

Michelle Richards

Professional Portfolio

Master's in Education, Reading Specialist

Concordia University, Nebraska

December 19, 2010

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Professional Vita
- II. Professional Resume
- III. Conceptual Framework Outcome—Teaching: Case Study Report
- IV. Conceptual Framework Outcome—Leading: Class Presentation
- V. Conceptual Framework Outcome—Learning: Research Proposal

# Professional Vita

## Michelle Richards

Graduate Student – Concordia University Nebraska

### Part I: Personal and Professional History

I grew up in a family of educators and have always felt very comfortable around children. I graduated from University of Nebraska at Kearney in Dec. 1990 with my degree in elementary education with an endorsement in special education.

I started my first job in the fall of 1991 at Wymore Southern Elementary. I taught second grade there for 10 years and also served as assistant varsity basketball coach for 8 years, asst. varsity volleyball for 2 years, and cheerleading sponsor for 1 year. I married my husband Dan in 2000 and moved to Lincoln.

In the fall of 2001 I changed schools and positions. I taught third grade at Milford Elementary for one year. Then my current position opened up in Pleasant Dale, in the same K-1 room where I student taught. I feel like I have come full circle in many ways; I love my job and my students and can't imagine doing anything else. Each day is a new and exciting adventure. Dan and I have 2 children and I am enjoying watching my own children grow as learners.

I feel I have learned a tremendous amount about myself throughout this master's journey. I have always loved to read and write, which is a positive when it comes to teaching literacy. I feel that my enthusiasm for books and reading shines through when I am teaching my kindergartners how to read. I was taught to read in the 1970's when there was a strong phonics push and the famous Dick and Jane books were popular. I was blessed to have teachers who also surround me with wonderful stories and many opportunities to explore different kinds of books and read. I feel that because of having that great start with a combination of a strong phonics program, knowledgeable reading teachers, and an endless supply of interesting books with intriguing characters, my literacy past has been integral part of how I teach reading and why I continue to love what I do. I also had writing teachers who gave me the skills and confidence I needed to feel good about my writing. We were given time to write daily in many of my classes and our writing was celebrated by hanging it up, sharing it with the class, or publishing it. Again, I feel that my literacy past and those positive experiences have been essential to the way I approach teaching writing and my feelings toward it.

### Part II: Description of Present Position

I am currently in my eighth year of teaching in a K-1 combination classroom. I have nine kindergartners and 12 first graders. I teach all core subjects including: reading, math, writing/grammar, social studies, science health, and art. I am also a member of our school's SCIP/SAT team, which is currently making the switch to RTI.

Not much has changed except that I am in my ninth year of teaching K-1 and we have now made the switch to being an RTI team.

### **Part III: Statement of Goals and Objectives for Graduate Study**

One of the main reasons I chose this program is because I believe that my students deserve the best possible reading teacher and I want to be that for them. I have always loved to read; from the minute I learned, you could often find me with a book in my hand in my free time. I want to instill that love of reading in my children. I teach at a very crucial level. I know the importance of what I do in the classroom and how it can affect my students' future success; and I don't take that responsibility lightly. I am building the foundation for them so that they can continue to build on that to become lifelong readers and learners. I have always felt fairly confident about my reading teaching abilities until recently when I had a student that I just couldn't find the answers for. I tried everything I knew how to do and called upon the advice of many others but he still didn't make the gains I expected and hoped to see. He is another important reason that I am in this program today.

I believe literacy instruction is important because children are not born knowing how to decode or comprehend what they read. They must be taught—directly and explicitly. It is crucial that teachers model and scaffold the instruction to help build confident, successful readers. Students must be able to make sense of print in their daily lives—reading signs, recipes, newspapers, directions, etc. As our society becomes more and more advanced our students need to be more proficient than ever just to perform everyday tasks. I used to be on a mission to instill a love of reading in each and every child I taught. I now understand that while that would be a great accomplishment, not every child is going to love reading anymore than every child is going to love science or math. We all have our individual interests and strengths and although I would love to have every student I teach love reading the way I do I know that my goal as a reading teacher should be to equip each of my students with the instruction, strategies, and practice to be able to be successful, proficient readers in their everyday lives and careers.

