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# Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education: Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee

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**Literacy Instruction in Early  
Childhood Education:  
Ohio's Third Grade Reading  
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Honors Thesis

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Department: Teacher Education

Adviser: Joni L. Baldwin, Ed.D.

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## Abstract

This qualitative study's purpose was to research effective literacy instruction in three separate primary classrooms. Three teachers were observed and interviewed as to how they are delivering best instruction in their respective classrooms. These observations were then compared with Gail Tompkins' (2011) effective literacy educator statements as well as other best practice techniques. Once all of the data was collected, the primary investigator traced similarities throughout the three teachers and made five new additions to the collection of effective literacy educator statements by Gail Tompkins. Implications of this study include the impending Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee which is an unfunded mandate for the state of Ohio. It requires a third grade reading level for all students leaving that grade or they face retention. Literacy is a crucial part of life which is why having effective literacy instruction in the early grades is so important.

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## Chapter 1 – Background of the Problem

Being a literate person is vital to being a citizen of the modern world. Elementary educators are challenged to teach the skills of writing and reading to the young people of society. This study investigates effective literacy instruction in the early grades, specifically kindergarten through second grade. It will explore beneficial practices identified by teachers and researchers in different categories of literacy from the physical environment to direct instruction. The goal of this thesis project is to explore and discover what teachers are implementing in primary level classrooms that have students progressing as expected in literacy.

This is a study of instructional methods. Three different teachers were selected by the faculty adviser from nearby schools in Dayton, Ohio. After the teachers consented to the study, the primary investigator observed in their classroom, but only the teacher was observed rather than the children. Then the teachers were interviewed by the primary investigator. During observation, there was no recording of children or accessing personal records of the children. Each participant received a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes.

The instructional methods used were aligned with Gail Tompkins's (2011) statements of effective literacy teachers. She created eight statements about literacy instructors that have been influential in teaching children in the primary grades. This study was aimed to supplement the Tompkins findings, which could then be utilized as underlying themes in their instructional methods despite individual differences.

In Ohio, literacy instruction in the early grades is under close supervision with the recent passing of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This is an unfunded mandate

that every third grader must be reading at the third grade level by the end of their school year; if the student does not achieve this status, he or she will be retained in the third grade in reading. If the teachers decide that the student is on par for fourth grade in other subjects, the student can be promoted with the caveat that they remain in the third grade reading programs with intensive direct instruction and at least 90 minutes of reading per day. Once into the new school year, if the teachers decide that the student can be promoted out of the third grade reading, they may switch during the school year. These new regulations also present new challenges for literacy educators. Because of these factors, it is more important to have competent teachers in the primary grades that can provide effective literacy instruction and thus promote growth in their students.

Numerous research studies have been completed about the efficacy of literacy instruction. There are several theories that suggest best ways of teaching, some explicitly and others implicitly. There are even more theories that have combined other ideas from the theorists and everyday practices; however, literacy instruction research is a never-ending process. Policies change all of the time regarding the new and best ideas in teaching in general, specifically in literacy instruction. It is always important to have the most current techniques happening in the classroom to which this study hopes to add more suggestions. The following study will help educators understand how having effective literacy instruction is significant and necessary in educating their students.

### *Definition of Terms*

In this research, the following terms will be used:

### Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a practice in which teachers give appropriate, leveled instruction to each individual student. Rather than having the same approach for each student, scaffolding ensures that a student will get the right amount of support and a gradual release of responsibility on the side of the teacher.

### Schema

Another teaching theory is the schema theory which is described by Frederic Bartlett as the “structure of human knowledge as it is represented in memory” (Pearson, 15). In other words, it is the stored knowledge that a person has saved about a subject matter or topic, which is important to reading comprehension (Crawford, 141). Schema is like a personal brain filing cabinet: when new information comes in; it is stored away in a folder of something the child already knows.

### Individualized Education Program

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a document that is drawn up for a student that is exhibiting special needs. It is created by the child’s parents, primary teacher, special education teacher, school administrator, and any other specialists that might be needed to assist the student, for example an occupational therapist or speech pathologist. The IEP is used to provide learning objectives for the student that is to be followed by the teachers and specialists in order to best serve the student’s unique needs.

### Retention

Retention is the practice of holding back a student and asking them to repeat the same grade. Reasons for this include failing or not being academically ready for the next

grade, or in the Third Grade Reading Guarantee's case; not being on the correct reading level.

### *Reading Specialist*

The term reading specialist refers to an educator who has received a special endorsement in reading instruction.

### *Limitations and Assumptions of the Study*

Due to the time and scope of the study, the major limitation of the study is the schools that were chosen. They are both in the same part of town and include representation from the same socioeconomic status. Both schools were in the same district; therefore they both required the same formal reading assessment, limiting the types of assessments to be viewed. The teachers were all female and were educated at the University of Dayton at some point of their career. Two of the teachers were from the same school which also restricted the variety of the participants.

Another limitation to this study is the limited amount of time in the classroom. No specific conclusions could be drawn given the limited time in the classroom observing each teacher's specific instructional strategy. Despite these limitations, the primary investigator observed nothing to suggest the classrooms were atypical and the observations were an accurate depiction of the teachers' abilities.

### *Summary*

Literacy is such an important skill to have and develop because it is used in every facet of a person's life. Early childhood educators are given the responsibility of fostering those necessary skills to set the stage for learning in the later grades as well as the rest of their students' lives. Because of this, identifying the best practices of teaching literacy is



crucial for teachers in the primary grades. This study will look at three primary teachers through observation and interviews and add to the collection of data about effective literacy instruction. This research will contribute to the existing literature because teachers in early childhood education need to be informed of the most effective practices and utilizing them in their classrooms in order to provide the best education for their students.

## Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

Literacy instruction has been defined in the past as teaching the explicit skills of how to read and write. But in reality, it is so much more than that. It involves using strategies and applying them to different types of texts while gaining a true understanding of what was read. This chapter begins with an overview of literacy instruction in application. It then defines successful and unsuccessful readers, followed by an in-depth look into specific instructional methods. Finally, it delves into the age group significance with the application of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

### *Literacy*

In this changing world, literacy is going beyond the ability to read and write to include the comprehension and application of a text. Gail Tompkins states that “reading and writing are *processes of constructing meaning* through organization and prior knowledge” (p. 159). The goals of literacy are to make meaning and the ability to apply it through writing and communicating. There are several different types of literacies, including but not limited to scientific and mathematical literacy, cultural literacy, and digital literacy. Teachers are responsible to instruct children about literacy and how to use that literacy effectively in their daily lives. Consider the example of completing a job application; the majority of the process is often online so digital literacy, being able to navigate technology and its functions, is crucial. Teachers need to recognize these new literacies as valid despite constant change, which is why the application part of literacy is so important. Literacy goes beyond just reading, it is questioning if people are able to create new meaning from existing material. These different types of literacy are all important and a critical skill required by all of them is the ability to read.

Comprehension is the main piece of early childhood literacy. Directly teaching strategies to assist in comprehension is an effective process. Allington (2001) advocates for this because his “research on comprehension strategy teaching provides powerful evidence that most struggling readers (and many not so struggling readers) benefit enormously when we can construct lessons that help make the comprehension processes visible” (p. 98). This can be completed using several different strategies, specifically using a student’s schema to connect the reading with something they have already learned. “The more background knowledge a reader has that connects with the text being read, the more likely the reader will be able to make sense of what is being read” which is a true asset in comprehension (Pardo, 2004, p. 273). Overall, comprehension is the true meaning of reading because without it, all a reader is doing is decoding words. By creating meaning and gaining a true understanding, readers are able to retain information and use it as a foundation for other knowledge.

In a nation that is constantly pushing for higher standards for children, “the latest assessments of reading proficiency typically include extended response items that often require (1) that students actually think about what they have just read and (2) that they explain or describe this thinking” (Allington, 2001, p. 87). This means that students must now be able to summarize, analyze, and synthesize what they read. Within these skills, the literacy delves into all subject areas. Assessments require students to understand that they must be able to read and write about the other subjects. This will build wholesome students who are able to use their literacy skills in all facets of school and life. The integration piece of literacy will also come from the multiple types of literacy and build

stronger readers and writers. Effective literacy educators should be able to bring all types of literacy into the classroom while building lifelong readers and writers.

### ***Struggling Readers v. Successful Readers***

When discussing readers, there are two evident groups: struggling readers and successful ones. Each group comes into reading with a different experience and will produce different results. Successful readers get support at home, read a great deal, comprehend their reading, are able to read a variety of genres, and can elicit information from a text. On the other hand, struggling readers are reluctant to read, read only to gain the answer, lack fluency, and have negative feelings attached to reading. There is a notable correlation between the amount students read and their reading achievement. According to Allington (2001), “More instructional time for reading most consistently produced greater gains and achievement gains in lower-achieving students especially” (p. 30).

However, the notion that reading is only a school activity needs to be broken. Reading needs to take place outside of school, which is difficult because “schools create more students who *can* read than students who *do* read” (Allington, 2001, p. 8). In order to turn struggling readers into successful ones, there needs to be support for the students, accessibility to the right texts, and ample time for them to read in school and at home.

### ***Effective Literacy Educators***

Gail Tompkins, in her text *Literacy in the Early Grades* (2011), compiled a list of “effective teacher statements.” Through research and her personal experience, Tompkins delved into researching literacy educators and what practices were most effective. The following eight statements were what she presented.

## #1 “Effective teachers understand how children learn”

Using multiple theories to influence teaching is a good way to access all types of learners. It is also beneficial to use a balance of teacher-centered theories and child-centered theories. There are five main, widely researched theories that Tompkins sorts through in her book. The first is behaviorism, most notable through B.F. Skinner. This entails conditional learning and filling the students with knowledge as if they were empty vessels being filled with sand. There is explicit instruction of skills since “reading is a conditioned response” (Tompkins, 2011, p. 5). They teach the vocabulary, letters, and sounds and build their way up through words, sentences, paragraphs, all the way up to reading texts and making meaning from it. Another theory is constructivism from Jean Piaget and John Dewey. Children are active in their learning and are able to use their schema to activate prior knowledge about the subject and make connections in order to come up with a new, personalized understanding of the topic. It takes on the form of teachers having students access their schema, read a text, think about the ideas, and show how literature can fit into the world. It shows literature as a whole, and then breaks it down into small parts like phonics and spelling. A child will be actively making meaning of a text, influenced by personal experiences (schema), and able to choose their own reading materials (Fuhler, 24). The constructivist classrooms allow mistakes because it is a sign that children are growing and learning properly (Reutzel, 121).

Sociolinguistics from Lev Vygotsky was the third theory mentioned. In this method, Vygotsky believed that children should be challenged in a way that is appropriate for them: hence the term scaffolding. This should happen within the Zone of Proximal Development, or the child’s ZPD. This is the area at which the child starts

learning and ends at the point of mastery of a topic or developmental skill. “Reading and writing are viewed as social activities” since children are social creatures (Tompkins, 2011, p. 7). Literature is used to build cultural awareness in an authentic way. Through this, the children develop critical literacy which encourages a worldview that advocates equity, justice, and social action. The fourth theory was the information processing theory. This relates the child’s mind to a computer: there are control mechanisms that they use to complete functions like problem solving, reading, and writing. Reader response or the transaction theory was the last mentioned, coined by Louise Rosenblatt. In this method, the student has a transaction with the text and makes his or her own meaning from that understanding. This theory, like constructivist, gives the responsibility for making meaning to the reader and allows for multiple interpretations of the text. Reading for aesthetic reasons is for thoughts and feelings, as when you read a book for pleasure. Reading for efferent reasons is to carry away information, as in reading for a class assignment. A child reads for efferent or aesthetic purposes, and keeping this in mind will gather different ideas from the text. The actual transaction between the reader and the text, Rosenblatt calls the poem. The main reason why this section is included is that when students have different reading purposes, they will each create different meaning from the text. All of reader response theory keeps readers “cognitively engaged” which is pertinent for teachers (Fuhler, 25).

