

8. I have ways to figure out tricky words
























9. I like working in small groups.



10. I get more help when there are two teachers in my classroom.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How do you feel about reading independently?			
2. How do you feel when a book is read out loud to you?			
3. How do you feel when a teacher asks you a question about what you read?			
4. How do you feel when it's time for word work?			
5. How do you feel about small group reading			
6. Reading new words is easy for me.			
7. Reading new words is hard for me.			

**Appendix B**  
**Survey Questions**

**Heritage University Special Project Permission to Conduct Research**

Permission has been given for Julie Strickler by Alfred Deblasio to conduct an action research project as part of the Heritage University Masters Degree Program entitled Teacher Leadership in English as a Second Language. The Hypothesis of this study is as following:

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved.

The results of the study will be shared with the Principal and other building departments as appropriate.

Signature



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Alfred Deblasio

Date

11/15/15

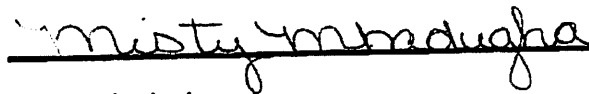
**Heritage University Special Project Permission to Conduct Research**

Permission has been given for Julie Strickler by Misty Mbadugha to conduct an action research project as part of the Heritage University Masters Degree Program entitled Teacher Leadership in English as a Second Language. The Hypothesis of this study is as following:

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved.

The results of the study will be shared with the Principal and other building departments as appropriate.

Signature



Misty Mbadugha

Date

11/2015

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

**Permission**

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When implementing instructional groups, groups should be flexible and should change often based on assessments and current classroom needs. Co-teaching should also be utilized as often as possible as it is an effective model to increase student achievement.

The results of the study did not show significance of either instructional grouping impacting students' phonics scores. As a result, the recommendation of the researcher is to have flexible grouping that changes often for a variety of reasons including; student progress, language background, and literacy skills in their first language. Frequent formative assessments need to be used to inform the decisions of groups and, when appropriate, assess students' skills in both their first language and in English.

Of the 40 students that started, 35 were given the phonics based spelling inventory post-test. The Words Their Way Spelling Inventory provided information on students' ability to spell word features or patterns at increasing levels of difficulty based on grade level expectations. The assessment was used to determine if the hypothesis could be accepted or rejected.

### Conclusions

After conducting the study, gathering the data, and evaluation the implications, the data was not able to support the hypothesis. Both the treatment group and the control group made gains, however, the control group made slightly higher gains than the treatment group. On a survey given to the treatment group, students did report that their ability to read new words improved. Although research supports the positive impacts of heterogeneous grouping to increase ELLs' skills in English, students in this study did not have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling assessment as a result of heterogeneous grouping in a parallel co-taught classroom.

### Recommendations

The literature discussed in this study indicated a need for phonics instruction to be systematic and explicit. Teachers need to consider their students' linguistic and literacy background to help make instructional decisions for their ELLs.

towards grade level standards in phonics skills. The researcher wanted to know if students grouped heterogeneously increased their skills at a higher rate than students grouped homogeneously by skill.

Two second grade classrooms were identified for the research with a total of 40 students at the beginning of the study, however, five students from both classrooms moved during the study and could not complete the project. A pretest was given to both groups before treatment was given. The treatment group was divided into two groups of ten students. Both groups received the same instruction following the Fountas and Pinnell phonics curriculum. The control group was divided into two groups based on their pre-test scores. Students on or above grade level received instruction by the classroom teacher and moved at a faster pace. Students performing below grade level received instruction by the researcher, moving at a slower pace.

The hypothesis of the study was that students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topic: (a) introduction, (b) summary, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations. The purpose and nature of the research Project and concern are paraphrased here.

#### Summary

As Part of the Title III grants, school districts receiving funds must have reported LEP student progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening to demonstrate their progress in becoming proficient in English. Title III also required that states set annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) that school districts must meet along with meeting annual yearly progress (AYP) (Westall, Sisco, Mendoza, & Moore, 2014). Honey Dew and Highlands elementary schools looked at their reading data and observed that a high number of ELLs were not meeting grade level standard. This impacted their progress towards English language proficiency resulting in limited progress towards AMAOs.

The purpose of this project was to determine if instructional grouping, along with co-teaching, in phonics had a significant impact on students' progress

Through the control group had a slightly greater success on the phonics based spelling inventory, it could be contributed to several factors. On the post test, some students scored lower than their pretest resulting in a negative score. Negative student scores can be attributed to student behavior, lack of attention or focus, and distractions during the time of the testing. Some students scored 100% on the pre-test, resulting in a change of zero on the post-test. One student's post-test in the control group was significantly higher than the pre-test. Though the student could have increased their skill significantly in that time period, it is more likely due to other factors that affected the pretest score, causing it to be lower than the student's true skills.

homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved. The results did not show that the students grouped heterogeneously performed higher on the phonics based spelling inventory.

The two classes chosen for this study had 57% of its students performing below grade level at the beginning of the study. Of the students performing below grade level, 75% were identified as ELLs. Jong (Jong and Commins, 2006), argues that students grouped heterogeneously helps facilitate English language learners as it creates the need to use a common language, English, during instruction. Commins (Jong and Commins, 2006), also agreed that ELLs benefit from heterogeneous grouping as they were instructed through using rigorous academic programs and had positive English language models. Other research in favor of heterogeneous grouping found that in homogeneous grouping, students in the lowest ability group received lower quality instruction that resulted in negative perceptions of their reading ability (Vaughn, 2009). This study, however, found that students grouped heterogeneously did not significantly increase their phonics skills based on a phonics based spelling inventory. Herrmann (2014) did note that both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups have benefits in the classroom.

### Findings

The results of the Independent t-Test showed the number of scores for experimental group was 17 and the mean score was 3.00 while the number of scores for the control group was 18 with a mean score of 4.06. The t-Value was .64 with a degrees of freedom of 34. To show significance at  $P=.05$  a t-Value of 2.042 was required with a degrees of freedom of 34. The results of this study showed a t-Value of .64 with a degrees of freedom of 34. Therefore, the Independent t-Test showed that the null hypothesis could not be rejected and the hypothesis could not supported.

Results of the student survey indicated students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom reported that their ability to read new words has improved. Therefore the null hypothesis could be rejected and the hypothesis could be supported.

### Discussion

The study resulted in findings that were inconclusive, which was not consistent with the expectations of the author. The hypothesis of the study was that students who participated in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participated in phonics instruction in a

To the statement “I get more help when there are two teachers in my classroom.” fourteen students agreed to the statement, three students were neutral and zero students disagreed. The mean score was 2.83.

