was the students with early exposure were at or above their grade appropriate reading level for fluency and comprehension. Whereas the students who had later exposures were a year or more behind their peers (Stuart 2004).

### **Effective Ways to Teach Phonics**

Dombey (1999) goes into depth about why teaching phonics is critical and what exactly should be taught when it comes to phonics. The article touches on the argument that students will figure out the graphological and phonological rules of English by themselves without being taught the rules and skills. According to Dombey, This is simply not true. For a child to be a successful reader, they must be taught the rules in syntax to understand the English language. The steps that should be taken to successfully teach phonics include:

1. Teaching the one to one correspondence between grapheme and phonemes.
2. Sounding out a new word by sounding out each phoneme and blending the sounds together to create a word.
3. Introducing vowel consonant (CVC) words
4. Proceeding through initial and final consonant blends,
5. Introducing vowel digraphs that are commonly found
6. Explaining diphthongs and their use
7. Exposing the student to various spelling alternatives

8. Breaking down multisyllabic words

9. Finally introducing the Latin suffixes and their use Dombey (1999)

An example of a phonics lesson that a first-grade teacher conducted is:

“The Phonics Lesson

“Kuh ahh tuh, Kuh ahh tuh,” the first graders chanted as one, the teacher flashed a toothy smile-  
her phonics lesson had begun.

“Kuh ahh tuh, Kuh ahh tuh!” the chant once more was heard. The principal outside, passed by,  
asked herself, “What is that word?”

"Kuh ahh tuh, Kuh ahh tuh!" "Pray tell- what are they saying? It can't be cut or cot or kit. Pray,  
tell- what are they bellowing?"

"Kuh ahh tuh, Kuh ahh tuh!" In unison, once more the roar. The puzzled principal turned around  
and peeked inside the door.

“Kuh ahh tuh, Kuh ahh tuh!” Once more the students exclaimed; and written on the board was  
**cat**- The poor word *a* being maimed.

Now one can learn to read with phonics- no doubt a useful tool. But **cat** can never be **kuh ahh**  
**tuh-**

Even when learned in school.” (Roswell, 2005, p. 62)

Phonics is a crucial part of learning to read. However, it must be implemented correctly for it to be successful "The Phonics Lesson" is a very important aspect of teaching phonics. The letters should never be drawn out that way. It dilutes the entire context of the word and confuses the reader and listener.

## **Interventions**

A study done at an inner-city school in England conducted by Stuart (1999) compared students who were exposed to two different interventions. The first intervention was the Big Book intervention; the teachers used Big Books to teach the students the skills necessary. The second intervention was called Jolly Phonics; this intervention was more phonics-based than the whole language.

Both interventions had several controlled aspects or areas that were the same for both groups. The first controlled aspects were, oral language, when the children were exposed to the same amount of oral vocabulary. The second aspect was, auditory perception, which means the children did not have difficulty hearing certain sounds. The third aspect was, alphabet knowledge, includes the children all knew the same amount of letters and sounds. The fourth aspect was rhyme awareness, meaning the children all knew the same aspect of rhyme awareness. The final aspect was, mathematical awareness states that the children all knew basic numbers Stuart (1999).

As these aspects were crucial for the research to be accurate, the researchers also needed to be sure there were aspects that were going to change. Meaning the experimental aspects that would be addressed were Phoneme Awareness, when the children could identify the letter they hear at the beginning of a word. Phonic Knowledge, which is when the children could identify the sounds the letters make. Reading Measures which is if the children could read words on a page. Writing Measures addresses if the children could write words on a page (Stuart 2004).

After the implementation of the interventions, it became very clear to the researchers that the students who were exposed to the Jolly Phonics intervention performed better on the post-test. The children were able to decode words and were significantly ahead of the students who were exposed to the Big Book intervention (Stuart 1999).

Stuart (2004) went back 5 years later and revisited his work on the various interventions and why the Jolly Phonics intervention worked so well. He conducted many more assessments and found that the students who were exposed to early structured phonics teaching were the most successful as readers. The students who were exposed to this type of instruction gained the phonics knowledge necessary to become successful readers.

### **Methods to Implement Phonics in the Classroom**

There are many various phonics techniques that may be implemented to help build a strong phonics base. Some strategies that were discussed by Morrow and Tracey (1997) were:

1. Explicit instruction- The systematic presentation of phonics skills using direct instructional strategies.
2. Contextual instruction- Learning the phonics skills within meaningful or functional context.
3. Combined approach- Both explicit and contextual instruction are used.

