THE KEY TO READING SUCCESS:
PHONICS, A FORGOTTEN METHODOLOGY, AN EARLY INTERVENTION

MASTER'S PROJECT

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

As a teacher for two inner-city school systems, the writer found that there are an inordinate amount of below average readers. These below average readers are consistently passed on to higher grade levels while, simultaneously, falling one to three years behind in their reading levels. As stated by Regina L. Wood, "N.A.E.P. reading tests show that most 7th graders today can not read 6th grade lessons; most 11th graders can not read 9th grade lessons written with 6th grade vocabularies." The writer also found this to be true. While teaching a second grade class in inner city Dayton, she noticed that the majority of the students could not read the second grade level reading books, so they were placed in first grade books. Most did not know the alphabet or the pronunciation of the letters. Many inner city children have not been afforded the opportunity to learn basic phonic skills during their early years; thus, hindering their reading success in later grades.

Teachers abandoned the basic phonics program in the 1950's. This program was replaced with configuration, sight word and finally the whole-language reading curriculum. However, it is pertinent that phonics be brought back into the classroom and integrated with the whole-language curriculum in order to have a satisfactory and effective reading program which creates high level readers. Phonics should be used intensively the first three years of schooling
and should be introduced in preschool. Inner city children should attend preschools which promote and teach phonics.

It is pertinent to all school systems that a method be found that will effectively and efficiently increase the growth in the percentage of average to above average readers. It is the writer's belief that adding any Phonics program to a child's reading program in pre-school will increase his/her chances of becoming an excellent reader as a Kindergartner and beyond. Phonics must be taught as an early intervention. It is pertinent that data be accumulated to ascertain whether phonics incorporated with whole language will cause a drastic decrease in the number of below average readers and spellers who enter second grade. Researchers and the media have claimed, phonics alone can not do the job. Others claim that whole-language only can not do the job. However, it is the writer's pleasure to show that phonics incorporated into a whole language curricula will produce knowledgeable and highly skilled readers, ready to enter their first years of elementary school. It will also be proved that reinforcing phonics in higher grades will cause a continuous growth in readers who were working at poor levels.

Teachers are constantly faced with limited time in the classroom. Students have many individual needs which can not fully be met in the teacher work day. Many students are not effectively taught, because of this; thus, the student falls behind. It is not enough to teach whole-language only or phonics only. The two must be incorporated. Researchers believe that teaching phonics early develops independent readers who excel in word identification, decoding, and comprehension. These children essentially "get off to a better start in learning to read then children who are not taught phonics". (Trachtenburg, Chall) Educators also believe that "low income families do poorly under whole-language methodology" when used as a single panacea
(Jongsma, 1992). In addition, for children with learning or reading disabilities and also low income children, "earlier and more systematic emphasis on phonics in beginning reading programs are necessary." (Chall, 1989) The writer has found that in the inner city schools the majority of below-averaged readers do not know basic phonics skills. Hence, phonics can be used as an early systematic intervention and phased out as the child grows in reading.

Through the use of phonics, teachers in early childhood education will be able to help more students acquire basic reading skills which will allow them to excel in elementary school. With this in mind, the teacher will not be required to give up valuable time with children who need individual guidance. There will be more children who do not need special reading instruction.

Incorporating phonics for at least six minutes a day will enhance the whole language component of the classroom. The writer will give examples of phonics games teachers can use.

The necessity to begin an early reading intervention is of utmost importance. Based on past performance of the California Achievement and proficiency tests, the time is ripe for going back to the basics—PHONICS. Once the student's reading level is raised, the school system will have successfully acquired a program which proves effective. This can only happen if phonics is integrated with the whole-language program at an early age. As selected students use a variety of phonics lessons, the writer will find by what percentage does a pre-school and elementary student who receives phonics and whole language instruction excel above those who only receive the regular pre-school and elementary reading and spelling instruction which does not involve a systematic phonics program.

Page 3
Student's Interest

As a mother of three, an educator, and an owner of a daycare in Southern Ohio, it is saddening to think that young children, upon becoming school age, may be placed in a school system whose students consistently function below the norm in reading. Basically, this is due to the lack of teaching phonics in the classroom. Recent studies show that inner-city students scored far below average on proficiency tests when compared to suburban school students. (Portsmouth Daily Times, 1993) The results of this test showed that only 63% of ninth grade students passed the vocabulary and reading comprehension sections of their tests. It is clearly a problem of the inner-city school system which caters to low to middle income and minority students. The parents of these children can not afford early education. The writer does not want her children to be taught in a failing school system.