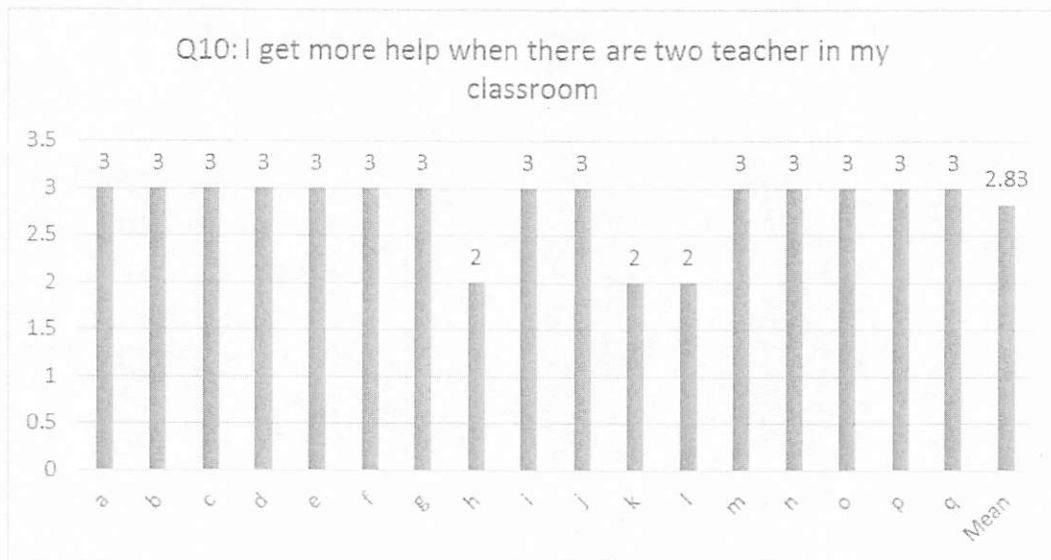


Figure 10.

To the statement “I like working in small groups.” twelve students agreed to the statement, four students were neutral and one students disagreed. The mean score was 2.65.

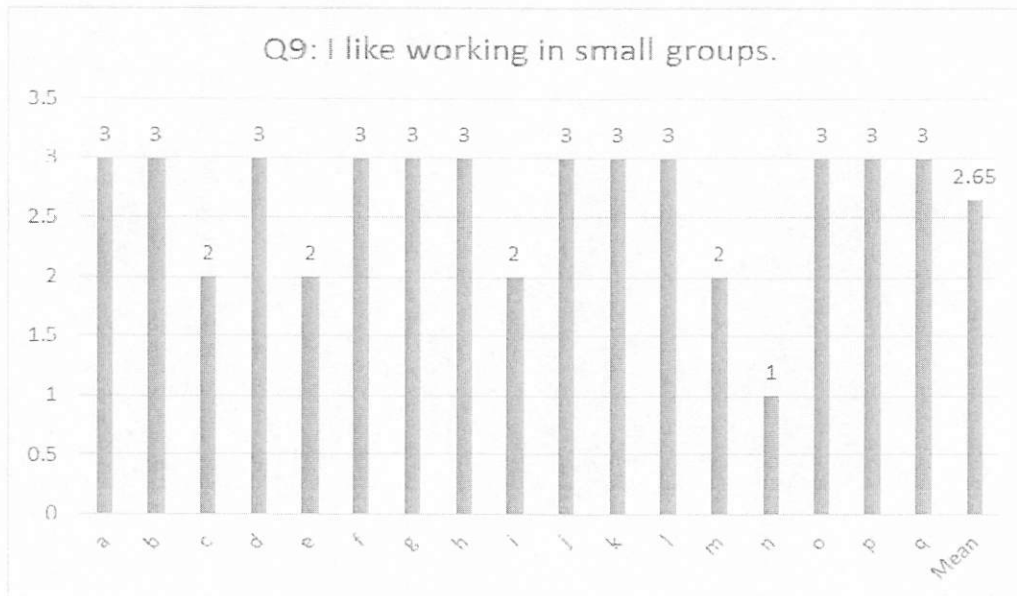


Figure 9.

To the question “How do you feel when a book is read out loud to you?” twelve students agreed to the statement, five students were neutral and zero students disagreed. The mean score was 2.71.

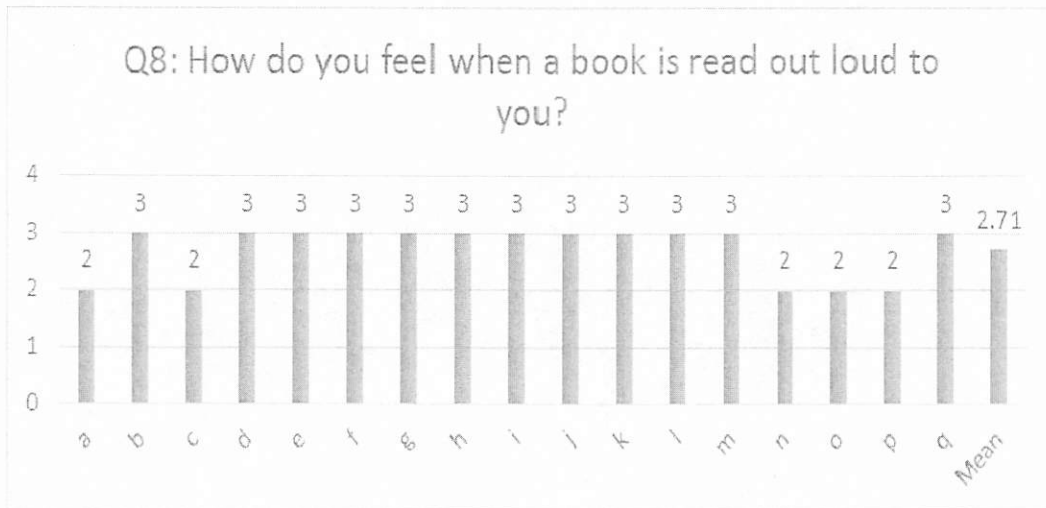


Figure 8.

To the statement “Reading new words is hard for me.” Six students agreed to the statement, six students were neutral and five students disagreed. The mean score was 2.06.

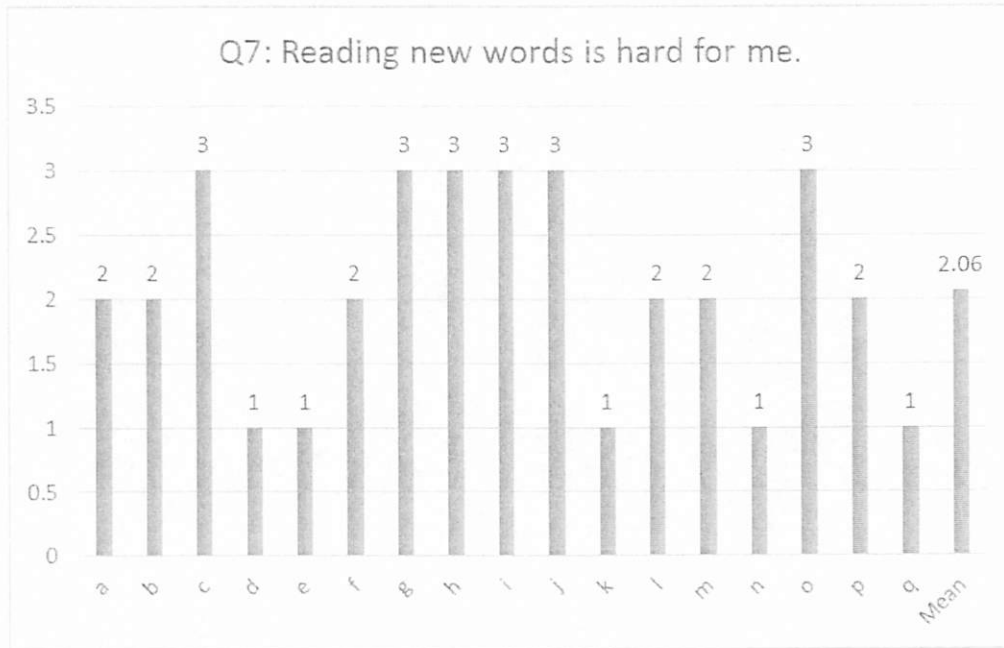


Figure 7.