### **Part IV: Philosophy of Education Statement**

I have always believed that every child can learn and it is my job to find out how. I definitely have a “whatever it takes” attitude when it comes to teaching. As I have read about and reflected on the different educational philosophies, I have found that while I am definitely a mixture of them, I feel I lean to the essentialist side. I believe that part of that is due to the level I teach. I am giving my students their start in education, building that foundation, so of course it makes sense that I spend a lot of time on those essential life-long skills like reading, writing, grammar and math. It is my job as a teacher to make sure my students have the basic framework of knowledge so that they can move on to more complex skills and application of them as they grow and learn.

While I believe the essentialist in me is important in the level and age of kids I teach, I also believe that the progressivism in me is valuable also. I love to try to make what we do relevant and interesting to my students. I try to incorporate as much hands-on learning as possible. Many of these lessons take place during my social studies, science, and health time. I do not use textbooks to teach these objectives but instead use lots of non-fiction trade books and hand-on materials. If the children get excited about a topic or unit I adjust my lesson plans to keep that curiosity and excitement going

by digging deeper into the topic. I try to keep them actively involved in their learning so that interest and curiosity is instilled in them and helps them to have a love for learning.

I believe that children start the road to reading and writing from a very young age. From hearing the sounds and rhythm in our language as they are read nursery rhymes and sung to as infants and toddlers to making crayon marks on the wall, it is all a part of their road to literacy. Many come to kindergarten having a wealth of literacy experiences and some have little or none. It is our job as literacy teachers to model, let them practice with guidance, and finally move toward working independently. I refer to it as “I do, We do, You do.” Students must be given time to actually practice reading and writing with the teacher breaking it down into small manageable steps to help scaffold the instruction to build confidence and insure success (Zone of proximal development). Many students come to us with little schema or prior knowledge so we must take the time to build that so the comprehension skills can be enhanced and connections made (Constructivist theory). We can also do that by “thinking aloud” in front of the kids so that we can teach them what good readers and writers do. I also feel it is crucial that students are grouped with other children who have common needs.

The comprehensive reading model is the approach that I feel the most strongly towards. I believe that by providing my students with a direct, explicit instruction of skills with a balance of authentic literature based reading and process writing; I can be an effective reader teacher and help them to become successful readers.

#### **Part V: Vision for the Future**

My ultimate goal is to just simply be the best teacher I can be. I just started this program but can already see how the knowledge and resources I have and will gain will help me achieve my goal. In the future I see myself in a primary classroom, either in Pleasant Dale or Milford, working hard to ensure that all my students succeed. I also hope to be an available resource to other teachers, staff members, and administrators in my district.

In addition to my vision of the future listed above, I now see myself as more confident working with struggling readers. My goals for those readers would be to first diagnose what specific skills and areas of reading that they need additional instruction and practice on and then providing the intensive instruction and extra practice that they need to help them become successful readers. I continue to have a “whatever it takes” type of attitude when it comes to my students and feel I am even more aware of and considerate of their individual learning styles and needs.

# Michelle K. Richards

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## EDUCATION

- **Concordia University- Seward, NE**  
Master of Education-Reading Specialist, Kindergarten-12th  
Endorsement, December 2010
- **University of Nebraska at Kearney- Kearney, NE**  
Bachelor of Arts Degree-Elementary Education, December 1990  
Mild/Moderate Special Education Endorsement, December 1990
- **Grand Island Senior High School-Grand Island, NE**  
May 1986

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## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

**Milford Public Schools-Milford, NE      2001-Present**

**Pleasant Dale Elementary K-1      2002-Present**

- Plan and instruct in a combination class in a K-3 building.

**Milford Elementary-Third Grade      2001-2002**

**Southern Public Schools-Blue Springs, NE      1991-2001**

**Southern Elementary-Second Grade      1991-2001**

**Southern High School**

- **Asst. Varsity Basketball Coach 1991-1999**
- **Cheerleading Coach 1991-1993**
- **Asst. Varsity Volleyball Coach 1993-1995**

## **Substitute Teacher**

**Nebraska**

**Spring 1991**

- Substitute teacher for Lincoln Public Schools, Milford Public Schools, and Waverly Public Schools in various settings including physical education, special education/behavior rooms, and kindergarten-sixth grade rooms.