The writer will show the necessity of early intervention of pre-school children who are preparing to enter elementary school and reinforcement of elementary students in phonics. She will show the benefits of such an early intervention and reinforcement program which will minimize responsibilities for first, second and third grade teachers because children will have the basic phonics skills embedded in them before reaching elementary school. Therefore, the teacher need only to reinforce the student when he/she arrives. Teaching time will be decreased and learning time will be increased. This research will prove the success rate of phonics in the pre-school and elementary environment.

As owner of a pre-school, it is my belief that a child's interest in learning to read peaks at age four and five. This interest must be supplemented at that moment when interest is shown. It is at this age, that children learn large quantities at fast levels. Preschools must use this spark of
interest in children to develop a child fully. Phonics must be taught at this instance. Researchers have concluded:

"Although no universally effective method exists for young minds, the best programs integrate phonics.... The most basic skill in learning to read is word identification... early comprehension of words and texts depends on a knowledge of the sounds associated with letters and letter combinations, not guessing strategies .... Programs emphasizing phonics instruction produces the best readers. Scientific evidence shows that acquisition of reading skills in grades one through three depends on the ability to decode the sounds associated with combinations of various letters of the alphabet." (Brown, Chall)

Nonetheless, it is pertinent that children learn reading through the use of phonics integrated with whole language at the pre-school level. This will effectively raise reading levels of these same children when they reach the first through third grades. Hence, allowing them to have a solid background in word recognition, decoding, and comprehension from the fourth grade and beyond. Resulting in a high level reader.

**Scope**

The researcher will begin with a formal letter to the teacher whose class will be studied. Parents will be asked to allow their children to be used in the study. After proper notification is given, a group of pre-school and 4th grade students will be selected to have a variety of phonics applications incorporated into their whole language program. These sessions will last between 6 and 45 minutes. Another group of pre-schoolers will receive regular non-structured daycare instruction without phonics. The pre-schoolers will be studied for 3 months and the 4th graders will be reinforced with phonics for a period of six weeks. A pre-test and a post-test will be given to the preschoolers and the results will be published. The 4th grade reading and spelling scores
will be compared to each other during these time periods: three weeks before phonics reinforcement began; six weeks during the phonics reinforcement; and, five months after the phonics reinforcement ended. Findings, calculations, test scores and results will be published.

Another short three week study done on a group of second graders and sixth graders will be added as supportive data to show the writers conclusions. Research testing and observation will show that phonics when integrated with a whole language program will increase the students ability to recognize words and letters, decode words and letters and to comprehend those words by at least 2% higher than those who are not taught and reinforced with phonics. It is the writer's desire that preschools will incorporate phonics into their everyday activities, thus, giving these children a great advantage when arriving at the elementary level.

Hypothesis

Pre-schoolers who are well versed in basic phonics skills and who receive whole-language instruction will perform significantly better than their counterparts who are taught only with the whole-language method. In addition, elementary students who are reinforced with phonics instruction daily will increase their reading scores by at least 2%. It is assumed that reading programs which do not use phonics instruction (such as whole-language only programs) are not sufficient for effectively and solely raising and sustaining the reading and spelling level of these students. Therefore, the student requires a structured phonics program for maximum effectiveness.
Definitions and Assumptions

The following terms will have these meanings:

**Structured phonics program** is any type phonics instruction used to enhance the whole-language reading curriculum. This instruction may take the form of educational programs such as "Hooked on Phonics" or Basal readers or programs developed by individual teachers based on what she has learned about the classroom students as a whole. This program would be integrated into the whole-language methodology for the purpose of growing highly skilled readers through a structured program.

The term **pre-schooler** in this study will represent 3-6 year old who attend Close To The Heart Daycare, and have not yet entered Kindergarten. These children attend the center on a full time basis. They have no knowledge of using letters to sound out words and most have not mastered the recognition of all the alphabets: both lower and upper case.

The term **whole-language only** denotes a program where children learn word and letter recognition through reading repetitive books, rhymes, copying letters, writing familiar words by tracing, having books read to them, which deal with specific subjects and having activities which benefit the lesson learned for the day. In whole language "the teacher guides the student to self determine the generalization and think through possibilities in authentic contexts. While the teacher may question and suggest, it is the learner who is encouraged to make deductions and consciously apply what is learned from one context to another." (Routman, 1992)

The term **Below Average Reader** refers to elementary students who are functioning at least one grade below their normal grade level.
The term *inner-city students* refer to students who live inside the city limits and are attending public elementary schools.