To the statement “Reading new words is easy for me.” twelve students agreed to the statement, four students were neutral and one student disagreed. The mean score was 2.65.

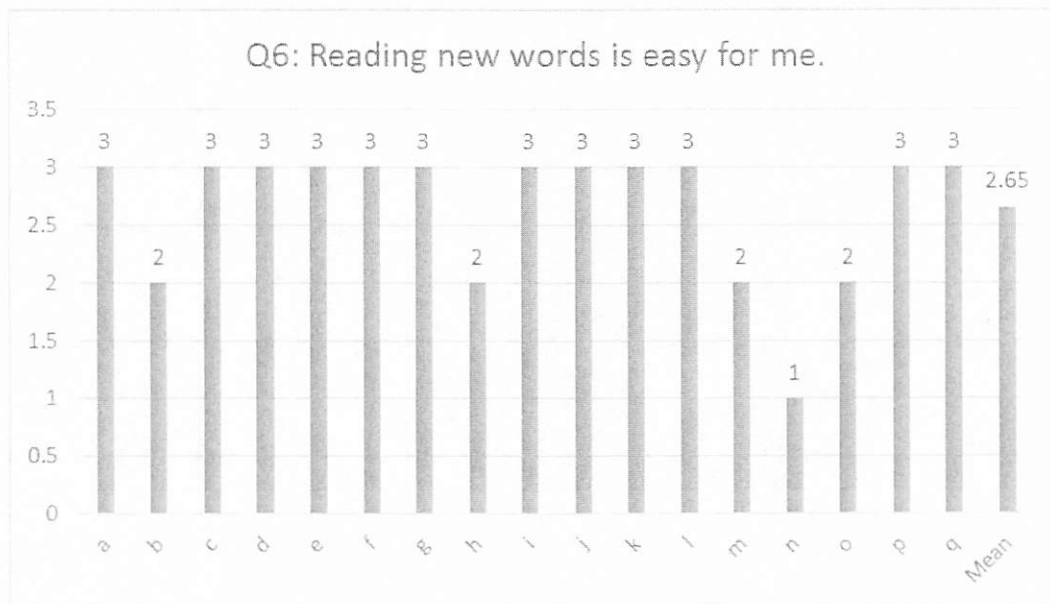


Figure 6.

To the question “How do you feel about small group reading?” ten students agreed to the statement, four students were neutral and three students disagreed. The mean score was 2.42.

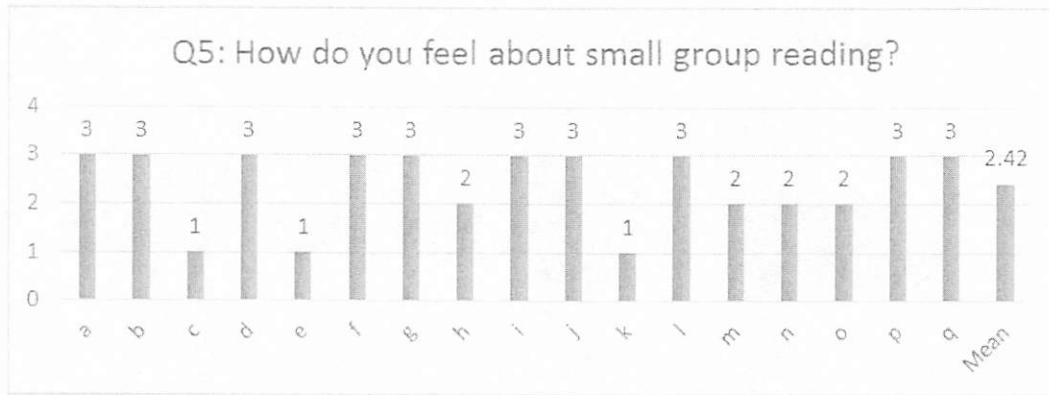


Figure 5.

To the question “How do you feel when it’s time for word work?” eight students agreed to the statement, nine students were neutral and zero students disagreed. The mean score was 2.48.

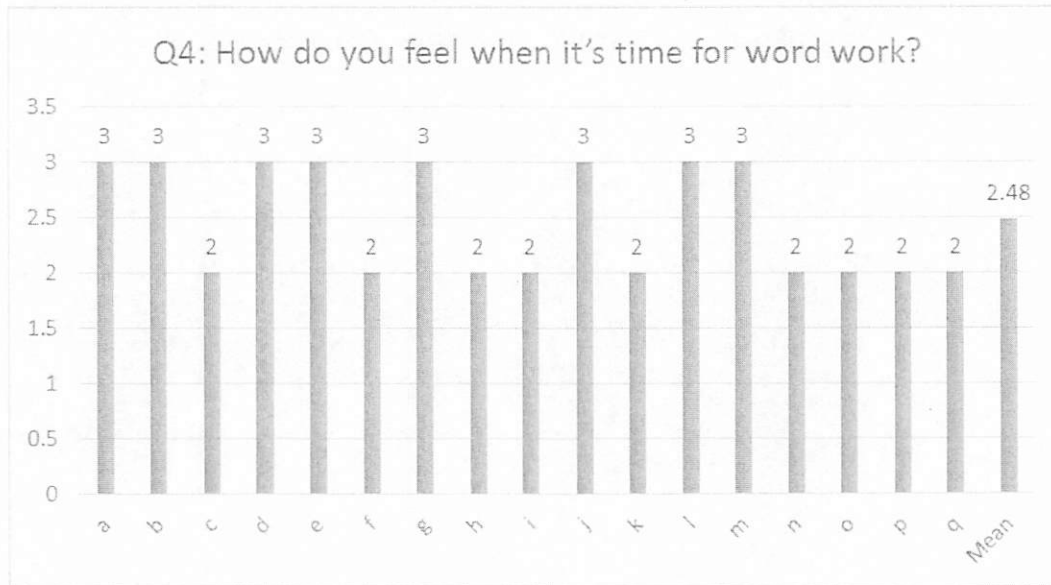


Figure 4.

To the question “How do you feel when a teacher asks you a question about what you read?” eight students agreed to the statement, eight students were neutral and one student disagreed. The mean score was 2.42.

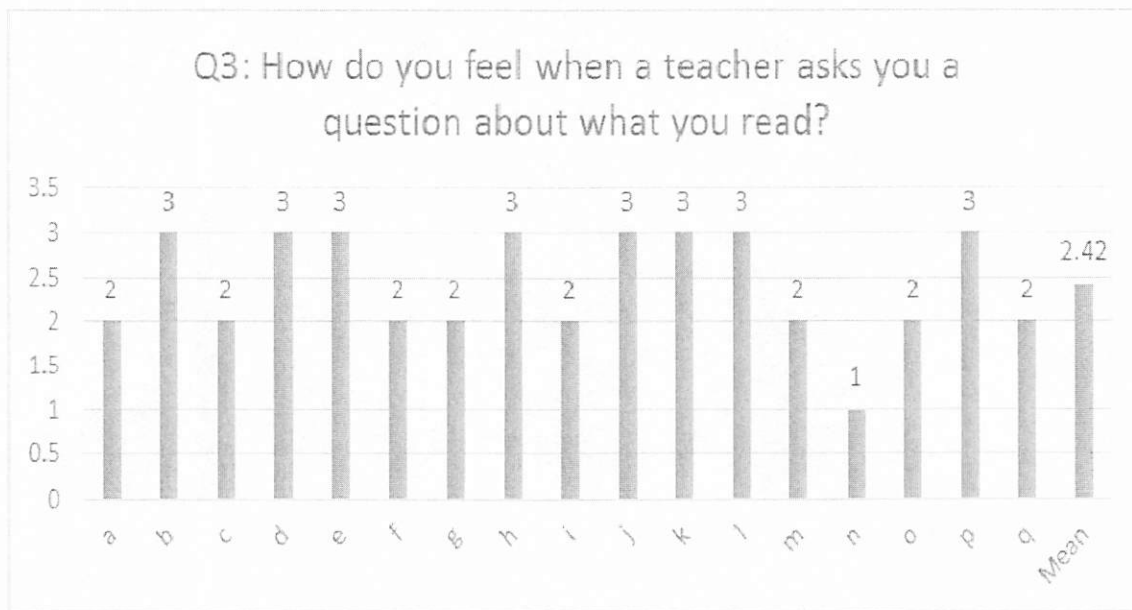


Figure 3.