Another approach that was proven effective was using visual phonics to increase literacy interventions. The steps to complete this intervention are:

1. Having the child simply watch the teachers mouth, as they say, a specific sound. The teacher must exaggerate their mouth when doing this.
2. Giving the child an opportunity to make the sound by themselves.
3. Giving the child a hand simple that will remind them how to create the specific sound.
4. The student repeats the sound and corresponds the hand gesture to the sound.
5. The teacher gives the student several words to read using the specific sound taught.
6. The student tries to read the words using the mouth, and hand gestures taught.
7. The teacher gives the student a sentence using the specific sound that was taught.

8. The student tries to read the sentence using the mouth, and hand gestures taught.

These specific steps help a child to remember the sounds of various letters that might be more difficult to remember according to Cihon, Gardner, Morrison and Paul (2008).

According to the 'Tile Test,' a test designed to assess the student's phonological abilities, students are assessed using a hands-on approach. This approach allows students to manipulate and arrange the tiles to come up with the correct answer. The tiles can be used to recognize basic letters and sounds. It can be added and adapted to include blends, and words. This hands-on approach is wonderful for students to learn the basic phonics they need to be successful readers. The 'Tile Test' went as far as having students create sentences with the tiles as well (Norman and Calfee 2004).

Tutoring is a wonderful tool for teachers to use to assist students who are struggling with basic phonics skills. It is very important to help students as much as possible to understand the basic phonics skills necessary to be strong readers, tutoring does this. The research done by Vadsay, Jenkins, and Pool (2000) stated several specific things that are successful when tutoring students. Some of those helpful strategies were: Rapid letter naming, Sound repetition, Segmenting sounds, Writing alphabet, Dolch sight words, Spelling practice, Rime analysis, and Story reading.

Therefore all of the above mentioned methods are necessary to help increase phonics skills in the classroom. The methods discussed are all research based and have proven successful in inner city schools similar to Deerfield Beach Elementary School. The research says that hands on methods that focus on phonics such as the Tile Test are wonderful ways for students to be engaged in their learning and are motivating to produce success. Tutoring is

another wonderful way for students to receive the extra assistance they need to be successful

readers Vadsay, Jenkins, and Pool (2000) .

### **Procedure/Description of Intervention**

When I began the school year as a second grade teacher I found myself shocked and appalled by the lack of phonics skills in my class. I had students who were unable to sound out words and did not know basic phonics skills. I told myself something needed to be done with this problem and after I researched all the various methods to produce better readers I found that the research all pointed toward phonics. Therefore, I based my weekly plans on the various methods researched.

The weekly plans are based on ideas received from the research. They are hands on similar to the Tile Test. The intervention is implemented in a small group of tutoring like setting. The methods researched are being used in various ways to implement the intervention strategies in the classroom.

When creating these lesson plans I chose to use the Tile Test idea of hands on learning for my students. I created the lesson plans with ease in mind. The lesson plan is broken into 3 basic parts; the skill being taught, the standard being taught, and the activity for each group. The lessons build on each other, starting out basic and becoming more complex as the week progresses and the groups progress through rotations based on reading level.

Each group is a different reading level. The blue group is my lowest reader, students who are significantly below level. The green group are students who are on or slightly below level. The pink group are students who are on or above grade level. The purple group are students who are significantly above level.



**Week 1**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Skill</b>	Consonant Digraphs (sh, ch, wh, th, ph)	Consonant Digraphs (sh, ch, wh, th, ph)	Consonant Digraphs (sh, ch, wh, th, ph)	Consonant Digraphs (sh, ch, wh, th, ph)	Consonant Digraphs (sh, ch, wh, th, ph)
<b>Standard</b>	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words
<b>Activity-Blue Group (Below Level) 15 minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list while the teacher writes.	The students will review the digraphs taught. They will give the teacher examples of words that have that digraph.
<b>Activity-Green Group (On Level) 15</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the	The students will name a picture and decipher the	The students will name a picture and decipher the	The students will create a list of words with the	The students will review the digraphs taught. The

<p><b>minutes</b></p>	<p>digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.</p>	<p>digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.</p>	<p>students will create their own list of words in their reading journal.</p>
<p><b>Activity- Purple Group (On/Above Level) 15 Minutes</b></p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.</p>	<p>The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal.</p>
<p><b>Activity- Pink Group (Above</b></p>	<p>The students will name a picture and</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and</p>	<p>The students will create a list of words</p>	<p>The students will review the digraphs</p>

<p><b>Level) 15 Minutes</b></p>	<p>decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the consonant digraphs.</p>	<p>with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.</p>	<p>taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal. The students will create sentences that have the words they thought of.</p>
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**Week 2**

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p><b>Skill</b></p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs (ai, ay, ou, ow, oo)</p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs (ai, ay, ou, ow, oo)</p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs (ai, ay, ou, ow, oo)</p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs (ai, ay, ou, ow, oo)</p>	<p>Vowel Digraphs (ai, ay, ou, ow, oo)</p>
<p><b>Standard</b></p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>
<p><b>Activity-Blue Group (Below Level) 15 minutes</b></p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture</p>	<p>The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the</p>	<p>The students will review the digraphs taught. They will give the teacher examples of words that</p>

	into the correct digraph.	into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	list while the teacher writes.	have that digraph.
<b>Activity-Green Group (On Level) 15 minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.	The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal.
<b>Activity-Purple Group (On/Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they	The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of

	the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.	words in their reading journal.
<b>Activity- Pink Group (Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.	The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal. The students will create sentences that have the words they thought of.