Finally the term *phonics program* will be substituted for any systematic and effective phonics program which can be easily incorporated into the pre-school and elementary classroom by a teacher. It is a program which had been condemned by certain members of the educational community for various reasons. Yet, the writer believes that if it is used in the right areas at the right time, it will raise levels of reading and spelling when used as a tool for early childhood education intervention.

It is assumed that:

1. Students in the integrated program will excel by at least 2% more than the students in the whole language only program.
2. No child will be adversely affected by the addition of a good phonics program.
3. All selected children have no learning disabilities and have the desire to learn to read and have normal I.Q's.
4. The majority of the elementary students are at least one grade level behind in their reading and are a "b" or below in spelling.

**Limitations**

While phonics may be effective for most children, the writer may not have found a phonics program which can be used on all children. Some children are non-phonetic learners. The teacher must be in tune with each individual child. Children can become bored easily with phonics due to the repetitive nature of the instruction; however, it is up to the instructor to develop or choose an age appropriate and interesting program for his/her classroom.

This study is limited to pre-school age and elementary students up to the 6th grade. Phonics, however, can be used by all ages. It is the writer's belief though, that the phonics program
should come to an end by the third grade. Children should have mastered the use of phonics by this time. Reinforcement should only occur after the third grade.

There are some which believe phonics hurts more than it helps.

The increase in reading and spelling percentages due to the addition of a phonics program may be slightly higher or slightly less. But, there will be an increase. Also, children will learn at different paces. Some of the children may change schools during the process.

All in all, when used in conglomeration with a whole-language program, phonics will prove effective and necessary in early childhood education and should be required immediately.
Literature in Support of Phonics

While doing substantial research, the writer found many views of which she has culminated into one. Top researchers have written works both for and against phonics only and whole-language only instruction. (Gans, Kantrowitze, Forgan, Stahl, Samuels, Anderson, Weaver, Chall) Many are coming to the conclusion that it is of necessity to integrate both methods while considering individual students. These have concluded that it is important that phonics be taught in the early grades as the basic program while enhancing the repetition and drill of phonics with age appropriate literature. (Farr, Gibson, Winograd, Greenlee, Trachtenburg, Bracey, Spiegel) The writer believes phonics is the basic method which should be enhanced with a structured whole-language program. She believes that the phonics program should begin in the pre-school level and be mastered by the end of the third grade. This enables children to move into a literature based program where comprehension becomes a necessary component in the reading program. The problem of growing below averaged readers is clearly an inner-city problem. Regina Wood claims, since 1950 when teachers moved away from phonics instruction, "at least 50 million children have reached the fourth grade unable to read; nine million of the ten million in remedial classes are struggling even though they have normal sight, hearing and intelligence.... the switch from sounding words by syllable to sighting them by configuration and sight word method is the cause of this problem" When interviewing Sandra
Lattimore, a 50 year old teacher in the Portsmouth inner city school district, she stated that she was taught using sight words and configuration. "Teachers had just switched about this time. As I entered college I found that I was far behind in my reading skills. I taught myself to use phonics and increased my reading skills 100%." It is very hard for a child to learn to read strictly by sight or configuration method. There are many words that a child must sound out in order to recognize them. In configuration, many words look the same. For example:

```
sold
cold
```

Both of these words are shaped the same. There could be many words which fit this configuration. Thus, phonics is necessary to sound out letters and words. Without phonics a child would not know whether the c in cold was pronounce as a "k" sound or an "s" sound. Teachers strayed from phonics teaching in order to find a method that would teach comprehension as well as decoding and word recognition. This mainly occurred in the inner-city and caused one out of five children in the United States elementary schools to "fail to achieve functional literacy." (Reading and Research Quarterly, Jan. 1987) Hence, the current reading programs have become dysfunctional without the use of phonics instruction. Many teachers began to recognize the problem and an exodus back to the use of phonics in the classroom has begun.
Houston inner city schools found that students were failing because their district had adopted a whole-language only methodology for their reading program. They found as the Senate Republican Party Committee did, "intensive systematic phonics is necessary in all primary schools. (Weaver, 1991 & Jongsma, 1992) Eight Houston elementary schools requested that their districts allow them to return to teaching traditional phonics. Their request was granted based on the fact that children were reading at very low levels. It is of great importance that other inner city districts continue in the same vain. Our children will not succeed in reading without basic phonics instruction.