To the question “How do you feel when a book is read out load to you?” sixteen students agreed to the statement, one student was neutral and zero students disagreed. The mean score was 2.95.

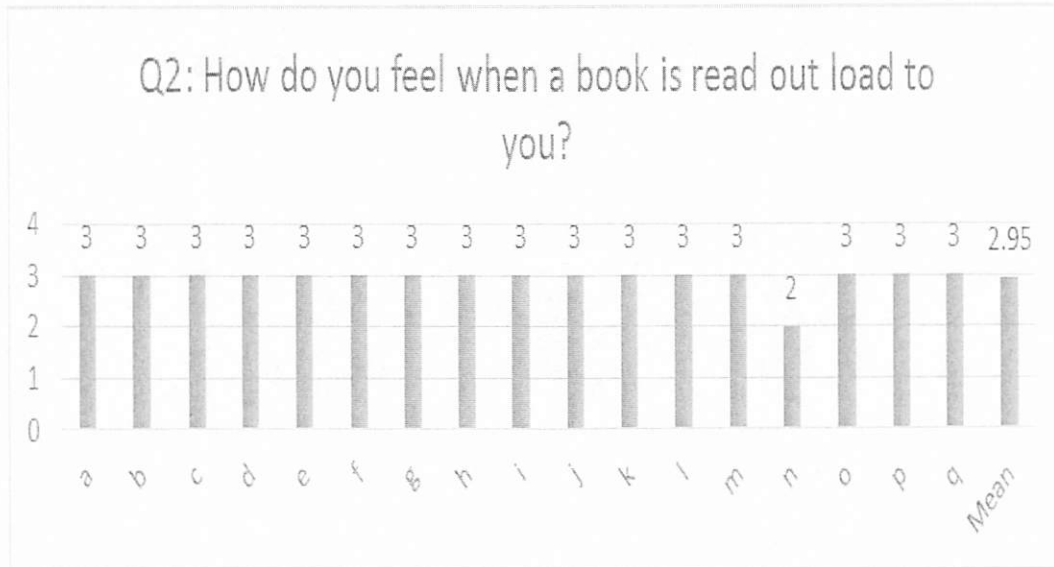


Figure 2.

A survey to answer the hypothesis “Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved” was conducted. Graphs were developed to visually display the data.

To the question “How do you feel about reading independently?” Thirteen students agreed to the statement, four students were neutral and zero students disagreed. The mean score was 2.76.

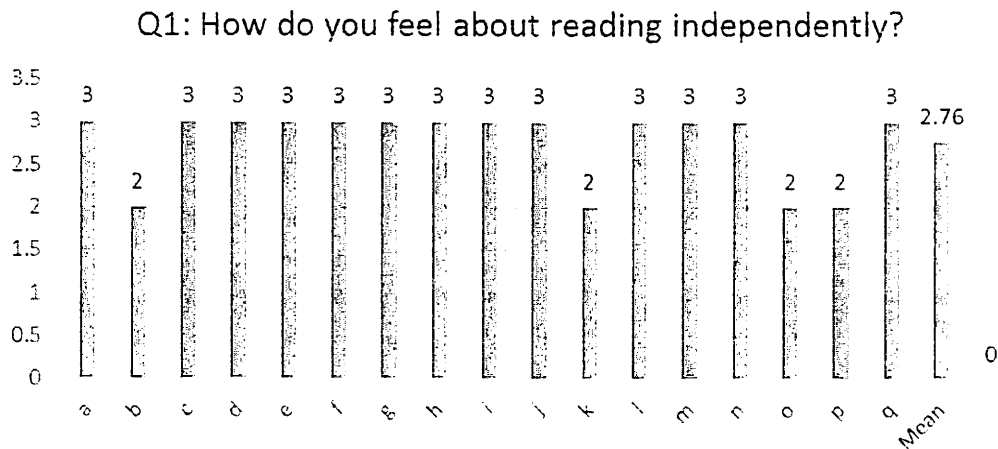


Figure 1.

The mean score of the experimental group was 3.3125 and the mean score for the control group was 4.625.

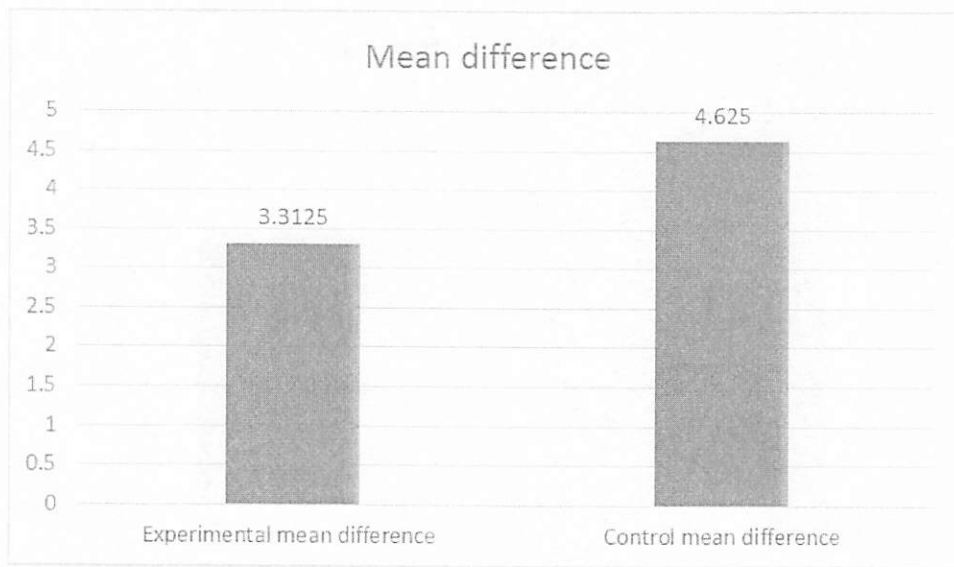


Figure A.

students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom, the researcher used an Independent t-Test.

The results of the Independent t-Test showed the number of scores for experimental group was 17 and the mean score was 3.31 while the number of scores for the control group was 18 with a mean score of 4.625. The t-Value was .64 with a degrees of freedom of 34. To show significance at  $P=.05$  a t-Value of 2.042 was required with a degrees of freedom of 34. The results of this study showed a t-Value of .64 with a degrees of freedom of 34. Therefore, the Independent t-Test showed that the null hypothesis could not be rejected and the hypothesis could not supported.

The mean scores for the t-Test showed (no) growth between the pre and post scores. This was consistent with the t-Test results.

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved.

#### Null Hypothesis

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will not have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will not report that their ability to read new words has improved.