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## **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS/LEADERSHIP**

- Milford Education Association/National Education Association
- Education Committee at Milford United Methodist Church
- Education Committee at Trinity United Methodist Church in Lincoln
- Youth Group Leader (Grades 7-12) at Wymore United Methodist Church
- Assistant Girl Scout Leader
- Assistant Boy Scout Leader

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## **EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES WHILE EMPLOYED**

- Served on the SCIP/SAT and RIT team; 2002-Present
- Served on the reading series selection team; 2009
- Trained in the Spalding Phonics Program
- Trained in the scientifically-based practice of Explicit/Direct Instruction using lesson maps; 2009

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## **REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

## **GRADUATE PORTFOLIO AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OUTCOME—TEACHING: CASE STUDY REPORT COMPLETED IN EDUCATION 568, FALL 2010

- T1: Skill in planning
- T2: Designs valid instructional methods
- T3: Assesses and evaluates learner progress
- T5: Integrates professional knowledge and research
- T8: Applies learning theory

### Case Study Form

**Name of student:** Student E

**Date of report:** December 11, 2010

**Age of student:** 5 years, 7 months

**Gender:** Female

**Grade in school:** Kindergarten

**School name** (fictional): Happy Trails Elementary

**Parent's/Guardian's name** (fictional): Mr. and Mrs. Lee

#### **Background Information**

##### **Reason for Referral**

- Low score on baseline reading test (readiness, letter recognition, phonological awareness, listening comprehension, and concepts of print)
- Showed up as strategic on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment
- Difficulties with conversational communication
- Difficulty following one step directions
- Based on the information above I chose Student E

#### **Family Information**

- Lives with mother, father, and two siblings- an older brother and a younger sister

#### **Linguistic Background**

- English is the sole language spoken in the home.
- She received early childhood speech services for 3 years at Barkley Memorial Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

### **Social and Personality Factors**

- Able to stay on task better in small group and one on one learning situations than in whole group time.
- Is an enthusiastic worker and learner.

### **Medical History**

- Eye and ear screenings in the normal range (Fall 2010)
- No history of serious illnesses

### **Educational History (includes instructional factors)**

- No formal preschool
- Received early childhood speech/language services
- No prior retentions
- Good attendance

### **Results of Student/Parent Interviews**

- Parents report that she seems to learn things best when the lesson can be associated with something to help her remember—songs, connections to prior learning etc.
- Parents and teacher agree that she has difficulty communicating. She seems to struggle with verbal directions and questions.
- Student wasn't able to reflect on herself as a reader and writer but she loves to read the readers from our reading series at school and at home.
- Has a positive attitude towards school and reading.
- Is a pleaser. She really tries hard and wants to do a good job.
- Likes routine.
- Can become frustrated and shut down if pressured.
- Responds well to praise.
- Hard worker and loves to participate.

### **Summary of Previous Assessment Data (Assessments given prior to the case study)**

- July, 2010 the **Goldman-Fristoe Test of Articulation 2** was administered:  
Standard Score: 82, 8<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- August, 2010 **Scott Foresman Kindergarten Baseline Assessment**:  
5/8 on the readiness section  
4/12 on the letter recognition section  
8/12 on the phonological awareness section  
3/8 on the listening comprehension section  
1/10 on the concepts of print section  
This gave her a 21/50 overall and at a 42% it put her in my strategic group.

## **Summary of Assessment Data Derived During the Case Study**

### **Concepts of Print Assessment:**

- Scored 1/10 when given in August, 2010
- Scored 7/10 when given in November, 2010.

### **Phonemic Awareness Assessment by Beverly DeVries (Oct/Nov. 2010):**

- Syllablicating words: 3/5
- Distinguishing initial sounds:0/5
- Distinguishing rime and rhyme: 5/5
- Distinguishing oddity:2/5
- Blending Onset with Rime: 1/5
- Blending Letter sounds:0/5
- Segmenting Sounds in Words: 0/5
- Manipulating Initial Sounds in Words: 0/5
- Deleting Initial Sounds of Words: 0/5
- Overall score: 11/45

### **Auditory Discrimination Assessment of Word Pairs (Nov. 2010):**

- 21/30. She had 3 errors in each area—beginning, middle, and end.