The writer studied inner city children in Dayton, Ohio and Portsmouth, Ohio and found that the majority of children in her classroom had little knowledge of phonics rules. Many of these same children were reading one to four years behind their current grade level. Notwithstanding, while teaching in a suburban school, the writer found that the majority of students were reading at or above their grade level and had been taught using an integration of phonics and whole-language methodology. These students were functionally literate and excelling in reading and other related disciplines.

The writer discovered these basic problems:
1. Inner city children are predominantly below average readers.
2. Many inner city elementary students have not mastered basic phonics rules.
3. Suburban students are taught phonics but it is neglected in the inner-city.
4. The increase in below average readers directly relates to the reading curriculum of the school district.

Looking further, it was found that suburban children were more apt to enter structured pre-school programs at an earlier age than their inner-city counterparts. This is clearly due to income levels. Most inner city dwellers can not afford daycare and do not qualify for programs
such as Title XX (where human services pays for children to go to daycare) or Headstart (where the majority of children must be disabled). Thus, many inner-city children stay in a home environment until they can attend kindergarten. Suburban children, on the other hand, hold the advantage. Their parents can afford some type of pre-school program where they receive basic phonics training: letter recognition; sounds; etc., before their inner-city counterparts. This process has put suburban children at least one grade level above inner-city children in reading skills when entering kindergarten.

Inner-city children are faced with lower test scores and reading levels in k-3 because they did not receive early training as did the students who live in the suburban area. However, if they were given basic phonics instruction they would excel in elementary school. "Four year old learn about 20 new words a day. By the time they enter school they know about 10,000 words.... They are familiar with several grammars-- the grammars used by the people they identify with, though not necessarily the academic grammar taught in the classroom." (Smith, 1992) For this reason, we, as teachers and parents and administrators, must introduce children to an enhanced phonics program at an early age. It is at this time that they will learn the most. Inner city preschools should stress structured reading programs which include basic phonics skills in their curricula.

There are three fundamental stages which children attain at an early age when learning to read. These are: logographic (words learned as whole units); alphabetic stage (children use individual letters and sounds to identify words); and finally, orthographic (patterns are seen in words and applied to words to sound them out). (Frith, 1985) These stages occur during pre-school and kindergarten years, primarily. After these stages occur, Frith claims "... children
grow in their ability to recognize words automatically, without having to think consciously about word structure or spelling patterns." It is at this point, the writer believes phonics instruction should cease and whole language methodology should take the foreground. Teachers must know when this time is for each individual child.

If inner city children who are low income could be afforded the privilege of a quality, structured, reading program while in pre-school, it would not be necessary to supply expensive remedial courses and pull-out programs in the upper elementary and junior high and high school levels. A study by George Weber (1992) concluded that, when comparing schools in the inner-city to schools in the suburban area, reading achievement levels, "will distribute themselves according to the income levels." Where there is a high income level, there is a high reading level and vice versa. Preschool is not affordable to the low income individual, therefore those children will miss out in early intervention programs.

In a report by the Portsmouth Daily Times (1993) students tested deplorably lower in reading than those students tested in the suburbs. Therefore, it is necessary to assume that teachers of the inner city are faced with below-average readers at greater levels than teachers who teach at suburban schools. It is necessary to find a reading program which can be implemented in the early childhood education programs of the inner-city.

Several studies concluded that reading achievement in the inner-city schools is very poor, also, phonics has a marked effect on reading levels of students in the early elementary grades. (Hull, 1976; Linxwiler, 1987; Mazerkierwicz, 1976, Weber ). It is now state requirement by public law 140 that phonics be incorporated into all reading curricula. However, some teachers still have not returned to this method of teaching. Therefore a program must be acquired which
Configuration was abandoned and the whole language movement began to grow. In whole language, a child is surrounded by literature. Disciplines are taught through the use of exciting and interesting age appropriate books. Children can create stories, read or be read to. It is a less structured program; yet, it takes more effort. Universities began to teach whole language methodology which greatly replaced the other aforementioned programs. Basal readers were no longer the mainstay of the reading curriculum. Many teachers and researchers believed that in order to "stimulate imagination, provide strong language models, expose students to lucid discourse, and expand their cultural awareness," Memorable, quality literature was needed in the classroom. (Trachtenburg, 1990) In effect, whole language replaced, both phonics and configuration in inner-city schools while simultaneously, reducing the amount of above average readers.