**Week 3**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Skill</b>	Vowel Digraphs (oy, oi, au, aw)	Vowel Digraphs (oy, oi, au, aw)	Vowel Digraphs (oy, oi, au, aw)	Vowel Digraphs (oy, oi, au, aw)	Vowel Digraphs (oy, oi, au, aw)

<p><b>Standard</b></p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>	<p>LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words</p>
<p><b>Activity-Blue Group (Below Level) 15 minutes</b></p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph.</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.</p>	<p>The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list while the teacher writes.</p>	<p>The students will review the digraphs taught. They will give the teacher examples of words that have that digraph.</p>
<p><b>Activity-Green Group (On Level) 15 minutes</b></p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read</p>	<p>The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the</p>	<p>The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence</p>	<p>The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal.</p>

	several words that have the vowel digraphs.	several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	strip.	
<b>Activity- Purple Group (On/Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs. The students will write words with the digraphs as well.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a sentence strip.	The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal.
<b>Activity- Pink Group (Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture	The students will name a picture and decipher the digraph in the word. They will write the word on a sentence strip. They will then sort the picture	The students will create a list of words with the digraphs with their teacher. Together they will create the list the students will write their words on a	The students will review the digraphs taught. The students will create their own list of words in their reading journal. The students will create

	into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	into the correct digraph. The students will also read several words that have the vowel digraphs.	sentence strip.	sentences that have the words they thought of.
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**Week 4**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Skill</b>	Prefixes (un, re, dis, pre)	Prefixes (un, re, dis, pre)	Prefixes (un, re, dis, pre)	Prefixes (un, re, dis, pre)	Prefixes (un, re, dis, pre)
<b>Standard</b>	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words
<b>Activity-Blue Group (Below Level) 15 minutes</b>	The teacher will explain what each prefix means. <b>re-again pre-before dis-not un-not</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those prefixes.	The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a prefix added to it. The students will discuss how	The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip as a group. They will then fold the strip to add a prefix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.	The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different prefix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which prefix each word belongs to.	The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review prefixes with the group.



		that prefix changed that word.			
<b>Activity-Green Group (On Level) 15 minutes</b>	<p>The teacher will explain what each prefix means. <b>re-again pre-before dis-not un-not</b></p> <p>The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those prefixes.</p>	<p>The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a prefix added to it. The students will discuss how that prefix changed that word.</p>	<p>The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip as a group. They will then fold the strip to add a prefix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different prefix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which prefix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review prefixes with the group.</p>
<b>Activity-Purple Group (On/Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	<p>The teacher will explain what each prefix means. <b>re-again pre-before dis-not un-not</b></p> <p>The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those prefixes.</p>	<p>The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a prefix added to it. The students will</p>	<p>The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a prefix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different prefix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which prefix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review prefixes with the group.</p>

		discuss how that prefix changed that word.			
<b>Activity- Pink Group (Above Level) 15 Minutes</b>	The teacher will explain what each prefix means. <b>re-gain</b> <b>pre-before</b> <b>dis-not</b> <b>un-not</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those prefixes.	The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a prefix added to it. The students will discuss how that prefix changed that word.	The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a prefix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.	The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different prefix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which prefix each word belongs to.	The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review prefixes with the group.

**Week 5**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Skill</b>	Suffixes (er, est, ful, less, able)	Suffixes (er, est, ful, less, able)	Suffixes (er, est, ful, less, able)	Suffixes (er, est, ful, less, able)	Suffixes (er, est, ful, less, able)
<b>Standard</b>	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words	LAFS.2.RF.3 .3- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words
<b>Activity-</b>	The teacher	The teacher	The students	The teacher	The students

<p><b>Blue Group (Below Level) 15 minutes</b></p>	<p>will explain what each suffix means. <b>er- more est-most ful-full of less- without able-able to</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those suffixes.</p>	<p>will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a suffix added to it. The students will discuss how that suffix changed that word.</p>	<p>will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a suffix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different suffix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which suffix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review suffixes with the group.</p>
<p><b>Activity-Green Group (On Level) 15 minutes</b></p>	<p>The teacher will explain what each suffix means. <b>er- more est-most ful-full of less- without able-able to</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those suffixes.</p>	<p>The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a suffix added to it. The students will discuss how that suffix changed that word.</p>	<p>The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a suffix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different suffix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which suffix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review suffixes with the group.</p>