### **Letters and Sounds phonetic elements assessment (Nov. 2010):**

- She correctly named 52/52 letters
- She produced 18/26 of the letter sounds.
- 2 of the 8 she missed were vowels: e and u
- 6 of the 8 she missed were consonants: h, g, z, j, y, q

### **Informal Rhyming Assessment (matching pictures) Oct. 2010**

- 0/5

## **Diagnostic Teaching**

### **Hypothesis:**

- Auditory processing difficulties may be causing her to struggle with verbal directions and questions.

### **Strategy:**

- Give directions in three ways: orally, in writing using words or symbols, and with real items when possible.

### **Hypothesis:**

- Auditory processing difficulties may also be the source of her struggles with phonemic awareness activities like rhyming, initial and final sounds, blending and segmenting.

**Strategies:**

- Use songs and movement for instruction as much as possible
- Use songs, nursery rhymes, poems, verses, word families, and books to provide her opportunities to not only experience and practice rhyming but also help her build confidence, work on onset/rime using Gentry's hand strategy along with word sorts, use a pvc pipe to help her hear the sounds better as she blends, and use elkonin boxes with counters first but then eventually move to letter tiles to work on segmenting

**Hypothesis:**

- Needs additional direct, explicit interventions to help with phonemic awareness skills.

**Strategies:**

- Meet with student after school two times a week to work on phonemic awareness activities and skills mentioned above.
- RTI intervention skill time with our Special Education teacher daily for 25 minutes in a small group.
- Meet in a small group during reading time to reinforce and practice skills.

**Hypothesis:**

- May need some additional speech/language instruction.

**Strategies:**

- Use peer modeling when talking during center and play time—I feel she has learned and benefitted from this tremendously.
- Model and assist her in answering questions appropriately
- Introduce new vocabulary—use visuals or real examples when possible.
- Work with the speech pathologist after she has completed her evaluation to put a plan together.

**Suggestions and Recommendations****Student's Strengths:**

- Strong parental support
- Desire to please.
- Positive attitude toward school.
- Interacts well with other students and teachers

**Student's Literacy Needs:**

- **Concepts of print**—specifically knowing where to start reading, identifying a word, and being able to explain what a period means.
- **Rhyming**
- **Blending of sounds**
- **Segmenting of sounds**
- **Listening Comprehension**
- **Language**—this is something I will work on with the speech pathologist, so although I wanted to mention it as a need, I won't include it in my actual plan until I get her assessment results and am able to come up with a plan with her guidance. Until that time I will continue to work on vocabulary and modeling how to appropriately answer questions, follow simple step directions, etc.

**Specific Methodologies**

- Student E learns best when using visual and kinesthetic methods.
- Small groups or one on one situations.

**Materials**

- Instructional level is at pre-K and Kindergarten (depending on the skill).

**Level of Support**

- Continue peer tutoring
- Continue adult tutoring
- Continue RTI intervention—she meets in a small group with the Special Education teacher daily for 25 minutes.
- Continue work with speech pathologist.

*Michelle Richards*

Signature of Person Preparing Report

12-11-10

Date

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OUTCOME—LEADING: CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
PRESENTATION FOR TEACHERS COMPLETED IN EDUCATION 511, FALL 2009  
And EDUCATION SOC 565 SPRING 2010 (respectively)**

LD2: Communicates effectively

Guided Reading  
Power Point Presentation



Reading Specialist  
Power Point Presentation

**Striving for Excellence in  
Reading Instruction**

Shelly Richards  
Milford/Pleasant Dale Elementary  
2010



**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OUTCOME—LEARNING: RESEARCH PROPOSAL  
COMPLETED IN EDUCATION 595, SUMMER 2010**

LR5: Practices lifelong learning  
LR7: Demonstrates specialty depth of knowledge

Effect of Implementation of a School Wide Systematic Spelling Curriculum on  
Student Standardized Test Scores