Whole language philosophy was a popular literacy practice in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it did not have one main theorist to back it up. The philosophy’s goal was to eliminate basal readers (e.g. the Dick and Jane story books) and have all authentic experiences in the classroom that focused on the children’s wants and needs, so it could

be catered towards an individual classroom. This philosophy would teach in mini lessons that focused around a piece of literature and then would have trans-disciplinary lessons for that day or week. It would focus around a theme and have a totally integrated curriculum. Here, readers would construct their own meanings (Pearson, 21), much like the constructivist approach. As for assessment, teachers who used this method believed that skills were better “caught than taught” meaning that there was no direct instruction: the teachers hoped the children would absorb the knowledge through the lessons (Pearson, 24). This philosophy did not last long because of the lack of formal assessment.

## #2 “Effective teachers support the children’s use of the four cueing systems”

When educators begin teaching students how to read in an explicit, synthetic manner, there are four natural cueing systems in every child. The first is phonological awareness that “can be defined as an awareness of the sounds that compose words and the ability to manipulate those sounds” (Masseti, 2009, p. 555). Massetti (2009) also claims that “it is one of the strongest predictors of reading achievement” and will assist children in learning reading and spelling (p. 555). Phonological awareness is the first step in learning how to read and write, or the foundational building blocks for literacy. Being able to recognize sounds will translate to letters which can turn into decoding words and will assist with fluency.

The next cueing system is the syntactic system or the structure of the English language. When children come across a word in a sentence of which they are unsure of the meaning, they can use context clues and the structure of the sentence for assistance. The syntactic cueing system can also assist children in decoding more complex words by having a solid understanding of the root word. For example, the word preschooler may

look intimidating to a first grader but if he or she is able to look at the root word *school* and then take the prefix pre- to mean “before” they have a word meaning before school. The suffix –er can mean “a person who”, so altogether the word preschooler is a person who is before school. By using these parts and chunks of words, readers can easily decode meanings of unknown words.

Another cueing system is the semantic system which is “the meaning system that focuses on vocabulary” (Tompkins, 2011, p. 10). Without having an exposure to vocabulary early on, children will struggle in the later grades to have a complete understanding of more complex sentences. Comprehension is a large piece here, especially by knowing synonyms and antonyms to words which will simultaneously assist every other cueing system and the reader. Good readers are able to make true meaning from what they read and having a strong vocabulary will greatly assist in this goal.

The last cueing system is the pragmatic system which entails the formal and informal uses of the English language. There are many purposes for writing, reading, speaking, and listening and it varies based on the circumstances and the individuals involved. A student could be giving an oral report in which he should use formal English to explain the topic and later that same student could be having a conversation with his friend and need to use a more informal tone to match the circumstance. The other cueing systems all feed into the pragmatic system because it has so many different uses of which students must be aware.



### #3 “Effective teachers create a community of learners”

Under Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, safety is the most important need after a child’s physical needs. Feeling safe in a classroom is the teacher’s duty to provide for the students. They need to have a safe space to learn without fear of bullying or embarrassment. A student must feel comfortable in their environment and with the students around them in order for him or her to even begin to learn. Along with being safe in the classroom to express ideas, the students should also feel a sense of respect from the teacher and they need to respect the teacher as well. This will assist with rule-making and safety. Once these two needs are met in the classroom, the teacher must give the students the opportunity to work together, make independent choices, and take risks with their learning. If a first grader never took a risk by choosing an instructional leveled book rather than an independent one, he or she would stay at that level and never move on to chapter books. Lastly, the family of each student must be involved with the student’s success and invested in their learning. “[W]hen parents are involved, children’s achievement increases (Edwards, 2004)” which is the teacher’s original goal (Tompkins, 2011, p. 13). This community of the classroom is a solid foundation for student learning.

### #4 “Effective teachers adopt a balanced approach to instruction”

The Balanced Literacy Approach, also known as the BLA, was developed to combine several different approaches to literacy into one model. Pearson (2002) describes it best as when a “teacher facilitates by establishing authentic activities, intervening when necessary to provide the scaffolding and explicit instruction required to help student takes the next step towards independence” (p. 32). There is a mixture of

teaching sounds and words as well as bringing in students' prior knowledge and experience all to assist in creating meaning from the text.

The balanced literacy approach takes pieces of all of the previous theories and combines them into one concise form, of which the end goal is to make meaning. This approach does not come in a package, as some salespeople would offer: it comes from pulling from several resources and combining them all to be unique to a specific classroom. Literature is at the heart of the program, yet the approach spans several disciplinary areas. The skills and strategies are taught both directly and indirectly (Tompkins, 125).

#### #5 "Effective teachers scaffold children's reading and writing"

Scaffolding is all part of the gradual release of responsibility in a classroom. The process begins as a shared experience between the teacher and student then step by step the student will gradually become more independent reading and writing. Some students are able to skip some in between steps and can move right forward into the independent stage while others may require more assistance in part of their process. Teachers must realize at what stage the students are and appropriately point them in the direction they need to go.

In scaffolding reading, the teacher must explicitly teach skills and some strategies. The students must also be actively engaged in authentic activities, the reading process, as well as shared reading, guided reading, partner reading, and read-alouds to ensure a well-rounded approach. In terms of writing, scaffolding could be performed using writing workshops with the writing process. Students should be able to go from interactive writing with the teacher helping them all the way to having the students publish their own

story. This process must be adapted to fit each of the child's needs, which is one of the main purposes of scaffolding literacy instruction.

#### #6 "Effective teachers organize for literacy instruction"

Organizing for literacy instruction is the process that the teacher goes through in order to prepare his or her students for the school year. It takes the form usually of basal reading programs, literature focus units, literature circles, and reading and writing workshops. Sometimes these approaches are blended together or they are also just used on their own in combination with a different sort of instruction. Teachers organize their days into periods where these activities can take place but they also understand that "no single instructional program best represents the balanced approach to literacy" so teachers cater their instruction to best fit the needs of their current students (Tompkins, 2011, p. 21).

#### #7 "Effective teachers differentiate instruction"

No two children learn in the exact same way which is why best practice in an early childhood classroom involves differentiation. This term refers to a teacher's ability to make the instruction fit to the needs of each student. Scaffolding also fits into this concept as well. Students come into the classroom at different levels of knowledge, regardless if they were all in the same classroom the year before. In a study completed with first grade students, Connor et. al. (2009) found the "importance of individualizing (or personalizing or differentiating) instruction based on the child's entering skill levels" (p. 77). After researching, they decided that differentiation should be a multi-faceted approach that caters to the needs of each student in the classroom. Differentiation can be learned through professional development which must be research based.