<p><b>Activity- Purple Group (On/Above Level) 15 Minutes</b></p>	<p>The teacher will explain what each suffix means. <b>er- more est-most ful-full of less- without able-able to</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those suffixes.</p>	<p>The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a suffix added to it. The students will discuss how that suffix changed that word.</p>	<p>The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a suffix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different suffix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which suffix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review suffixes with the group.</p>
<p><b>Activity- Pink Group (Above Level) 15 Minutes</b></p>	<p>The teacher will explain what each suffix means. <b>er- more est-most ful-full of less- without able-able to</b> The students will brainstorm some words they know that have those suffixes.</p>	<p>The teacher will have a list of words on a sentence strip. The group will read the word and discuss what the words means. The teacher will fold the sentence strip to make the word have a suffix added to it. The students will discuss how that suffix changed that word.</p>	<p>The students will be given a sentence strip and will write a word on the strip. They will then fold the strip to add a suffix. The students and teacher will discuss how the word changed.</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a tab book for the class. Each tab will have a different suffix. The students will also receive a list of words. As a group the students will figure out which suffix each word belongs to.</p>	<p>The students will finish their tab book from Thursday. The teacher will review suffixes with the group.</p>

### **Ethical Considerations**

This research is all being done as part of the regular classroom curriculum. The students all have consent to be a part of the research as it is simply a phonics intervention targeting specific areas of weakness. Due to this research being a part of the daily curriculum absolutely no children were harmed in the facilitation of this research or the implementation of this intervention. All the data collected is confidential therefore, no child's information will be disclosed in the research findings.

### **Limitations**

With everything there are limitations that might hinder the outcome of the research. With this research there are very few limitations. One limitation is the students who were pulled from the small group setting to receive extra assistance by either the ESE teacher or the reading coach. The pull out groups consisted of a total of 4 students at various times in the literacy block each group would be pulled for approximately 40 minutes. Another limitation was the amount of days the teacher must be out of the classroom. The school requires the teacher to attend several trainings and for this reason the intervention was missed on those particular days. This occurred a total of 6 times during the implementation of the intervention. The last limitation was behavior, the class has two students who require extra attention. Due to their challenging behavior and thus distracting attention from other students.

### **Data Collection**

Before the intervention began the teacher conducted a phonics assessment called; Phonics for Reading by Archer, Flood, Lapp, and Lungren (2011). The assessment is administered one on one and is broken into 7 parts. As the student passes each part the words the student is

required to read become more difficult. Each section of the assessment places the student into the correct Phonics for Reading intervention group. The assessment takes about 5-10 minutes per child depending on how quickly or slowly they read. This assessment showed me exactly the areas in phonics the students lacked. With this information I decided to focus on digraphs, prefixes and suffixes. The data received from this assessment was used as my base line data. In mid November I conducted the Phonics for Reading assessment a second time, at the end of the intervention, to see if the intervention proved successful. I chose Phonics for Reading because it is the assessment that was provided by the school, and because it is a helpful tool to see the exact areas in which the student is struggling. It allows the teacher to target those specific skills and perfect them prior to moving on.

These two assessments will help prove my intended outcome by ensuring the students understand the skills taught throughout the intervention. The Phonics for Reading assessment will help prove the need for phonics based lessons in the classroom by pinpointing the students exact weakness and showing improvements made as a result of the intervention. It will help the researcher know if the lessons created were useful or not after the intervention period is complete. .

The methods used to collect data are very valid because they are a yes or no type answer. This makes the assessment valid because it is not a biased test. The test giver can not mark an answer correct just because they like that particular style better. The assessment assesses the student's phonemic knowledge in the various areas of phonics. The phonics for reading assessment the students receives a point for every syllable spoken. If they read it correctly they get the point if they didn't read it correctly they do not receive the point. Either the student understood the skill and is able to apply it or they need remediation. If a child needs additional

remediation they will be placed in a lower group ensuring they receive the skills they need to succeed.

The assessments are reliable because each assessment is being given by the teacher so the student will feel comfortable and will perform their best. The student will not feel intimidated by an adult they do not know. They are simply reading the words using the skills their teacher taught them. The student does have an opportunity to show the teacher all he/she has learned in the phonics lessons taught.

### **Data Analysis**

\_\_\_\_\_ The data that was collected was a Phonics Assessment that was provided to the teacher by the administration at the school and administered at the beginning and the end of the intervention. The assessment was broken into 7 parts. Each part of the assessment shows the teacher the level in which the students would be placed for school based intervention. The assessment tool instructs the test administrator to stop at certain points if the student misses a certain amount of syllables. The administration instructed the teachers to continue the entire assessment regardless.