Researchers of the early 90's have began an exodus to the use of phonics enhanced by whole language. However, finding a phonics program which can be easily used by both teacher and student has been difficult. Each teacher must do their own study in the classroom to see what works best for their classroom as a whole. The writer believes that good supplemental phonics tools are easily found and better yet easily created. Although the writer feels that phonics must be used in pre-school through third grade, it is important that teachers always reinforce the use of phonics constantly, in the upper levels. Both Gans and Forgan believe, "It is necessary to use a combination of word recognition techniques,... including, context clues, structural analysis, and even picture clues in addition to phonics." The teacher can purchase or invent many programs that are time efficient and all inclusive of the necessary components for increasing reading levels.
Whether a teacher uses a self prescribed method or one which is required by his/her district, or one which has been designed by an educational manufacturer (such as Hooked on Phonics), phonics must be taught in the early stages of a child's learning. Children are flunking and young adults are functionally illiterate because they do not have basic phonics skills. With these skills they would know to pronounce the "c" in cold with a hard "k" sound rather than a soft "s" sound. This mistake was being made in a second grade classroom at Jefferson, Montessouri in Dayton, Ohio. Children did not recognize the alphabet nor their pronunciation— they could not read on a second grade level. Some could not read at all. The writer found that by teaching the alphabets two minutes in the morning, two minutes before lunch and two minutes before the final bell that the children's reading and spelling grades soared by at least 80%. Eighteen of twenty-one students received the grade of "F" before the intervention. After one week of phonics fun fifteen of the eighteen who flunked received a grade of "B" or better. Another study done by the writer in a fourth grade classroom where she did her student teaching showed that when applying phonics instruction to the reading and spelling lessons that the grades increased over a six week period by at least 50%. (see copy of grade book) Phonics must be taught in preschool and elementary school and it must be reinforced during later grades. It is pertinent that we return to phonics.

**Recommending a Phonics program**

Two rules should be kept in mind when teaching phonics. "Quality phonics instruction should be a part of a reading program, integrated and relevant to the reading and writing of actual texts, based on and building upon children's experiences with texts. Also, phonics should never dominate reading instruction. No more than 25% of your time should be spent on phonics
instruction and practice. The children should read text daily, preferably, with phonics instruction integrated into the text reading". (Stahl, 1992) A phonics program must be easily incorporated into the curriculum in order to be successful.

The writer prefers that a teacher design her own instruction based on the students in his/her classroom. Some teachers prefer to buy programs. Thus, Hooked on Phonics is a program which is recommended by the writer as a good phonics supplement. It is already broken down into sessions as to make the learning and teaching experiences enjoyable. Hooked on Phonics has received much criticism, however. The reasons compare to the negative attitude against phonics in general. These being:

- Students do not get appropriate feedback and correction
- Does not connect word sound with work meaning
- The workbook consists of unrelated sentences
- Could harm a child's efforts to learn to read because of the dullness
- Does not teach reading
- Doesn't consider learning disabilities
- Boring, Repetitive drills.


Most of these problems are solved by an enthusiastic teacher who is skilled in integrating phonics and literature. It is very easy to make any reading program, whether phonics or other, a long drawn-out process if the teacher can not make the learning interesting. It is easy to loose the student's interest in any reading program if the correct teaching styles are not applied. It is easy for any program to be without the correct amount of feedback if the teacher has not been taught to give proper and appropriate feedback. It is easy to have any reading methodology be unrelated to the learning if the teacher is not able to relate material to the objectives of the course. It is easy to harm a child's efforts in learning to read if the teacher is not in tune to the
needs and desires, likes and dislikes of each individual student. Thus, Hooked on Phonics becomes like any other reading program. Whether configuration, sight or whole language, if it is enhanced with phonics in an interesting, efficient, accepting manner, it will only develop readers into creative imaginative children who love reading and can read fluently and successfully.