According to Gail Tompkins (2011), there are three main ways to differentiate: content, process, and products (p. 23). By changing the content, a teacher could easily choose an appropriately leveled book for a child and bring them to an instructional level of reading as opposed to a frustrational or independent level. When teachers differentiate the process, they are personalizing the way the students are grouped and instruction is given. This could mean working one-on-one with a student or making time for small groups to meet. It also involves challenging each student at their level and pushing them slightly each time they meet. Product differentiation is when each student is able to demonstrate their academic ability in a different manner such as a poster, oral presentation, or essay: this also means being able to share their information with the teacher and a small group. Overall, differentiation does not mean more work for the students; just appropriate and leveled work for them. Differentiation is not something that only certain teachers could do; it is simply best practice for *all* teachers.

#### #8 “Effective teachers link instruction and assessment”

Assessment should be a daily, on-going process since there are so many different types of assessment. Results can come from tests, anecdotal notes, observation, conferences, or interviews. The main purposes for assessment are “determining reading levels, monitoring progress, diagnosing strengths and weaknesses, and documenting learning” (Tompkins, 2011, p. 30).

Running records are one type of assessment that schools use to document reading strengths and weakness as well as reading levels. Important things to also note while taking a running record are the student’s automaticity and accuracy, speed, prosody (Tompkins, 2011). The teacher picks a book for the child to read and while the child is

reading, the teacher has a copy of the same text. The student reads aloud and on the teacher's copy, he or she marks misspoken words, self-corrections, repeats, and any other miscues. At the end of the text, the teacher ranks the level of the book as independent (95-100% accuracy), instructional (90-94% accuracy), or frustration (0-89% accuracy) for the child (Tompkins, 2011). The teacher also asks questions at the end of the text about comprehension pieces. Fountas and Pinnell is a publishing company that creates sets of running record materials that are already leveled and have explicit instructions for teachers. Since the teacher should be picking a text that is in the child's instructional level, this is already a differentiated assessment. It is mostly a formal assessment, but in other ways it can be informal, such as when a teacher determines if the student used meaning, syntactic, or visual clues for their reading strategies. Students of all needs can benefit from this assessment because they are working individually with the teacher.

Questioning can also be a type of informal assessment. They are most likely about a text that the child has read and can be literal, inferential, or critical. A literal question is one that has the child recall ideas or key points of a story. Inferential questions have the student bring together several components of the story in order to come to a deeper level of understanding through their answer. Critical questions are ones that evoke the child's opinion on a topic. Questions are so informal that they can be used on a daily basis. To record the responses, all the teacher needs is a journal for each student, anecdotal notes, or a check sheet to ensure that children are hitting the benchmarks. Because of their informality, questions can be scaffolded to be used at the student's level in the reading process. For this, teachers will have to know exactly how they want to word their questions in order to properly document the student's ability.

Overall, assessment and instruction must be linked in order to get the best picture of the student's ability. In order to ensure this, the two must have a common factor and each student must be met by the teacher at their individual level.

### ***Literacy Instructional Methods***

#### *Read Aloud*

A read aloud is when the teacher gathers the students together, chooses a specific text catered towards a literacy lesson or geared toward other content, and will actively engage the students while reading the text aloud to the children. This is not simply reading the words on the page but during the reading, “teachers engage children in the experience rather than postponing their involvement until after reading” (Tompkins, 2011, p. 266). Read alouds are useful because it does not put pressure on the children to read it themselves and they can think more about the text rather than spending their energy decoding words. It is also useful because the teacher can choose a higher level text and challenge the students' listening and comprehension skills without the decoding problems.

#### *Shared Reading*

Shared reading goes hand in hand with scaffolding. It is an important step in assisting the children in becoming more independent readers. Shared reading is done with the teacher and a student where the responsibility for the reading comes from both parties. It can be done in guided reading groups or one-on-one with a student. The process is a gradual release of responsibility so the teacher and student both have a part to play. They are reading together and thinking aloud together in an effort to push the student towards independent reading.

### *Guided Reading*

Guided reading is when the teacher arranges the students in groups of 3-5 by their instructional level in reading and the teacher leads children in working their way through a text. During independent reading, he or she will call the students together and give them all the same text to read. This text is leveled so the children “can read it with approximately 90% accuracy” (Tompkins, 2011, p. 348). Usually one child will read aloud while the other ones read silently. During this time, the children may read aloud, answer questions, decode vocabulary, and work on fluency. It is done in a small group setting where the teacher can more fully engage with the students and help them at their personal level. When the one child is reading, the teacher is able to make anecdotal notes and track the student’s progress as well as mark down what to work on next for that child. For example, if a kindergarten teacher was seeing that the student was struggling with identifying the word chunk –ck, then the teacher could take a moment to do a mini-lesson for the child. If several students were struggling with this, then the teacher could conduct the mini-lesson with the whole class after the guided reading was over. After the text is finished and each child has gotten at least one chance to read aloud, the teacher asks comprehension questions about the text and marks responses down on a chart or in a journal of some sort. This is also the time during which most teachers will perform a running record on one child. Because this is an informal setting, the teacher can meet the students at their individual level and scaffold the instruction appropriately.

### *Independent Reading*

The next method in literacy instruction is independent reading. This is also a lower level of teacher involvement but it still serves a genuine purpose: “teachers want

children to practice a strategy they've already introduced...slowly releasing more responsibility to them" (Tompkins, 2011, p. 20). Independent reading is the final step in the process of scaffolding and for teacher involvement in reading. It is the ultimate goal for their students: to get them to a point where they are choosing books for themselves and are able to read a majority of the book while still retaining meaning from it.

Examples of independent reading programs are DEAR (Drop Everything And Read), AR (Accelerated Reader), and SSR (Sustained Silent Reading), however programs are not a requirement in classrooms. These programs are adopted to encourage children to read for pleasure without the teacher picking out books for them. Some have a reward after taking a test on a grade leveled book while others just encourage reading in general. In some schools, instead of an independent reading program, some teachers simply have a classroom library with leveled texts sorted by genre or author for students to select their own books to read. Teachers also will assist students in finding their reading level to make this a smooth process.