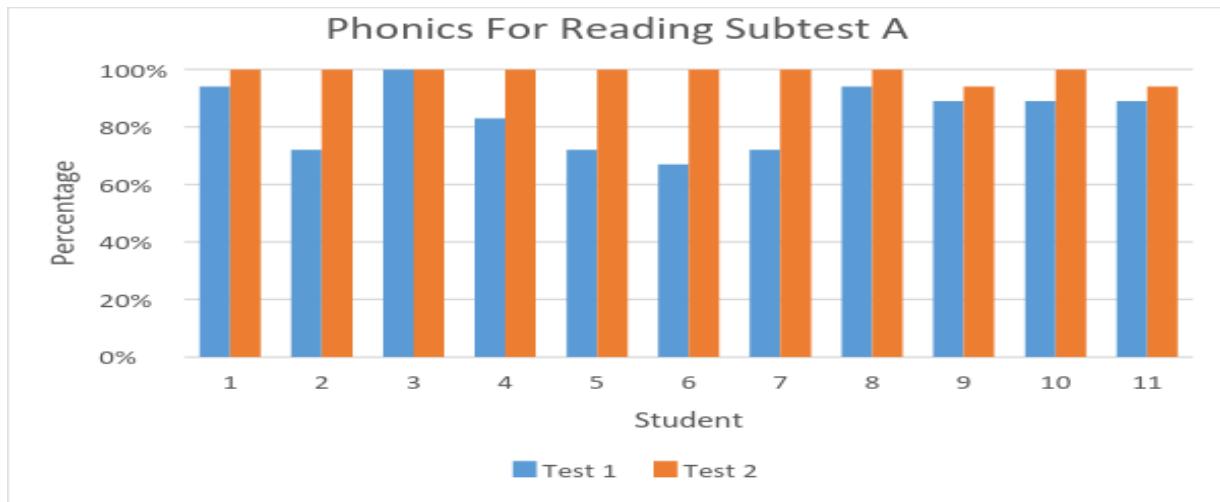
Each assessment is broken into Subtests. The subtests go from A-G, A being the easiest and G being the hardest. Subtests A and B assess to see if the student has mastered the basic CVC words and the skills taught in the first Phonics for Reading intervention. Subtest C, D, & E assess for more complex words and if the student has mastered the skills taught in Phonics for Reading two. Subtest F & G assess for multisyllabic words and if the student has mastered the skills taught in Phonics for Reading three.

The graphs below show each subtest and how the student performed on assessment one in September versus assessment two in November. The graphs show all 11 students assessed and