#### Results of the Study

Using the statistical calculator program Stat Pak, a statistical t-Test, was performed to determine whether there was significance at the  $p = .05$  confidence level. To determine significance of the hypothesis, students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of the Data

#### Introduction

Chapter 4 has been organized around the following topics: (a) description of environment, (b) hypothesis, (c) results of the study, (d) findings, and (e) summary. This section provides a paraphrased statement of the research concern which the study has addressed.

#### Description of the Environment

The study was delimited to two second grade classrooms at Honey Dew and Highlands Elementary schools. Highlands had an enrollment of 540 students in the fall of 2015 and Honey had an enrollment of 545 in the fall of 2015. Students at both schools came from multi-cultural backgrounds and spoke a variety of language at home. The project was conducted during the spring of the 2015-2016 school year. The treatment instruction was 20 minutes, four times a week and the duration lasted eight weeks. There were 35 second grade students who participated in this study. Of the 35 students, 22 were identified as English language learners.

#### Hypothesis

to examine scores of both groups. The collected data was entered into a statistical calculator (Stat Pak) and a t-test.

Data from the student survey was tallied and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Graphs were created to display students' overall scores as well as individual questions.

### Summary

This chapter was designed to review the methodology and treatment of data related to the study to determine if there was a significant increase in phonics skills. Students were predetermined for this study based on reading assessment data and their level of English proficiency. A variety of instruments were used to determine participants as well as gather and analyze data. As a result, the design of this study falls under the quasi-experimental design. The analysis of data and findings from this study are reported in Chapter 4.

Second grade Fountas and Pinnell Phonics lessons were aligned to ELPS for both classrooms. After ten weeks of Second grade Fountas and Pinnell phonics instruction, students were given the same Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory assessment. The data was tabulated using the WTW feature point scoring guide. The pre and post test scores were entered into Excel spread sheets and graphs were created to compare the two groups.

A 10 question survey was written by the teacher (see appendix B) to gather information on students' feelings and attitudes towards reading and how reading instruction is presented. After ten weeks of intervention, all students were given a survey. (see appendix B).

Results of the study were shared with students, staff and administration (see table 1 and 2). Surveys were totaled and shared with staff and administration.

#### Treatment of Data

The researcher collected data using the Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide. The feature guide provided information on students' stages of orthographic features that are most important in identifying students' skills in reading and spelling. Data from the pre and post tests were calculated and then entered numerically into an Excel spreadsheet. Excel spreadsheets were used to determine the mean and t-scores of the pre and post-tests. Graphs were created

Permission to conduct research at Highlands Elementary and Honey Dew Elementary was granted by Principal Misty Mbadugha and Principal Alfred Deblasio. Permission was granted on November 23, 2016.

A review of selected literature was conducted at Highline Community College, Heritage University, and internet search engines. The literature set included information and background on Educational law, standards, English Language learners, phonics instruction, instructional grouping, and co-teaching that was used to implement this study.

The researcher reviewed beginning of the year BAS data and WELPA scores to determine which grade level would participate in the study. Students who were performing below grade level were identified at both schools. Classrooms were chosen and instructional groups formed in collaboration with classroom teachers.

All students, control and experimental group, were given a Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory pre-assessment before the study began. The data was tabulated using the WTW feature point scoring guide and students were ranked based on their total feature point score. Based on assessment results, classroom A was divided into heterogeneous grouping and classroom B was divided into homogeneous groups.

The validity and reliability of the instruments used are discussed here.

The researcher tried to control the setting for the pre-tests, post-test, and the survey to address validity issues. The survey was presented in an educational setting. The researcher read the survey to all students to ensure validity of student responses. Data invalidity is controlled through consistent documentation of student responses, as outlined by test protocol. Students were assessed through Words their Way Primary Spelling Inventory. The Words Their Way series is a researched based program of orthographic development published by Pearson, an educational publisher.

#### Design

The study included 35 second grade students at two schools. All students in the study were predetermined and the design of this study was a quasi-experimental. The researched used a pre and post-test to determine the effect of the treatment. The researched prepared and administered a survey for group A at the end of the study. The survey was to show how students felt about reading and different types of reading instruction.

#### Procedure

Asian/Pacific Islander, two White, one Black /African American, and one two or more races.

### Instruments

The data gathering devices that were used were; Skyward, Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), the participant surveys, Microsoft Exel spreadsheets, Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory (WTWPSI) for the pre and post-test, and Stat Pak. WELPA proficiency levels, enrollment statuses, and absence data was collected through Skyward. The BAS data provided students current reading levels and identified students who were performing below grade level benchmarks. WTWPSI provided information on students' ability to spell word features or patterns at increasing levels of difficulty based on grade level expectations. All data was entered into Microsoft Exel and graphs were created. Stat Pak was used to analyze data and to determine significance of the data results.

The survey was designed to include a three point scale that evaluated students' feelings and perceptions about reading in the classroom. The participants were asked whether they agree, somewhat agree, or disagree to the statements or questions. The survey was also designed to determine how students felt about reading and different types of reading instruction. The survey was given to the experimental group at the end of the study.

Data was collected from November 2015 to June 2016. The collected data was entered into a statistical calculator (Stat Pak) and a t-test. The results of the t-test were then compared to distribution of the t-table to ascertain if the treatment did provide a significant change in increased phonics skills.

### Participants

Participants for the study were selected from Highlands Elementary and Honey Elementary schools based on limited English proficiency (LEP) status and beginning of the year Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) scores. Schoolwide WELPA scores were analyzed and it was determined that second grade had the lowest improvement in reading compared to all other grade levels. One second grade classroom from each school was selected to participate in the study.

The experimental group was made up of a class of 17 students. In that class, there were nine females and eight males. Eleven of those students were identified as ELL and two were in special education. The ethnicity of the class was 12 Hispanic, two Asian/Pacific Islander, and three White.

The control group was made up of a class of 18 students. In that class, there were seven female and 11 males. Eleven of the students were ELL and one was in special education. The ethnicity of the class was seven Hispanic, seven

most threats to internal and external validity. All true designs have a control group but are still randomly selected.

Permission for this study was obtained by principals of both schools, Misty Mbadugha and Alfred Deblasio. The purpose of the study was to determine whether phonics instruction provided within homogenous or heterogeneous grouping, as well as parallel co-taught, resulted in higher rate of growth on the Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory assessment.

The researcher divided classroom A into two heterogeneous groups; students performing on or above grade level and students performing more than a year below grade level. Students on or above grade level received phonics instruction provided by the classroom teacher and moved at a faster pace. Students performing below grade level received instruction by the researcher, moving at a slower pace. Classroom B was divided into two homogeneous groups, ability levels evenly split between the classroom teacher and the researcher. Both groups received the same instruction. At the end of the study, students in group A were given a survey. The survey allowed students to give their perspective of reading, their reading ability, and type of instruction. Pre and post-tests data and survey data were entered into Microsoft Excel. Graphs were created to represent the results of both groups as well as the survey.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of the Data

#### Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topics: (a) Methodology, (b) Participants, (c) Instruments, (d) Design, (e) Procedure, (f) Treatment of the Data, (g) Summary.

#### Methodology

The researcher determined that the best method for this study was the Quasi-Experimental design. Based on action research, the study was conducted at Honey Dew and Highlands elementary school and the researcher was involved in the study.

Quasi Experimental designed according to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2012) consists of the following components. Two treatment groups were pretested, administered treatment, and post tested. This quasi experimental design involves assignment of intact groups to treatment rather than randomly assigned individuals. As a result, quasi experimental design has less control of variables. In true experimental design, participants are randomly selected and randomly selected to a treatment group. True experimental design controls variables for

and co-teaching. The methodology and treatment of the data are reported in Chapter 3.