### *Interactive Writing*

Similarly to shared reading, interactive writing is a step in the process of scaffolding in order to assist children to the next step towards independent writing. It is accomplished either in large group, small group, or one-on-one where the teacher and the student both have the ability to help one another put their thoughts into words. If they are working on sentences, the teacher may start the sentence on the board and ask a student to fill in a sight word or sound out a word and write all of the letters that they can. The teacher may also ask for proper punctuation and capitalization with this as well.



Interactive writing may be done through language arts as well as other content areas, such as a flow chart of steps in metamorphosis during science instruction.

### *Independent Writing*

Independent writing is when a child has moved through all of the steps of the writing process and is able to complete them without the assistance of a teacher. They may still need encouragement to edit or some help in revising, but for the most part they are writing coherently on their own. This writing is done with purpose and follows grade level standards for appropriate writing.

### *Physical Space*

The physical space is also a vital instructional strategy for early childhood educators. Effective teachers find supplemental materials for the children to have easily accessible. The physical space includes the arrangement of the classroom, the walls and furniture, the lighting, as well as the separated sections of the room such as a reading corner or mini-library. The classroom should be a welcoming place for children.

Word walls are also part of the physical space of the classroom. They are normally sectioned by letter and underneath each letter is a frequent, interesting, or confusing word for the children. Words are added to the wall as the year goes on so the children can see progress as well as expand their vocabulary. These are also great resources for writing so the children can see proper spelling of the words and teachers use them to measure comprehension by asking questions about the words.

### *Materials and Tools*

Materials and tools are crucial in an early childhood classroom. Children are mostly visual and hands-on learners, meaning that teachers need to understand this

and give them what they need in order for them to learn. Primary classrooms should be filled with manipulatives, models, books, graphs, instruments, scientific tools, charts, games, and any other materials necessary for that grade. This follows along with the physical space because materials and tools can be seamlessly added into a classroom and be stored until they are needed. Examples of materials could be as easy as pencil grippers, PVC pipes, or baskets with books in them but it could also mean ordering items for specific lessons such as graduated cylinders or scales.

### *Techniques and Management Practices*

Behavior management techniques are the underlying framework in any classroom. It is the most important to build the community of learners on the first day because without the routines established, the rest of the school year is going to be a constant struggle and not as much learning can be done. If the students are constantly wondering how the school day will work, they are going to spend less time working with the content they are supposed to be learning. With established set routines and management systems, the students are aware of what is expected and know the standards that are expected. If there are behavior issues in the classroom, they need to be addressed by the system that the teacher has in place immediately so as to not interfere with the classroom community. This may seem like a meaningless piece to literacy, but without an effective management system students and teachers alike will notice a negative difference in performance.

### *Tone and Atmosphere*

The tone and atmosphere of the classroom comes from a combination of the teacher, the behavior management system, the physical environment, and the behavior

of the students themselves. The teacher can change the physical environment to reflect his or her teaching philosophy as well as the behavior management system in order to ensure a classroom that works for that specific teacher. Then the rest of the tone and atmosphere will come from the response of the students. If they take to the rest of the factors, the school year will be a successful one. If they do not take to the systems established by the teacher, then the teacher will need to try and meet the needs of the students with a new plan. Students will often rise to and meet the standards set by the teacher, so if the teacher sets a positive tone for learning, builds a community of learners, and connects what the students are learning at school and at home, then the students should be set up for a positive experience in the classroom that year.

### ***Third Grade Reading Guarantee***

Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee is an unfunded mandate that is requiring all students in the third grade to be at a third grade reading level at the end of the year as determined by the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA). In order to be promoted to grade four, "a student must reach at least a 392" in the Reading section on the OAAs (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). However, if the teacher is able to promote the student to grade four in other subject areas, that student can go to the fourth grade but just receive intensive reading instruction at the third grade level. This student must receive help from a high-performing reading teacher and at least 90 minutes of reading instruction per day (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). If the student is held back to third grade reading and the student's reading improves during the year, the student can be promoted to fourth grade. As a way to avoid retention in grade three, Ohio has implemented testing to ensure that the students in kindergarten through grade three are on

track. If scores indicate that a student is falling behind, a reading improvement plan will be implemented for that student to meet their reading goals. This plan is supplemented by the school working with parents or guardians to provide extra support for the student.

But what makes the third grade so significant in the journey to literacy?

According to a documentary by the Public Broadcasting System, “Up until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are learning to read. After 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students are reading to learn” (2013). In other research, Irwin et. al, (2012), found that “children who fall behind in reading at seven years of age continued to lag behind at age twelve and beyond” (p. 20). This age is a significant turning point for children because if they have not gotten the proper background and foundation in reading, then for the rest of their educational careers they will always be falling behind and not learning effectively from the materials they read.

Exemptions to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee include some

limited English proficiency students... Special education students whose IEPs specifically exempt them from retention under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, Any student who has received intensive remediation for two years and was previously retained in kindergarten through the third grade; and Students who demonstrate reading competency on a Reading OAA Alternative approved by the Ohio Department of Education. (Ohio Department of Education, 2013).

Peterson and Hughes (2010) conducted a research study about grade retention versus promotion and found that “grade retention is being used as the primary intervention instead of a component of a more comprehensive remediation plan” (p. 156). They found that the struggling “retained students received fewer services than promoted

students” (p. 156). Ohio’s Third Grade Reading Guarantee is trying to combat this by requiring those retained students to have at least 90 minutes of reading instruction a day provided by a high-performing reading teacher.

Since the legislation of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, several revisions have been made, making it difficult to accurately assess. However, the focus of this project is not on the actual legislation but the significance of it. The focus is on literacy instruction and best practice in a classroom for children in grades kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The Third Grade Reading Guarantee is not required in all states, but being able to read is a necessity for life.