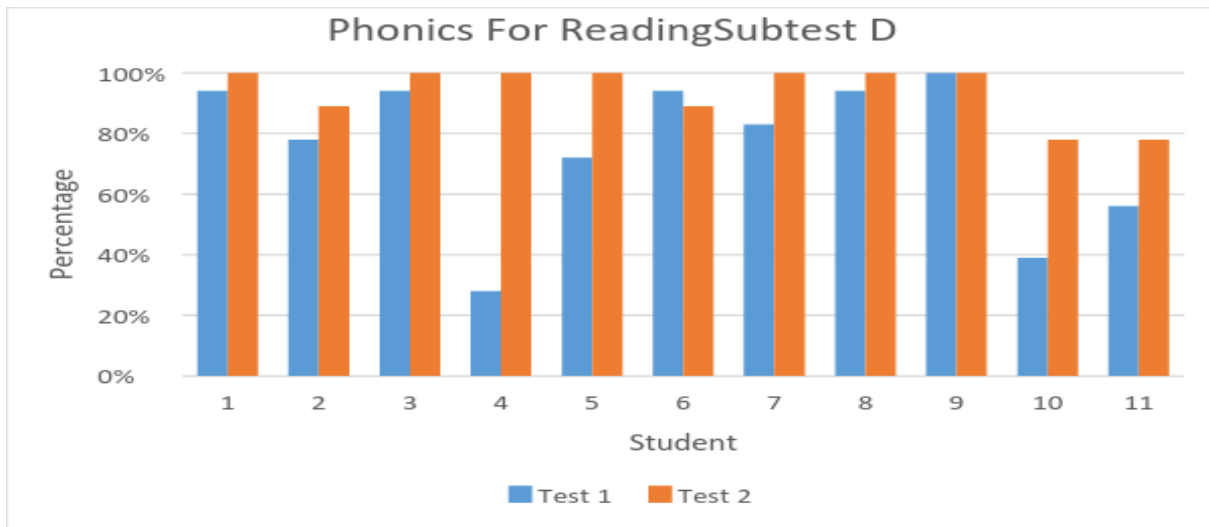
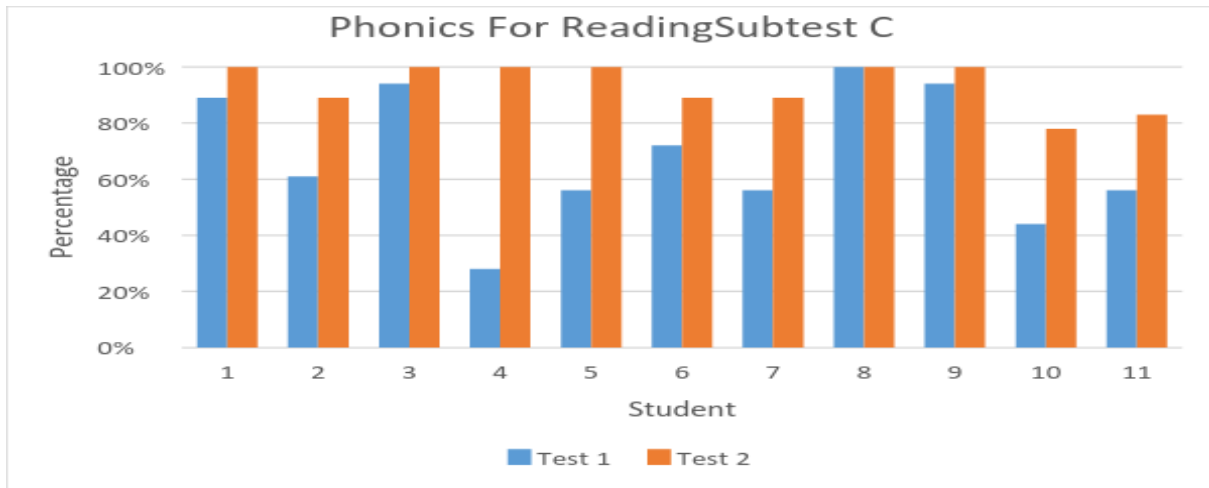
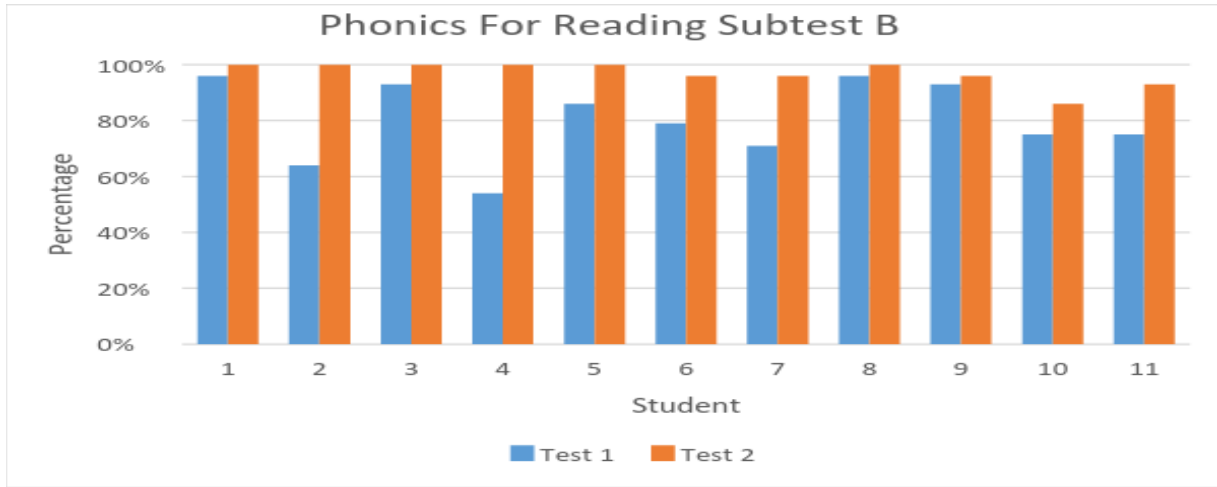
compares both assessments. The blue bar represents the first assessment in September while the orange bar represents the second assessment in November.