Co-teaching provided a solution to this problem as it allowed teachers to meet the instructional needs of the students within the core curriculum (Friend, 2015 p. 14).

Co-teaching has seen growth worldwide as it provided inclusiveness and social justice in schools. “Students in co-taught classrooms often have better opportunities to learn social, behavioral, and cultural mores through informal interactions with peers and professionals” (Friend, 2015 p. 15). Friend also believed that co-teaching in classrooms allowed instruction to be richer with varied points of view from both teachers (2015)

### Summary

The focus of this chapter was to address the available evidence to the topics of (a) ELL Law, (b) Phonics Instruction, (c) Instructional grouping, (d) Standards, and (e) Co-Teaching. The legislation regarding ELLs in our school outlined language program, standards, and assessments to ensure the progress of ELLs proficiency in English. Many have identified the challenges of ELLs to learn the rigorous content while learning English at the same time. There are several identified strategies for teaching ELL students reading, specifically phonics instruction, to ensure adequate progress. Several strategies were identified to support the varied needs of ELLs in the classroom, including instructional groups

This study followed the Parallel Teaching model. Friend (2015) described the opportunities and advantages that this model provided as well as potential problems. According to Friend, "Parallel teaching truly establishes a teaching partnership with both partners contributing to student learn. Strong potential exists to increase the instructional intensity of the by increasing students' opportunities to respond. This approach also provides built-in opportunities for high-quality differentiation" (p.27). Friend went on to describe the potential problems with parallel co-teaching. The first was the noise level that came with two teachers instructing and students responding at the same time. Another problem lied with how teachers chose to group the students. Friend cautioned against creating "high" and "low" groups as it may create a stigma. Lastly, both teachers had to be equally prepared and knowledgeable about the content being taught (Friend, 2015).

Friend identified several problems with a common ELL service model. Many ELL elementary students received instruction through pull out services by the ELL specialist. When this happened, student learning was fragmented and they were not able to generalize the skills they learned in the separate setting to the core curriculum. Students may have also missed significant parts of their classroom core instruction and were not provided an opportunity to learn the missed content.

simultaneously. The distinction between this approach and station teaching is that in parallel teaching, the teachers work only with part of the students; they do not interact with all the students as is the case with station teaching.

**Alternative Teaching:** In alternative teaching, one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group. The purpose for grouping the students may vary, as may the educator who takes the small group and the students comprising the small group.

**Teaming:** In teaming, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having “one brain in two bodies.” Others call it “tag team teaching.” Most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach, but it is the approach that is most dependent on teachers’ styles.

**One Teach, One Assist:** In one teach, one assist, one teacher holds primary responsibility for teaching while the other professional circulates through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed.  
(p. 22)”

## Co-Teaching

Co-Teaching was a form of instruction involving two qualified teaching delivering instruction to a class. Friend (2015), identified six models of co-teaching. The six models include One Teach/One Observe, Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, Alternative Teaching, Teaming, and One Teach/One Assist. Co-teaching could occur during the entire lesson or identified for a single component or unique variation.

Friend explains the six models of co-teaching as:

“One Teach, One Observe: This co-teaching approach entails one teacher leading instruction while the other teacher gathers data regarding students’ academic progress, behavior or social skills, or responsiveness to teacher directions. Data thus gathered should form the basis for instructional decision-making.

**Station Teaching:** In this co-teaching approach, teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third “station” could give students an opportunity to work independently.

**Parallel Teaching:** In parallel teaching, the teachers are both teaching the same information, but they divide the class group and do so

ELLs faced a challenge with the standards-based curriculum as they “acquire English language proficiency (ELP) and achieve academically across content areas” (Fenner & Segota, n.d., para. 1). Common standards helped define the language as well as the content that is needed for all students to achieve. In order to ensure ELLs achieve, ELP standards were developed as a way to identify the language that they must develop to be successful in the classroom. The purpose of the ELP standards was to support teachers as they helped ELLs develop academic language. They outline the ways ELLs were assumed to progress in their English over time as well as the expected language abilities at different levels (Valdes, Kibler, Walqui, 2014). The current ELP standards were being revised to show alignment with CCSS.

Another challenge for ELLs and the CCSS was the language required by conceptual learning and participating in analytical tasks. Teachers must know and understand how to build the language necessary for students to acquire these skills. In the classroom, both teachers and students were using a range a language “registers”, from general classroom language to content-specific language. Teachers were responsible for ensuring that language supports ELLs’ need for theses varying levels of language that were embedded in their daily instruction (Valdes, Kibler, Walqui, 2014).

always placed in the lowest reading groups developed negative perceptions of their reading abilities and low expectations of progress” (Vaughn, 2009. p. 2).

### Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were developed from the idea of having one set of challenging expectations for all students with the aim of improved achievement and college readiness. Previously, each state had their own set of standards and their own definition of proficiency. The standards were developed by first looking at the skills students needed to be college and career ready. They then looked at what skills that each grade level needed in order to get there (<http://www.corestandards.org/>). The standards were introduced in 2009 and adopted by 46 out of the 50 states by 2010/2011. In 2014, three states (Oklahoma, Indiana, and South Carolina) withdrew.

The standards were skills in English/language arts and math that students should have at each grade level so that they are college and career ready by the time they graduate high school. For English/language arts, students were expected to read complex literary and informational texts and interpret, develop arguments, and cite evidence from those texts. In math, standards were set to build upon a logical sequence of topics that supports application and understanding as well as fluency of numbers and facts (Gewertz, 2015).

ELLs as teachers may not have identified the language demands of the lesson. Second language grouping was when every student in the group was an ELL. The purpose of this grouping was to allow ELLs to work on English structure and academic content simultaneously. Commins cautioned that this form of instructional grouping should not be used as an all-day pull out class. The third type of grouping was primary language instructional groups. It did, however, allow students to participate in instruction through their primary language, work on higher-order thinking skills, and go deeper into content (de Jong & Commins, n.d.)

Another way teachers could group students for instruction was to look at academic ability. Homogeneous grouping was same-ability groups that were based on classroom, district, and state assessments. In classrooms, this usual resulted in grouping students in three to four groups to provide reading instruction. Vaughn (2009) explained that there was an increasing trend to provide instruction in reading as whole class and heterogeneous groups. The move away from homogenous grouping was due to several reasons. The first was that research found instruction to the lowest ability group in homogeneous grouping was lower quality and often focused on isolated skills. Secondly, groups were not flexible and often impacted peer relations (Vaughn, 2009). Finally, “students who were

skills they needed to work on. Herrmann stressed that groupings were flexible and could change for a variety of reasons (Herrmann, 2014).

According to de Jong and Commins (n.d.), several factors should be considered when placing ELLs in instructional groups. These factors included looking at the program model for instruction ELLs as well as available resources for the program. Students' language proficiency, background, and age should also be considered when looking at how students should be grouped.

De Jong argued that when grouping students by language background, heterogeneously, it supported English language learning as it created the need to use English as the common language within the group. However, if the students were grouped by the same language background, the teacher could use bilingual resources to use the native language as a way to scaffold instruction in English.