It is easy and true for researchers to say that Hooked on Phonics alone can not do the job. It is just as safe to say that any reading program which is taught solely on its own merits is incapable of being successful. Whole language enhanced with a few minutes of phonics can make a world of difference to a young eager reader. Researchers have concluded, some children are non-phonetic learners; therefore, they must be taught through whole language. "There is a call for balance between whole language and phonics. These two methods must be combined in a complementary method. This method would combine decoding skills with the skills of reading in context. With this, we must adequately stimulate the students ability to read or reason critically. The best reading programs integrate phonics, also known as code instruction, with other reading activities. Phonics rarely takes center stage in reading classes. It shares the spotlight with the reading of quality children's literature, writing exercises and testing for overall reading comprehension. The purpose of phonics instruction is not that children learn to sound out words, but to recognize words, quickly and automatically, so that they can... comprehend the text. (Gibson, Bracey, Trachtenburg, Samuels, Winograd, Greenlee, Weaver, Bower, Stahl, 1985) With this in mind, the writer advocates a phonics program which is integrated into the whole language methodology. Hooked on Phonics is one of many phonics is one of many programs which can be integrated successfully into a whole language program. The writer believes that children 31/2 and under should not use this program. However, she recommends it
for ages 4-6, specifically. This program should not be used over 15 minutes per session because of the attention span of the age group. Literature should be used to stress the phonics skills which are learned each day and other materials which enhance the phonics segment of the classroom.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The research will be done at Lincoln elementary and Close to the Heart daycare in Portsmouth, Ohio. A second and sixth grade elementary class will also be mentioned for supportive data. A group of eight 3-6 years old who have not mastered letters and sounds will be used as the sample. Half of the children will receive the integrated phonics/whole language program and the other classes will receive whole language only courses for two 15 minute sessions per day (session time based on the attention span of these students) A pre-test will be given to determine the current reading level of the students. At the end of the twelve week period, a post-test will be given (same as the pretest) to both classes. (see D) These scores will be compared and graphed to see if the integrated program significantly increases the reading level of the pre-school students.

The Pre-test questions are as follows.
1. Can you sing the alphabets?
2. Can you say the alphabet without singing it?
3. Look at the board and tell me the names of the letters as I point to them
5. Can you pronounce this sound? at
6. Do you know any words that end in at?
7. In the book, The Cat In The Hat can you find and pronounce the words on page one which have the at sound in them?
8. Say these words: Hat, Cat, Rat, Sat, Fat, Nat, Mat, Bat, Pat, Tat. The pre-school students will be studied from January 18, 1993 - April 18th 1993. The learning schedule is as follows:

Week One to Four
Learning to say alphabets in song; learning to repeat them by peaking; Using flashcards to recognize them; learning beginning and ending consonants; Worksheets teaching children to trace the letters; reading to children with books which deal with consonants.

Week Five through Eight

Children will add on vowels and learn to recognize them; will master recognizing all letters out of order and will begin learning sounds; will learn to recognize pictures which begin with certain letters. Will learn to recognize their own names and their classmates names. Will use worksheets to trace letters and names. Will incorporate books about vowels. Will introduce short a sound and books about this sound.(see list) Will begin introducing three letter words with the short a sound in them.

Week nine through twelve

Will begin putting letters and sounds together to make three letter short a words; will read books and have children discover words with the short a sound. Will focus on these words— cat, hat, mat, bat, fat, nat, pat, rat, sat, tat. Will learn meanings and learn to use in a
sentence. Most children should be reading short a words by the end of the twelve week period.

This training will neither be intensive or boring as games, songs, and other materials will be used to teach phonics. Children will be able to recite, write and pronounce the sounds of most of the alphabet. Also, a large number will be able to read many short a words which only have three letters and specifically those which end in at. Both teachers will use the same monthly guidelines however, the whole-language only teacher will exclude phonics lessons and only read the books which are on the list. Statistical data will support that phonics when incorporated into a whole language methodology increases reading abilities substantially.

The fourth grade group will be studied during the month of October - November. This will be a six week period. The groups spelling and reading tests will be studied from a period before the research and a period after the research was done. For six weeks phonics skills will be reinforced for 15 minute - 30 minute sessions during spelling and reading periods. Games, decoding skills, repetition, drill of the alphabets and their sounds, and workbook sheets will be used during this reinforcement period. These children will have each periods (before, during, and after) compared to each other. Phonics rules will also be stressed. The reader will see a marked decrease in grades when phonics skills are no longer reinforced. There will be a few students who retain the instruction and their grades will continually increase.

The second and sixth grade classes received 6 minutes of phonics instruction a day. Allowing us to see that the length of instruction is not necessarily important; but, the instruction in phonics must occur at an early age.
writer went back and asked the teacher for the final grades of his students who were in the study. He supplied the 37th week grades. The class average dropped 26% to a 2.30 average. The reader can see the grade averages listed on chart 1; also, the distribution of grades for each segment is shown in charts 2 through 5.

Chart 1.

**Reading & Spelling Averages**
For Phonics Case Study

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<table>
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Legend:
- Reading Averages
- Spelling Averages

Chart 2.

**Spelling Grades of 2.0 and Below**

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Page 25
a 2.0 or lower score (10 of the 20 were F's). During phonics reinforcement the number of low scores decreased. Only 11 children had grades of 2.0 or under (only 1 of the 11 had an F). In the 37th week there were still 11 children with the low grades. However, 6 of the 11 had scores of "F". Thus, even though the decrease in low scores remained constant, there was an increase in the number of students who received "F's". These are the children who need constant reinforcement. The teacher must be in tune with these children to supply their need at the time the need arises.