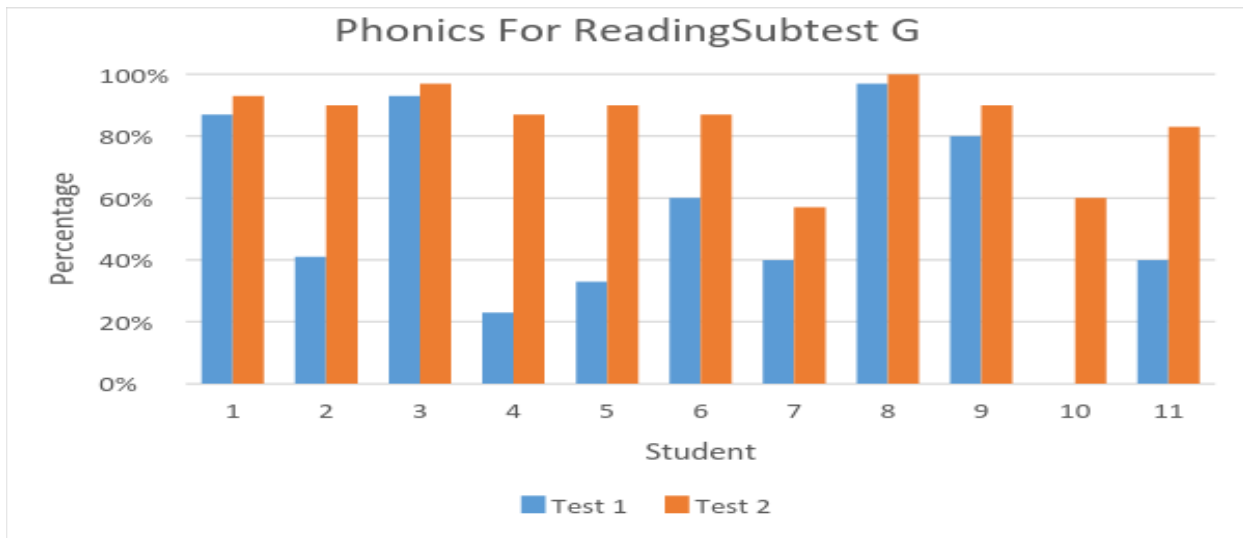
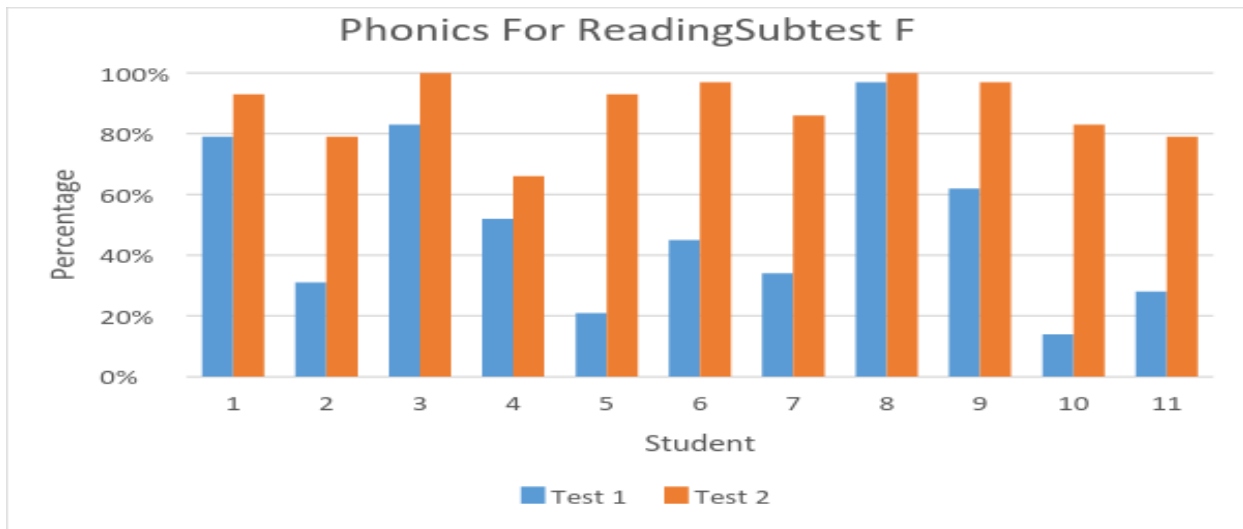
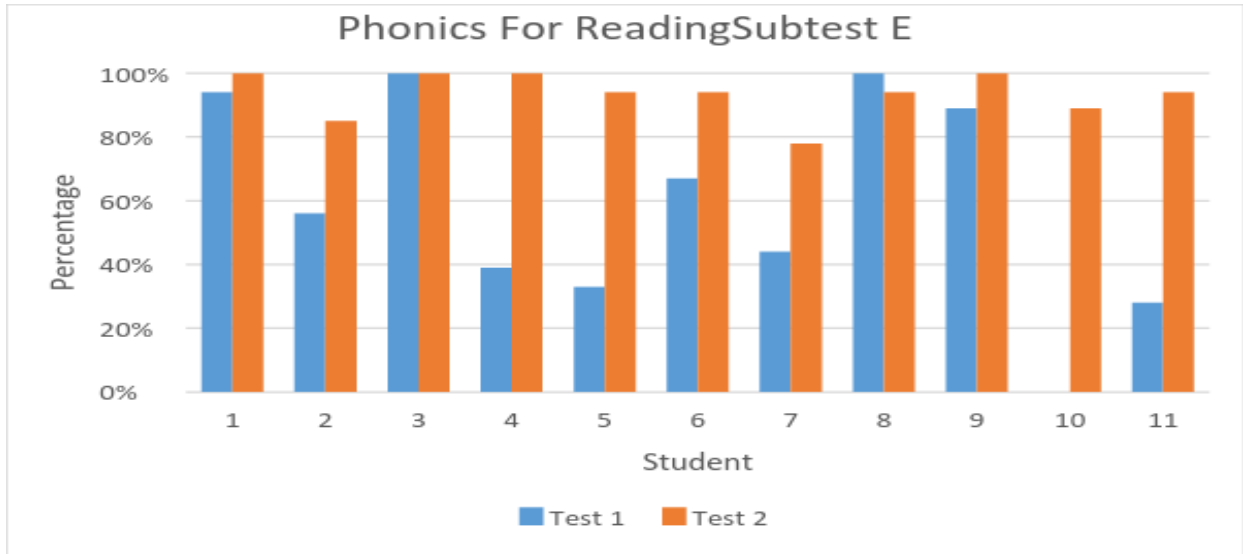
Prior to beginning the intervention Test 1 was given to the students. After Test 1 was given the decision was made to focus on phonics skills within my class to assist the students in reading unfamiliar words. The data collected in the baseline assessment made it very clear that my students needed the explicit phonics instruction that was provided with the interventions put in place.