### *Summary*

This literature search began with an analysis of students in the primary grades and their main needs related to literacy. Without focusing on students’ needs, an educator’s work is futile. After identifying the needs of the students, the research identified effective literacy practices and theories. This led to more research about the exact instructional methods like guided reading and read-alouds. All of this came to a crux with the impending Third Grade Reading Guarantee and the pressure felt by teachers to successfully bring the students in their classrooms up to a third grade reading level.

Much has been found and researched in the field of education as relating to effective literacy practices and there was significant overlap in all of the articles and texts. This is reassuring because it means that different researchers are coming to the same findings and drawing the same conclusions. However, there still is more to learn about literacy. This study will attempt to find alignment in the three classrooms to this research as well as to add to the effective literacy teacher statements.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

Because the research question was to find out what teachers are doing in primary level classrooms that have students progressing as expected in literacy, the study was set up to observe primary teachers in their classrooms to more fully understand some current practices. Instructional methods, grouping techniques, routines, and the overall literacy program were the majority of the observations.

### *Setting*

This study takes place in the greater Dayton, Ohio area within two different primary schools. Both schools are in the same district and in a middle income socioeconomic status region. The investigator was present in the classrooms in May, during the end of the school year. During this time in the classrooms, the routines had already been established and the students were well aware of their role in the classroom.

### *Research Design*

This is a qualitative study using anecdotal notes and interviews of three primary educators in public schools in a suburban district of Dayton, Ohio. The biggest strength of the study was that each of the teachers taught a different grade level. Because of this, all different ages were observed. Some limitations of the study are the lack of variety in the districts and the gender and backgrounds of the teachers. Since the teachers were all in the same district, they all were required to use the same formal assessment. However, it proved to not significantly affect the study and was a control throughout each classroom.

### *Subject Selection*

Each of the three teachers was selected by the adviser from around the Dayton area and are considered to be effective literacy instructors. All three teachers were educated at the University of Dayton at some point. For reasons of confidentiality, each participant has received a pseudonym for this study. The first teacher observed was Kathryn Deters who teaches kindergarten. At the same school is Molly Harris who is a first grade teacher. The last educator is Caroline Macintosh who teaches second grade at a nearby school. The teachers were chosen to be observed rather than the students because this study is aimed at finding effective instructional practices in regards to literacy.

### *Design of the Study*

The first step of the study was learning more about literacy instruction through classes at the University of Dayton as well as current research through books, articles, websites, and conferences. This spurred the research questions and more insight into literacy. The next step was to gain consenting participants and schools for the investigation. Once this was accomplished, the primary investigator went out into each classroom to observe the teachers during literacy instruction which was half of a school day in each room. After the observation of the instructional methods, an informal interview was conducted after the classroom was observed. This interview consisted of several questions (see Appendix D) related to literacy as well as the background of the teacher. These were all of the pieces used to collect data about the participants.

*Data*

During each classroom session, anecdotal notes were taken and recorded by hand in a notebook as well as per the guidelines in Appendix E. The investigator arrived in the classroom, took notes during instruction, and reviewed any details afterwards as needed. The interviews took place after the observation and were recorded with hand-written notes as well as on an audio recorder. The audio tapes were replayed, parts were transcribed, and then the tapes were deleted.

Specific questions were chosen by the primary investigator and the adviser to give a better-rounded picture of the teacher being observed. The questions were in place to supplement the observations and for the teacher to have a chance to give support and evidence to her choices in the classroom. The fourth interview question specifically ties into Tompkins's first effective teacher statement about basing all instruction around theory. The sixth question was to see what other methods were being used in the classroom besides those observed. The seventh question links directly to Tompkins's eighth effective teacher statement in how teachers are using assessment to plan for further instruction.

Results of the observations and interviews were interpreted by the primary investigator. The anecdotal notes and the interview answers were compared side by side with the research and the effective teacher statements. Trustworthiness of the data was obtained when the researcher gained permission from participants through written consent slips. Anonymity was achieved by using pseudonyms for the teachers and for the schools involved.



*Summary*

The methodology of this project was to gain more knowledge about literacy instruction and teacher practices in an actual classroom. Interviewing the teachers and spending time in their classroom allowed a more in-depth view of a primary grade classroom. The observations delved into different types of literacy in various ways because literacy is found in all different subject areas. By having several examples of literacy through these three effective teachers, it brought together a well-rounded picture of what best practice looks like in an early childhood classroom.

## Chapter 4 – The Results

### *Introduction*

This study's main purpose was to examine effective literacy instruction in primary grade classrooms. Each teacher's practices were found to be in line with the effective literacy statements from Gail Tompkins. This chapter will expand upon those literacy statements based upon what was observed in the classrooms and from the teacher interviews.

### *Research Question Revisited*

“What are effective practices in literacy instruction being used currently in an early childhood primary classroom?” was the original question asked in this study. Through this question, many different factors were considered. The first factor was the definition of literacy and how literacy is not just reading and writing, but being able to use those abilities in all areas of work. The next factor was the theories upon which the teachers built their foundation of instruction which was different in each classroom. Similarly, another factor was the different instructional methods such as reading aloud, guided reading, and independent writing. One final factor was the relation of the instructional implications to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

### *Findings*

In addition to Gail Tompkins's original eight statements, below are five new effective teacher statements based upon the findings in the classrooms. The selections were taken from anecdotal notes and the interviews of the teachers.

**Effective literacy teachers encourage students to self-correct.**

The ability to self-correct is a higher order thinking skill that demonstrates that a student is looking back at their own work and able to edit and revise their work. It could also be a skill used in reading aloud where a student says an incorrect word, realizes it was wrong, and then says the correct word. In Mrs. Harris's class, she would offer specific encouragement related to self-correcting like "good fixing!" or "great correcting!" whenever she caught a student self-correcting. During guided reading, she told a boy who was having trouble making sense of a passage: "I like how you reread that passage." Similarly, in Kathryn Deters's kindergarten class, she asked students to "make sure you've done your best" which prompted them to go back and revisit their work to check for errors. During reading groups, she stated that "when readers get stuck on a word, we need to problem solve" which assisted in the verbal self-correcting.