A Research Project Presented to Concordia University

Michelle Richards

Bernard Tonjes, Ph.D., Project Advisor

July 20, 2010

**ABSTRACT**

In the field of education, there has been a variety of opinions of the importance of spelling and time spent on spelling instruction throughout the years. The research done for this study not only found that there is a significant correlation between success in spelling to success in reading and writing but that direct, explicit instruction using a word study approach is also very effective and promotes a deeper understanding of words and their meaning. This study will compare the Iowa Basic Test spelling scores of students from a small Nebraska school district before a school wide spelling program was implemented to the scores after implementation to confirm the research.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	4
Purpose Statement .....	5
Research Question.....	5
Hypothesis.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	5
Assumptions and Delimitations.....	6
Summary & Closing.....	7
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	8
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	14
Research Design.....	14
Participants/Subjects.....	15
Instrumentation.....	16
Data Collection Procedures.....	17
Data Analysis.....	17
Timeline.....	17
REFERENCES.....	19

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

A few years ago when our school district began looking at purchasing a new reading program discussions revealed a concern of not only spelling scores but also our curriculum or lack thereof. At that time there wasn't any school wide consistency on curriculum or instruction of spelling. After great consideration and research we adopted a new reading series, Scott Foresman (Reading Street, 2008), which also included a spelling component. This past year we implemented the new series and although we found the spelling curriculum to be easy in the lower grades and very difficult in the some of the upper grades, we finally had a systematic school wide program that has some research based instruction. Crevol & Hill stated, "Dramatic improvements are achievable within the context of a fully implemented, comprehensive program that involves both system and school-wide commitment and coordination" (as cited in Strickland & Morrow, 2000 p. 103).

I would like to find out if implementing this program made any difference in our spelling scores on the standardized test. The results of this research could help my district decide if we need to stay the course or look into adding some additional supplemental pieces and instructional strategies to the program to make it more effective.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to find out if the new spelling curriculum had any effect on our students' ITBS (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) spelling scores.

## Research Questions

What kind of effect will the implementation of the Scott Foresman spelling curriculum (Reading Street, 2008) have on our ITBS spelling scores for grades 3-6?

## Hypothesis

After implementing the new spelling curriculum, I believe our spelling scores will show an increase.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions will be used in this study:

*Morphological instruction:* Morphology is the part of a language concerned with the structure of morphemes and how these morphemes combine.

Morphological instruction emphasizes the meaningful parts of a word and should increase in importance with each grade level (Spelling Success for All Students, 2009).

*Phonological instruction:* The study of sounds and sound-systems in a language. This part should be emphasized in the early grades (Spelling Success for All Students, 2009).

*Orthographic instruction:* A systematic method of spelling. The emphasis is on the visual form of the word, particularly the sequence of letters (Spelling Success for All Students, 2009).

*Basal:* A packaged reading program

*Word families:* Words that share the same spelling pattern

*Explicit instruction:* Instruction that is fully and clearly expressed. Nothing is just implied, it is all laid out.

### **Assumptions and Delimitations**

The following boundaries and assumptions have been set for the purpose of this research. The teachers in my district followed the new spelling curriculum systematically after only one year of implementation. The students performed their best on the standardized test and were able to apply spelling skills learned in curriculum to the test. I used a random sample of 20 kids from each grade 3-6 from the Milford School district that were in our district in the years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

### **Summary & Closing**

After looking at student scores and discussing current curriculum and instruction of spelling, our staff realized that spelling was an area of concern. Shortly after that we adopted and implemented a new basal reading program that included a spelling component. This program included many of the research based effective strategies for spelling instruction. I chose this

for my research project because even though it has only been one year of implementation, I would like to see if having a school wide systematic approach has had any effect on our ITBS spelling scores. This information will be helpful to any further decisions we make about curriculum and instruction.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Introduction:**

At the end of each year the teachers and administrators at my district review test scores and discuss the areas of concern and what changes in curriculum or instruction we can make to help our students succeed. After doing this last year and having discussions about current reading/spelling instruction and curriculum, we realized that spelling was an area that we hadn't given much attention to. At the time there some consistency on what words were targeted but a glaring deficiency of consistency on time spent on spelling instruction, methods, and strategies, along with a lack of a logical sequence of spelling words and patterns being taught. In many classrooms a list was handed out on Monday and besides having students practice writing the words three times each there wasn't any other class time or instruction spent on spelling until the test was taken on Friday. According to Mann, Bushell Jr., & Morris (2010) this is not an effective way of teaching spelling for many reasons:

It forces students to memorize word list but doesn't prepare them to be competent readers, writers, or spellers, it fails to provide adequate time and practice on words to be mastered, and the lists are often arbitrary instead of words found in their lessons and everyday life (p. 89).