After assessing 11 students on the 7 pieces of the Phonics for Reading assessment it became very clear that the students gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about sounding out words and the tools that should be used when facing a word the student doesn't know in the 3 month intervention period. According to the data illustrated before, all of the students in the intervention showed gains in phonics knowledge.









**Interpretation of Data**

The data collected from the intervention shows very clear gains in the students who were involved in the intervention. The data even shows growths from students who received 0% in some sections of the assessment. The students who had 0% completely shut down during the first assessment and did not attempt the words in that particular section of the assessment. Because of the phonics based intervention implemented for 3 months, the students were taught the skills needed in order to sound out words they could not previously. The data clearly shows that phonics is a key component to students success in reading unknown words. These skills allow students to have the confidence needed to attempt new words without fear.

**Reflection and Recommendation**

The intervention has a whole went very well. The students enjoyed the intervention strategies and began to apply them into their daily reading and writing. The students would use the strategies taught while sounds out a new word to read or write. Many times they were using the hand gestures taught. The students gained a tremendous amount of knowledge on basic phonics skills. The students reading fluency and confidence improved tremendously after a few short weeks of the intervention.

The part of the intervention that went the best was the students learned the skills with a hands on approach. The students were engaged in games while learning the skills that the intervention targeted; blends, digraphs, prefixes and suffixes. The students took ownership of their learning and gained the knowledge necessary to build a strong phonics foundation to become better readers.

While all students made gains from the intervention there were still a few students who did not make the gains necessary to meet the second grade expectations. The student who did not make the gains expected are now being put into a child study group to assess a possible learning disability. I believe the student may have a processing issues which is preventing him from making the gains necessary to succeed.

The other piece of the intervention that did not go as well as I would have hoped is the suffix lesson. The students learned the sounds of the suffixes but they did not fully understand the meaning of the suffixes. That is a piece of the intervention that the class as a whole will be revisiting.

The one thing I would do differently if I revisited this action research is to make sure the intervention was implemented daily regardless if the classroom teacher was there or not. I did not feel comfortable leaving my materials with a substitute therefore, the students didn't receive the intervention for all the days necessary. Due to this situation the intervention has continued past the five week plan. If the intervention was done consistently I think the gains would have been even more significant.

These are suggestions I am making are based off of the things I found made a difference in the student's ability to grasp the concepts. The recommendations I would make to someone who is interested in implementing this intervention into their classroom is the following:

1. Ensure the students know and understand all of the letters and sounds in the alphabet.
2. Introduce blends to the students prior to beginning this intervention.
3. Take the time to ensure all students are comprehending the intervention strategies as they build on each other.
4. Implement the strategies with fidelity.

5. Complete the intervention daily.
6. Adjust any lessons to meet the needs of your students.
7. Watch and enjoy the students learning and having fun!

For my 2nd grade students who started out the year struggling to decode unknown words, the interventions I put in place allowed them to learn the skills necessary to successfully use phonics to decode words. After 3 months of the intense phonics intervention that was tailored to their level and interests, hands-on activities and incorporating small group lessons. As a result the students made significant progress in terms of phonics skills and applying them to reading and writing.

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