The data shows a continuous growth in the student's grades. Although some children still made F's, they went from getting 0 out of 20 correct to getting 8 out of 20 correct. Lynnsi Lute is a prime example. The writer must, however, show her work in order for the reader to understand her accomplishments. Lynnsi could neither spell or form her letters. She also did not know many letter sounds. Because she did not know the basics, she flunked all her courses. When she began to receive phonics instruction (also handwriting instruction) which should have been taught in kindergarten - 3rd grade she began to increase in the number of answers which she got
correct. On test 1-5 she received 0,5,6,8, and 15 correct respectively. Yes, her grades were increasing steadily. (See Lynnsi's work in appendix). Robert Rogers was the same way. After being reinforced he could answer questions correctly. (See his work also)

The reading data also support my conclusions. The Class average before the study began was 2.59, during it rose slightly to 2.89, and after decreased to 2.30. Although there was not a great increase; grades did increase. Reading is a hard subject to master if children have been taught wrong the first few years of schooling. It would take all year to get the majority of students on a continuous path of growth. Reinforcement must be constant or grades will decrease dramatically. (See Chart 1)

All in all, the data shows that this group of fourth graders did increase in spelling test grades with the use of phonics. This program was designed by the writer. It was based on the interest and needs of this specific classroom. Some of the games were Spelling Bees, Spelling Basketball games, Phonics trivia, Spelling Races. Worksheets were also given, such as crossword puzzles which stressed the phonics skills being studied that week. No matter what program is developed by the teacher, the writer thinks that it will increase the student's grades. Data also supports this conclusion. Phonics just needs to be taught.
Preschool Study

In the case of the pre-school study, the same conclusions were found. The children who took the pre-test could answer question 1 perfectly. For both classes, question 2 was a little bit more difficult. And when choosing randomly the letters for them to recite only one student could accomplish this skill. He did switch the letter b and d, however. Neither of the classes could answer the rest of the questions. However, after phonics was introduced in the form of flashcards, workbooks, repetition, Hooked on Phonics, letter recognition games, letter sound games, books which stresses the consonants which can be joined to the at sound and watching audio visual tapes such as Clifford and Sessame Street the children began to recognize letters in and out of sequence. They learned to recognize their names, as well as their friends names. They could read along with The Cat in the Hat. They can write their own names without help.

Of the children who did not get phonics reinforcement, they are still incapable of recognizing the letters out of sequence. All know the letter A and O. None can write their names. None passed the test nor could answer all the questions past number 1. The group with phonics instruction has learned the skill of sounding out words; yet, they have not mastered it.

All in all the group with the phonics skills excelled at a much higher rate than those who had no phonics instruction. Whole language alone can not do the trick. Of the four from the phonics group, one child passed the test completely, 2 could answer six questions and one could answer questions 1-4. It is the writers opinion that these children will be at a higher reading level than their counterparts when they reach kindergarten. They will not need any reading intervention because they will have already been taught the basics. In New Zealand schools a whole language only program is stressed which results in" 15% of that country's children requiring
individual reading tutors by second grade". (Bower, 1992) Early intervention through the use of phonics is imperative to the reading success of all students. Another study showed that "only 2 or 3 percent of students who are taught with phonics in other countries require special instruction in special classes, and nearly all of these have diagnosed mental or physical handicaps.... Phonics instruction builds on rich concepts about how print functions.". (Wood, 1992 & Stahl, 1992) The teaching of phonics clearly develops above average readers. A child cannot read if he cannot pronounce the word he is reading. If there are many words that are skipped by a child when reading a passage, it is certain that comprehension is impossible.

Phonics must be learned at an early age.

In conclusion, phonics is necessary at an early stage to prevent functionally illiterate students at higher grade levels. It does not matter what program a teacher chooses, as long as it is compatible to the whole class. A good phonics program includes these components:

- Letter sound relationships and opportunities to distinguish the new letter sound relationships from previously taught relationships
- Practice with single letters and opportunities to apply the skill with whole words
- Reinforcement with sentences and paragraphs
- A balance of spelling exercises with activities which teaches some phonics rule
- Should only teach one or two letter sound relationships at one time
- Folk rhyme-Sentence investigation-Phonic investigation- mastery of consonant vowel consonant syllable patterns contained in the folk rhyme.
- Shared reading and writing, writing aloud, self selected writing, guided reading, words taken out of and put back into context.
- Enlarged phonics charts.