Commins broke down three possible instructional groupings into heterogeneous groups, second language groups, and primary groups. Commins also identified benefits, both linguistically and academically, of all three. Heterogeneous grouping was when the teacher worked with a mix of native English speakers and ELLs. ELLs benefited from this instruction because they had English models and were instructed using rigorous academic programs. On the other hand, Commins points out that this type of instruction could be stressful for

program should include books and stories that contain a large number of words that children can decode by using the letter-sound relationship that they have learned and are learning” (p. 33). Finally, ELLs should be spelling and writing their own stories using the phonics skills they’ve learned (Thompson & Vaughn, 2007).

Gersten & Baker note that phonics instruction is most effective when it is paired with oral language instruction, not waiting until students’ oral language is proficient before starting phonics instruction. As students participate in a systematic phonics program, their understanding of English language structure increases (as cited in Thompson & Vaughn, 2007).

### Instructional Grouping

Classroom teachers were required to meet the needs of classrooms that included students with diverse needs. Most U.S. classrooms were composed of students from different cultural, social, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. According to Herrmann (2014), both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping had benefits in the classroom. Students who were grouped heterogeneously learned from other students and benefited from different ideas, perspectives and shared learning. A homogeneous group was best to support students in specific

large number of words. They knew how to apply these skills as they are spelling more complex words, even words they have not had formal instruction in. Instruction that highlighted these patterns and strategies as a way to help writers spell was significantly more effective than memorizing spelling lists (Pinnell and Fountas, 2011).

Because ELLs faced a challenge when learning phonics skills, special considerations needed to be noted when deciding when and how to implement phonics instruction. English was a language with a less-predictable orthography and took longer to learn than languages with a more predictable orthography. Older ELLs, who have learned to read in their primary language, still needed phonics instruction, but they may acquire skill more quickly (Thompson & Vaughn, 2007)

Thompson & Vaughn (2007) have outlined effective components of a phonics program for ELLs. They found that a systematic approach and direct teaching allowed students to begin to read and write in English even before they have learned all of the letter-sound correspondences. "For ELLs, who are learning to read in an inconsistent orthography like English, instruction using analogy-based phonics provides children an additional strategy for reading a larger number of words as they are building their English oral language skills. In addition, the

students should use this skill in their reading as well as their writing. Some challenges that ELLs faced during phonics instruction was when letter sounds in their native language were different in English. For example, English vowel sounds, with their numerous spellings and combinations, were difficult for native Spanish speakers as Spanish has a one to one correspondence between vowel letters and sounds (Antunez, 2002, para. 9).

Honiq, Diamond, and Gutlohn (2008) have identified good phonics instruction as; developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle, incorporating phonemic awareness, providing sufficient practice in reading words, leading to automatic word recognition, and as part of a comprehensive reading program. Effective instructional techniques included corrective feedback, monitoring students to ensure they were attending and responding correctly, keep pacing at and engaging rate, and developing strategies for solving words quickly and effectively so they were able to focus on comprehension (Honiq, Diamond, and Gutlohn, 2008). Teachers evaluated their effectiveness by continued observations of student behavior in reading and writing and used that information to inform their teaching (Pinnell and Fountas, 2011).

Pinnell and Fountas (2011) have also found that students with an internalized system of word-solving strategies and some phonics patterns were able to spell a

during the first year, students would take both tests but their scores wouldn't count towards a school's ratings. In the second year, states would measure the growth for reading and math. In the third year, students test scores would be included in the same way their peers would for accountability (Sedelmyer, 2016).

### Phonics Instruction

Phonics instruction was defined as “the systematic relationship between the letters and letter combinations (graphemes) in written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language and how to use these relationships to read and spell words” (Honic, Diamond, Gutlohn, 2008. p.170). The National Reading Panel found that students who received systematic phonics instruction increased their reading skills at a faster pace than students who received nonsystematic or no phonics instruction at all. Armbruster defines systematic as “teaching a set of useful sounds/spelling relationships in a clearly defined, carefully selected, logical sequence” (as cited in Honic, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2008. p. 171). Explicit instruction was when skills were clearly modeled and taught (Honic, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2008).

Readers used the relationship between the spoken and written sound to read familiar words and to decode new words. Phonics instruction, as part of teaching reading, needed to clearly teach how letters correspond to sounds and how

As Part of the Title III grants, school districts receiving funds must have reported LEP student progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening to demonstrate their progress in becoming proficient in English. Title III also required that states set annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) that school districts must meet along with meeting annual yearly progress (AYP) (Westall, Sisco, Mendoza, & Moore, 2014).

On December 10, 2015, President Obama reauthorized the ESEA as he signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under the new authorization, there were some changes to how schools could use federal funding. One change would move the accountability for ELLs from Title III to Title I. This was done to show that ELL proficiency was just as important as other students (Mitchell, 2015). Under ESSA, states and districts had more flexibility in how they used federal money. Some districts even had the opportunity to direct more money toward students who faced disadvantages, such as ELLs and low income students (Ujifusa, 2016)

Another change that came with the authorization of ESSA was to allow states to choose between two options when testing ELLs. The previous policy under NCLB required ELLs to test in math within the first year of entering a U.S. school, and reading after they've been in a U.S. school at least one year. Under ESSA, states were able to choose between continuing with previous policy or,

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Selected Literature

#### Introduction

This chapter has been organized around the following topics: (a) ELL Law, (b) Phonics Instruction, (c) Instructional Grouping, (d) Standards, (e) Co-Teaching, and (f) summary.

#### ELL Law

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was renamed as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) after its reauthorization in 2001. NCLB required each state to develop standards and assessments to measure Limited English Proficient (LEP) student progress towards English Language Proficiency (ELP) (U.S. Department of Education). Under NCLB, Title III was a grant program that provided funds to improve instruction of LEP students. The purpose was to ensure English learners developed English proficiency and met standards for academic achievement. Title III required that LEP students be placed in language instruction programs with the “primary goal of becoming English language proficient”. Bilingual education or programs were no longer specified under the reauthorization (Wright, n.d.).

LEP- Limited English Proficiency

OSPI. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction WTWPSI- Words Their Way

Primary Spelling Inventory

WELPA- Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment

Phonics. Reading instruction that focuses on acquiring letter-sound correspondence and relating it to reading and spelling.

Co-Teaching. Two equally qualified teachers delivering instruction together to a classroom of students.

Homogeneous Grouping. Groups of students organized placed together with similar instruction levels. Instruction is targeted to their instructional level as determined through assessments.

Heterogeneous Grouping. Groups of students organized together with different instructional or language levels. Instruction is based on standards.

Title I. Federally funded program by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to provide financial assistance to local education agencies and schools with high percentages of students from low-income families.

Acronym

AMAO- Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives

AYP. Annual Yearly Progress.

CCSS- Common Core State Standards

ELL- English Language Learner

ELPS- English Language Proficiency Standards

ESEA- Elementary and Secondary Education Act

6. After 10 weeks of Second grade Fountas and Pinnell phonics instruction, students were given the same Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory assessment.
7. A 10 question survey was written by the teacher (see appendix B)
8. After 10 weeks of intervention, all students were given a survey to see how they felt about reading (see appendix B)
9. Post tests were graded and shared with students, staff and administration (see table 1 and 2)
10. Surveys were totaled and shared with staff and administration.

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following words are defined:

Title III. United States education grant program to improve education targeted towards Limited English Proficient children and immigrant youth.

No Child Left Behind Act. Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001 with a focus on closing student achievement gap by providing fair, equal, and high-quality education.

Every Student Succeeds Act. Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015. This law replaced No Child Left Behind Act.

If students had significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory after receiving the treatment, the positive results would impact the teaching practice within each building in order to gain similar results with other second grade classes. If students did not have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory after receiving the treatment, other options for instructional practice would be pursued.