**Effective literacy teachers use technical terms with their students.**

Contrary to popular belief, technical terms *should* be used in the primary classroom. Whether it is content related terms to a unit or process oriented vocabulary, effective teachers use the correct terminology with their students to not only expand their vocabulary but also their knowledge about a subject. Caroline Macintosh asked her second graders: "does this look like something we've seen before? We are using our schema right now." Then during a writing lesson she had the students sound out their words and called it phonetic spelling. By labeling these terms for the students and asking the students to do the same, it gives children a sense of power of knowing the correct term. Mrs. Deters was just completing a unit on insects and showed a diagram of a butterfly and stated that they were "looking at the proboscis of the butterfly." For those not quite up to par with these kindergartners, a proboscis is more commonly known as the

feeler or the mouth appendage of a butterfly. Yet all of these kindergartners would have no problem identifying this body part. Words are a gift that can be imparted to children knowing that they will gain knowledge and a deeper understanding through their use.

**Effective literacy teachers create a peaceful work environment.**

All three educators had a noticeably similar work environment for their students, which was different than any of the other teachers in the building. The physical environment was staged with wordless classical music in background, lamps rather than overhead lights, and woven baskets for materials. Not once during observation did any of the teachers raise their voice or become flustered with the students, even though there were some difficult moments in each classroom. They simply took a deep breath and calmly gave direction or asked questions about the situation in order to peacefully resolve the problem. Each teacher would also personally motivate and say positive and encouraging words to the children that went beyond “good job” and every child was sure to be mentioned. Mrs. Harris called her students the peace leaders and their mission was to bring about peace in the classroom and in the rest of the school. Kathryn Deters asked her students as they were transitioning to art class to “give the hallway the gift of silence” and those children gave that gift. This work environment led the students to not only remain calm and quiet but to also be productive in their work.

**Effective literacy teachers check for comprehension.**

The main goal of reading is comprehension and to make meaning from the text. Whether it is a personal understanding or a contextual understanding, some new connection should be made from every selection or else it will not be retained by the child. This builds into the student’s schema and sets the path for more connections to be

made to that topic. Early learners are so impressionable that it is important to build positive relations with literacy as well as to build strong knowledge content for them to grow as learners. During a read aloud chapter of Peter Pan, Mrs. Macintosh asked comprehension questions along the way to ensure that the last chapter of the text was remembered and understood. Likewise, Mrs. Deters had a large print poem that she used for shared reading with her kindergartners and she would check their comprehension of the new vocabulary through questioning. Molly Harris explained that, to her, comprehension is most noticeable when the children are able to independently read silently or aloud and laugh at a funny passage.

**Effective literacy teachers are in tune with their students.**

Walking into Caroline Macintosh's class, it was evident that she had been with these students all year. She had a deep understanding of each student's personal background which played into the tone that she used with each student. Because she had previous knowledge of a student's home life, she gave extra help to that child since the student was not able to complete her reading at home the night before. Mrs. Macintosh even had nicknames for some of her students which built up her rapport with them and there was an underlying theme of respect between her and the students. As far as academics are concerned, Mrs. Deters personally held conferences with each child and took notes in a notebook about how they were progressing in terms of literacy. When asked what reading level each of her students were on, Kathryn could easily list off each child's correct placement.

*Discussion*

After observing three separate classrooms, all three teachers had characteristics of being effective literacy teachers. Gail Tompkins's effective literacy statements were seen in each of the classrooms and the teachers exhibited traits similar to each other as well. These findings above were prevalent in not only subjects of reading and writing, but in science, math, and social studies as well. In addition to the effective literacy statements, several of the literacy instructional methods were found in each classroom. It was a combination of several different methods, especially because each child's work was scaffolded and individualized for their personal instruction. Having that Balanced Literacy Approach (Pearson, 2002) truly gives a multi-faceted approach to literacy and integrates all subjects and all students.

All of these effective literacy teacher statements are true of literacy educators but are also simply good teaching practices and could be used by teachers of all age groups. In the primary grades, there is an emphasis on learning to read, but that does not stop past the third grade. Every teacher should be an effective literacy educator because it is beneficial to the students and provides best instruction to the students. For example, having a peaceful work environment could benefit children of all ages, not just second graders. Also, when teachers are in tune with their students they are able to construct a better and more meaningful curriculum for them. These are just a few of the benefits of being an effective teacher.

One problem that was encountered in the study was the limiting factor of being unable to record the students and their discussions. It would have been a contributing piece to the study; alas the major restriction with it was getting consent. So the decision

was made to not request that as part of the study, yet it would have assisted in the findings portion.

### *Summary*

This study investigated several dimensions related to literacy instruction. After analyzing the data, it appears that these factors presented by Gail Tompkins (2011) *do* contribute to effective literacy instruction. Every teacher grounded their instruction in theory and described how their instruction related to the students and their previous knowledge. Both the interviews and the classroom visits confirmed these findings. Ineffective literacy instructors are unable to connect learning and do not make meaningful decisions in the classroom, but the three teachers observed in this study were the complete opposite. They truly had planned out their instruction to be the best match for their students.

## Chapter 5 – Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Whether it is reading the newspaper on the way to work, completing a job interview, or writing an email to a colleague, being a literate person is essential to living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That foundation is built in the primary grades by primary grade teachers. Educators in kindergarten through third grade have the duty to provide effective literacy instruction to all of their students to ensure further success in the years to follow. Literacy skills are not just used in the schools; they are an integral part of jobs, careers, and daily living. Speaking and listening skills are just as important as writing and reading. Being an effective literacy educator takes time, practice, and a strong knowledge base about what effective literacy instruction looks like. This study provided a focused look into what components go into effective literacy instruction in the primary grades.

### *Summary of the Study*

This study of literacy educators took place in Dayton, Ohio with interviews and observations of three teachers in grades kindergarten through second grade in suburban, public schools. After much research in the area of literacy, observations were conducted in the classrooms where each teacher was witnessed providing effective literacy instruction, as linked to Gail Tompkins's effective literacy educator statements. Once these and the interviews were completed, five new additions to that list were found. According to this study, effective literacy educators encourage students to self-correct, use correct terminology with their students, create a peaceful work environment, check for comprehension, and are in tune with their students. These five new statements were found throughout the three classrooms in different variations.