Some teachers spent class time having students find and mark spelling patterns or phonograms in words along with other activities but there wasn't consistency or a logical sequence on what was being taught or how. In his

book, *Breaking the Code*, Richard Gentry (2006) talked about the important connection between spelling/writing/reading:

In most elementary schools spelling is a “supplementary” subject, an afterthought, yet it is a key component of this highly acclaimed model of skilled reading with implications for reading speed and fluency, and the only component uniquely specific to reading (p. 5).

On the importance of spelling Bear and Templeton said, that understanding how words are spelled is not only considerate to one’s reader, it also promotes more competent and proficient writing (1998).

The research I am presenting for this project will include research based spelling strategies and the need for direct, explicit instruction within a systematic school wide program. A bulk of the research I will present is done by a few of the well known spelling experts: Louisa Moats, Donald R. Bear, and Shane Templeton.

The purpose of this study is to find out if the new spelling curriculum had any effect on our students’ ITBS (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) spelling scores.

### **Review of Related Literature**

According to Louisa Moats, most children will be successful if they are exposed to direct, explicit instruction that is provided in a systematic format. She went on to say that children need to be taught the phonological essentials in a order that is logical and sequential based on the structure of language and there needs to be cumulative and dispersed practice to help

the children retain these spelling patterns (1998). By having a school wide program that is built around these concepts children will have more spelling success than if the instruction is implicit and disconnected without having a sequence. Bear and Templeton discussed the importance of teachers having the knowledge of the spelling system and information about words but also the developmental sequence that children follow as they are learning that spelling system (1998). Because of the predictability of the correspondence system, explicit and exact recall of orthographic sequences is crucial in spelling. Word specific orthographic memory needs to be stressed (Moats, 1995). According to research one of the most important strategies in spelling instruction is helping students to find patterns and be able to apply those spelling patterns when remembering and learning new words.

Invernizzi & Hayes (2004) had this to say about the use of orthographic instruction in spelling:

Advocates of word study claim that the process of comparing and contrasting orthographic features not only teaches the spelling of specific words but also encourages students to make generalizations about the spelling consistency of other words within a given category (p. 224).

The trend seems to be moving away from random selection of spelling words from the literature and instead finding words that have a common pattern or orthographic feature so that students are not just memorizing words but finding a deeper understanding of words so they can apply it to their spelling.

Templeton (2003) stated the following:

Effective spelling instruction engages students in examining written words from a variety of perspectives, better enabling them to remember *and understand* the spelling of words. This knowledge in turn underlies the more rapid and accurate perception of words during reading. The variety of instructional perspectives includes: comparing and contrasting words in the search for patterns and the generalizations that apply to the patterns" (p. 48).

Moats declared, "Learning to spell requires instruction and gradual integration of information about print, speech sounds, and meaning—these, in turn, support memory for whole words, which is used in both spelling and sight reading" (2006 p. 12). Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton and Johnson also discussed the importance of spelling instruction that includes a gradual sequence to help students have a better understanding of words. Students begin with a simple one to one correspondence between letters and sounds and progress to more complex, abstract relationships between letter patterns and sounds to more complicated relationships between meaning units as they relate to sound and pattern. There are three common layers of information—alphabet, pattern and meaning, and students move through these layers along a continuum (2004). "Effective spelling instruction should not teach students how to spell individual words; rather, it should teach students how to think about language through the integration of the multiple linguistic factors underlying spelling" (Kelman & Apel, 2004 p. 57).

## **Hypothesis**

After implementing the new spelling curriculum, I believe our spelling scores increased. Despite only using the curriculum for one year, I believe that our student's have a better understanding of spelling patterns and are able to apply them to new words.

## **Summary**

According to the research, direct, explicit spelling instruction is not only important, it must be done in a continuum that provides for an understanding of words so it can help students be more successful readers and writers. The Scott Foresman program (Reading Street, 2008) provides research based spelling instruction that is integrated into the reading program. By implementing this program into our district that lacked any kind of consistency in our spelling curriculum or instruction, I believe that not only have we helped our students be more successful on their ITBS spelling scores, I also believe that we are helping our students have a greater understanding of our English language and how it works which will benefit them for years to come and help them build a better foundation of word and spelling knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The research problem is that student spelling scores and curriculum are a concern in my district. By doing this research I would like to find out if implementing the new Scott Foresman spelling curriculum had any effect on student spelling scores on the ITBS. The hypothesis is that the scores have increased with the implementation of the school wide spelling curriculum. The use of a casual-comparative study will demonstrate whether the change in curriculum made a difference in student scores by comparing the data to the previous year.