(Spiegel, 1990; Trachtenburg, 1990; Routman, 1992)

A teacher can make a variety of phonics programs which include the aforementioned items. Nonetheless, the teacher can also invest in programs such as Hooked on Phonics to fulfill the void.
Whatever the case, children are most susceptible to failure in reading when the age where they learn the most is not utilized at the proper time. Teachers of pre-school students must be in tune with these children to know when that time arrives. Elementary students who are failing spelling and reading should automatically be reinforced in the basic phonics skills. Many have been passed on who cannot read, pronounce letter sounds or pronounce words correctly. The majority of these children are in the inner city where income levels are low. The chance of getting these children into a structured pre-school program is almost nil. Yet, there is an urgency. Our children, Our Heritage is functionally illiterate. We hold the key to creating excellent readers. Shall we use it?
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

As a whole, inner city elementary and high school students have become low average readers. The majority of the students cannot read at or above their current grade level. It became necessary for researchers and educators to find a panacea for this problem. After abandoning phonics, educators turned to other methodologies for a sole cure-all. However, below average readers increased with these cures.

Whole language, sight words, configuration and many other methods were tried to no avail. The writer realized when dealing with fourth, sixth and second grade inner city children that they were lacking in one thing—phonics. This was the basic step to reading, somehow these children did not receive what was necessary for them to become good readers. Thus, children were tested and the results published to prove the necessity of teaching phonics methodology in an elementary and pre-school classroom. It is the writer's belief that adding any phonics program to a child's reading program in pre-school will increase his/her chances of becoming an excellent reader as a Kindergartner and beyond. Children who learn phonics read better.

Research showed that children who are taught phonics intermingled with whole-language performed significantly better than their counterparts who are taught with the whole language
method of teaching. It has been proven that children who do not use phonics become poor readers and can not function at their proper reading level. If teachers neglect to teach basic phonics children will fail. Therefore the student requires a structured phonics program for maximum effectiveness.

The study involved twenty-nine fourth grade students from Lincoln elementary school in Portsmouth Ohio. Also, a group of eight pre-schoolers were tested and taught phonics along with a whole-language instruction. Four of these students did not receive any phonics instruction. The fourth graders were reinforced in phonics instruction for six weeks. All children participated in fun games, drills, worksheets, repetition, and books which dealt with the phonics rules being taught for that particular week. These scores (before and after) were published to prove that phonics is necessary at an early age.

**Conclusion**

The class average in spelling was 1.69 before phonics instruction began. After six weeks of phonics instruction the average rose by 71% to 2.89%. After a period of 29 weeks when no phonics was taught the average dropped by 26% to a 2.30 average. The research proves that a small amount of phonics instruction can increase grades dramatically. Also that most children who are taught phonics will retain the instruction and apply the rules. Thus, resulting in a highly skilled reader. The reading scores of these children also increased, proving that if a child learns alphabets, and their sounds and learn the rules to putting them together comprehension and reading capabilities increase significantly.

In the pre-school study, children who learned with an integration of phonics and whole language did significantly better than those who did not use phonics. Children who had no
phonics instruction were still struggling with recognition of the alphabets at the end of the study. Thus, phonics instruction caused a marked increase in the basic (beginning) reading abilities of pre-school children. Early intervention through the use of phonics is imperative to the reading success of all students.

**Recommendations**

It is my recommendation that a study on this subject be carried on with a larger amount of students in different sections of the United States. Possibly, the study can watch children from pre-school age to third grade, and compare them to another group who is not given phonics instruction to see if phonics as an early intervention and a reinforcement is necessary.

All in all, the writer feels that phonics is a component of reading which can not be left out. If a child does not receive this instruction at an early age, he/she is apt to become a below average reader. Phonics is the key to successful reading. Thus, daycare and elementary teachers must make a conscious effort to teach and re-teach phonics until it is mastered and the students have attained (on average) higher reading levels.
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This is a petted case.
2. The address is on the dome of the package.
3. The thing on the piece is in the knether gone the package.
4. Lilly the name to see gift in Rene.
5. The name is in the nace.
6. More und crossed the name first last.
7. We will delivery to the last filled.
8. To the fore my mouth was a rose.
Spelling Test Oct 21, 1992

Lynnie Rute

1. beach
2. east
3. beat
4. feed
5. fifteen
6. free
7. because
8. least
9. team
10. lead
11. clem
12. leaf
13. speak
14. pie
15. paid

6. seat
7. tie
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10. leaf

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