### *Conclusions*

The goal of this study was to research and find what effective literacy instruction is in a primary grade classroom. The statements by Gail Tompkins guided the study by providing a starting point and foundation upon which to add information and research. With the five new statements added, there is new information in the field of literacy for educators to review and implement in their classrooms. Effective literacy instruction is crucial because teachers are creating lifelong learners and the foundation to reading is built in the primary grades. There are effective literacy teachers currently in the field and they are using a balanced literacy approach to meet the needs of all learners. These educators take time to build all facets of literacy in their students while appropriately challenging them with several different methods.

### *Implications*

The largest implication of this study is Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Due to the nature of education in its efforts to ensure success in the students, Ohio's new mandate is guaranteeing that by the end of third grade, each student will be reading at a third grade level and if not, he or she will be retained in the area of reading until he or she obtains a passing score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment. This is true pressure for Ohio primary educators because there is the possibility for a child to be retained due to ineffective literacy instruction.

This study, however, did not address every resource and piece of research available to educators. Literacy instruction is a changing and evolving process and therefore should be updated and researched constantly. This study is a small collection of work that teachers can utilize for their classrooms, but it is ultimately up to what practice

works best for the teacher and for his or her students that specific year in the classroom. Literacy acquisition is an individual process related to development in children and should be individualized for the students as needed in order to help each child best learn.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

The results in this study could be greatly expanded upon through more research. This particular study was only completed in one area, in suburban public schools. More factors that could be looked into are different types of schools like private schools, different districts, more and different gendered and aged teachers, and teachers with different education levels. In addition to expanding the study, other specific instructional strategies could be researched as well to see their effectiveness. A technique being currently used is workshop groups for reading and writing. This technique was not viewed specifically in this thesis, but would be another strategy to see in practice. Also having more research on how to specifically balance direct instruction with implicit instruction would prove interesting as well since it is a facet of the balanced literacy approach. Additionally, other teaching strategies could be further researched with more focus on one part of literacy.

One last factor that needs to be addressed in regards to literacy is how to specifically meet the needs of *all* students in the classroom. This study researched differentiation and individualizing a curriculum by scaffolding, however this was only one aspect. More research should be completed to discover what best practice is for each student, with implications for promotion and retention researched as well.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Exempt Research Approval

Jamie Dell

University of Dayton

300 College Park

Dayton, OH 45469

SUBJECT: "Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education: Ohio's Third Grade Guarantee"

Dear Jamie,

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the subject proposal and has found this research protocol is exempt from continuing IRB oversight as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).<sup>\*</sup> Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Best of luck in your research!

Best regards,

**Mary S. Connolly, PhD**

Chair, Institutional Review Board (IRB)

## Appendix B

## Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**TITLE of STUDY:** The title of this study is *Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education: Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee*. You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jamie Dell and Joni Baldwin, Ed.D. in the field of Education from the University of Dayton. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** This study attempts to look at literacy instruction in the early grades, which is under close supervision with the recent pass of the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee in Ohio. The goal of this thesis is to research and find out what the effective teachers are doing in their primary classrooms in terms of literacy.

**PROCEDURES:** If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Allow the investigator to come into your classroom during school hours and observe your literacy instruction during time convenient for you in the month of May for approximately 3 hours total
- Participate in an interview with the investigator at a time and place of your convenience for about an hour

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:** We hope to not subject you to any discomfort during this process. If you would like to terminate your participation at any time, let the investigator know and all documents pertaining to you will be eliminated from the study. We will be linking data to you in our study using pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

**ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS:** The benefit of your participation is that you will be furthering the field of education in terms of literacy instruction.

**PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:** Because all of the documentation will be in your school, there will be no payment for participation in this study.

**IN CASE OF RESEARCH RELATED ADVERSE EFFECTS:** If you experience any kind of discomfort as a result of your participation in this study, you may contact Joni Baldwin at 937-229-3230.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Audio-tape

recordings of you will be used only for documentation purposes and eliminated after the interview is written up.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, that will not affect your relationship with your school, the University of Dayton, or other services to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or penalty. The investigator may withdraw you from participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

**IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS:** If you have any questions about this research, please contact one of the investigators listed below.

Jamie Dell, Principal Student Investigator, University of Dayton, Education Department, 513-470-0820, dellj1@udayton.edu.

Joni Baldwin, Ed.D, Faculty Advisor, University of Dayton, Education Department, 937-229-3230, jbaldwin1@udayton.edu.

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Dayton: Dr. Mary Connolly, (937) 229-3493, Mary.Connolly@udayton.edu.

### **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT *(or legal guardian)***

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form. **I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.**

Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of Participant*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **SIGNATURE OF WITNESS**

My signature as witness certifies that the Participant signed this consent form in my presence.

Name of Witness (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of Witness* \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(Must be same as participant  
signature date)*

## Appendix C

### Letter to the Principals

ABC Elementary  
100 Washington Avenue  
Dayton, OH 45409

Dear Principal,

My name is Jamie Dell and I am an undergraduate Honors teacher education student at the University of Dayton. For my thesis research, I would like to observe a teacher at your school. My adviser is Dr. Joni Baldwin, whom you may already know. My observation would occur during the early part of May. For my data collection, no photos of children will be used: I will only be observing the teacher. I will come at a time most convenient for the teacher and will be interviewing them as well. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at dellj1@udayton.edu or (513) 470-0820.

As for getting this research project approved, I am asking you to sign the attached form and email it to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Dayton (irb@udayton.edu). This shows that you know that I am coming into your school in May and you give approval. If you have any questions about the IRB, contact Mary Connolly at the same email.

Thank you for your time and cooperation. I look forward to working with you in May!

Sincerely,  
Jamie Dell

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

What was your career path like?

Why did you choose this grade?

What is your brief educational philosophy?

What are your views on literacy? Who are the authors and researchers that you base your view on?

Do you follow a literacy model? Did you make your own model?

Which instructional methods do you prefer for literacy? (e.g. guided reading, shared reading, etc.)

What assessment do you use for literacy?

How do you know that you are making a difference in regards to literacy?



## Appendix E

### Observation Guidelines

What instructional methods are being used?

What assessments are the teachers using?

How are the teachers creating a community of learners?

Are there any similarities between the teachers?

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