### **Research Design**

In this research I will use causal comparative. "In causal-comparative research the researcher attempts to determine the cause, or reason, for existing differences in the behavior or status of groups or individuals" (Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2009, p. 218). A causal/comparative design is a good fit for my research project because I want to evaluate the new spelling curriculum by seeing if there is a difference in our ITBS spelling scores after we implemented it by comparing it to the scores from the year before. There has been increasing concern over the student spelling scores and curriculum in the past so finding out if the Scott Foresman curriculum had an impact on our ITBS scores would be beneficial for future instruction and evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum.

### **Participants/Subjects**

Participants in this study will be students in grades 3-6 from a small Nebraska school district who attended in years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. I will only be looking at grade levels 3-6 because standardized testing scores aren't available until second grade and we implemented the new spelling curriculum in 2009-2010. This is a convenience sample because I have access to the student ITBS spelling scores. "Convenience sampling is the process of including whoever happens to be available in the sample (Gay, et al., 2009, p. 136)."

As a teacher in the district I have access to the standardized test scores; we review and analyze them at the end of each year as a staff. Although no consent needs to be obtained, I plan on getting permission to do this project from my administration before starting it.

I plan to randomly choose 20 students from each grade level. The average number of students in grades 3-6 is 50. I chose to do random sampling because although it doesn't guarantee a representative sample, it is the best way to obtain one (Gay, et al., 2009, p 124). The students will be chosen by putting all the names for each grade level in a hat and pulling 20 out. I chose to include 20 out of each grade level so I could not only look at the effectiveness of the spelling program overall, I could also compare and analyze in each grade level separately.

I plan to keep the participants' identities secure by assigning each one a code, keeping the information out of plain sight, and not discussing an individual's scores.

### **Instrumentation**

My research question is what kind of effect did the implementation of the Scott Foresman spelling curriculum have on our ITBS spelling scores for grades 3-6? The independent variable in my research will be the implementation of a school wide basal spelling curriculum. The dependent variable is the students' ITBS spelling scores.

I will be using the ITBS standardized test for my data collection instrument. I will only be looking at the spelling composite and specifically the NPR scores. Tim Sitar, a test expert according to the tests.com website, had this to say about the ITBS test, "It is a nationally-normed test that focuses on grade level ability, that is, the standards taught in the classroom; *so, it is more knowledge-centered*" (tests.com, n.d.). According to the publishers of the ITBS, Riverside Publishing, the test was developed by the faculty and staff at the University of Iowa and has been a part of the research program in educational measurement there for the past 80 years (Riverside, 2010).

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The data for my research has already been collected so the next steps will be for me to meet with my administration to get approval and then begin compiling my random sampling and analyzing it.

## **Data Analysis**

The student's scores from before and after the implementation of the Scott Foresman spelling curriculum will be compared statistically. The level of significance chosen will be  $\alpha > .05$ . The ITBS scores will be evaluated based on the NPR scores of the spelling composite. A *t test* will then be used to compare the mean of the scores from the year preceding the implementation to the year following the implementation. Gay, Mills, and Arisain stated that the *t test* is the most commonly used inferential statistics when determining if there is a significant difference of one set of scores from another.

## **Timeline**

1. July 20, 2010 discuss my research proposal and project with administration.
2. July 22, 2010 meet with district's curriculum director to retrieve and compile the spelling scores from the ITBS scores.
3. July 23, 2010 review and analyze data.
4. August 2, 2010 research project will be completed.

The first step in this research project will be to submit this proposal to my district's administration for approval. Because I already have access to the data needed to complete this project, after it is approved I will begin the process of randomly selecting 20 students from each grade level 3-6 and assigning them a code number. I will then record the spelling composite for each student for the years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 and begin the process of statistically comparing them by using the *t test* with the level of significance being  $\alpha > .05$ .

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