#### Procedure

1. Permission to conduct research at Highlands Elementary and Honey Dew Elementary was granted by Principal Misty Mbadugha and Principal Alfred Deblasio (See appendix A)
2. A review of selected literature was conducted at Highline Community College, Heritage University, and internet search engines.
3. All students were given a Words Their Way Primary Spelling Inventory pre-assessment before the study began.
4. Based on assessment result classroom A was divided into heterogeneous grouping and classroom B was divided into homogeneous groups.
5. Second grade Fountas and Pinnell Phonics lessons were aligned to ELPS for both classrooms

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will report that their ability to read new words has improved.

#### Null Hypothesis

Students who participate in phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, will not have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory than students who participate in phonics instruction in a homogeneous parallel co-taught classroom. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom will not report that their ability to read new words has improved.

#### Significance of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding the effect of phonics instruction in a parallel co-teaching model using heterogeneous grouping. Information and data was gathered to determine whether co-teaching and heterogeneous instructional grouping would have a positive impact on students' phonics instruction.

2016 school year with 35 students. The enrollment at Honey Dew Elementary in the fall count was 545. The enrollment at Highlands Elementary in the fall count was 540. The ethnicity of Honey Dew was 51.9% Hispanic, .2% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 16.3% Asian, 7.9% Black/African American, .4% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 17.8% Whites, 5.5% two or more races. Free and reduced lunch was 69.2%, special education was 13.3%, ELL was 45.1%. The ethnicity of Highlands was 48.1% Hispanic, 18% Asian, 8.3% Black/African American, .7% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 16.9% Whites, 8% two or more races. Free and reduced lunch was 72.3%, special education was 12.5%, ELL was 47.7%. Approximately 70% of teachers at both schools hold Master's degrees, however, 100% of the teachers are highly qualified (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2015)

### Assumptions

Throughout the study, it was assumed that students would have regular attendance, be highly engaged, and participate regularly throughout the lessons. Students would demonstrate their ability during the phonics assessments. Students would be honest on their survey. Classroom composition would remain similar between classrooms throughout the study.

### Hypothesis

### Statement of the Problem

Honey Dew Elementary (HDE) and Highlands Elementary (HLE) looked at the fall Benchmark Assessment System scores for second grade. The two targeted classrooms had 57% of their students performing below grade level. The teams noticed that 75% of the students performing below grade level were English Language Learners (ELL). Students performing below grade level had received Leveled Literacy Intervention, which includes five minutes of leveled phonics instruction. Assessments showed that limited progress had been made in the area of phonics.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to determine if phonics instruction in a heterogeneous grouped parallel co-taught classroom, would have significantly higher scores on a phonics based spelling inventory. Students who participated in heterogeneous grouped co-parallel taught classroom would report that their ability to read new words has improved.

### Delimitations

This project was delimited to two second grade classrooms at Honey Dew Elementary and Highlands Elementary in the Renton School District, located in Renton, Washington. The project was conducted during the spring of the 2015-

English. ELP Standards were then developed to define the language needed to meet standards and to be successful in the classroom (Fenner & Segota, n.d.).

Grade level teams further looked at reading data and found that over 75% of student performing below grade level in reading were English Language Learners (ELL). According to Thompson and Vaughn (2007), ELLs struggled to learn the phonetics of English as it's far less predictable. They found that a systematic approach to phonics instruction allowed students to read and write in English even as they were still learning the language.

In order to meet the needs of all reading levels in the classroom, teachers often utilized instructional groups as a key strategy for differentiation. According to Hermann (2014), flexible groups could have benefits in the classroom. Students could benefit from specified instruction in their deficit areas, or homogeneously, as well as heterogeneous groupings where students could benefit from different ideas, perspectives and shared learning.

Finally, many teachers and schools have moved towards co-teaching as an option for teaching students with disabilities, gifted/talented students, and ELL. Students in these diverse classroom have benefited from having their classroom teacher and a specialist who provided instruction in the core curriculum (Friend, 2015).

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background for the Project

As part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), each state was required to develop standards and assessments to measure Limited English Proficient (LEP) student progress towards English Language Proficiency (ELP). Both Honey Dew and Highlands elementary schools were deficient in progressing second and third grade student English levels for the reading and writing subtest as measured by Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA).

As part of NCLB, each state was required to develop standards and assessments to measure LEP. Title III, under NCLB, required LEP students to be placed in language instruction to learn English. School districts that received funding under Title III must report LEP progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Common Core State Standards were developed and introduced in 2009 in order to improve achievement and college readiness. English Language Learners (ELL) were challenged as they were required to meet standards as they acquired

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure A. Mean Difference.....	36
Figure 1. Survey Question 1.....	37
Figure 2. Survey Question 2.....	38
Figure 3. Survey Question 3.....	39
Figure 4. Survey Question 4.....	40
Figure 5. Survey Question 5.....	41
Figure 6. Survey Question 6.....	42
Figure 7. Survey Question 7.....	43
Figure 8. Survey Question 8.....	44
Figure 9. Survey Question 9.....	45
Figure 10. Survey Question 10.....	46

Results of the Study .....	34
Findings.....	47
Discussion .....	47
CHAPTER 5.....	50
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	50
Summary.....	50
Conclusions.....	52
Recommendations.....	52
REFERENCES.....	54
APPENDICES.....	58
Appendix A.....	58
Appendix B.....	59

Review of Selected Literature.....	10
Introduction.....	10
ELL Law.....	10
Phonics Instruction.....	12
Instructional Grouping.....	15
Standards.....	18
Co-Teaching.....	20
Summary.....	23
CHAPTER 3.....	25
Methodology and Treatment of Data.....	25
Introduction.....	25
Methodology.....	25
Participants .....	27
Instruments .....	28
Design .....	29
Procedure .....	29
Treatment of the Data.....	31
Summary.....	32
CHAPTER 4.....	33
Analysis of the Data.....	33
Introduction.....	33
Description of the Environment.....	33
Hypothesis/Research Question.....	33
Null Hypothesis .....	34

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FACULTY APPROVAL.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
PERMISSION TO STORE.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
Introduction	
Background on the Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Project.....	3
Delimitations.....	3
Assumptions.....	4
Hypothesis.....	4
Null Hypothesis .....	5
Significance of the Project.....	5
Procedure.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
Acronyms.....	8
	Page
CHAPTER 2.....	10

PERMISSION TO STORE

I, Julie Strickler, hereby irrevocably consent and authorize Heritage University Library to file the attached Special Project entitled Use of Instructional Grouping in Phonics Instruction for ELLs and make such Project and Compact Disk (CD) available for the use, circulation and/or reproduction by the Library. The Project and CD may be used at Heritage University Library and all site locations.

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Julie Strickler, Author  
7-11-16, Date

## ABSTRACT

### Use of Instructional Grouping in Phonics Instruction for ELLs

Researcher: Julie Strickler, M.Ed., Heritage University

Chair Advisory Committee: Robert P. Kraig, PhD.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of heterogeneous grouping in phonics instruction to significantly increase students' phonics skills on a phonics based spelling inventory compared to students grouped homogeneously. The study was conducted using 35 second grade students between two classrooms, 22 of the 35 students were identified as ELLs. The overall effect of the study did not show a significant increase in scores for students who were heterogeneously grouped. The phonics instruction resulted in increased scores for both groups, however, a slightly higher change for students grouped homogeneously. In sum, grouping students heterogeneously compared to homogeneously did not have a significant impact on students' phonics skills.

FACULTY APPROVAL

Use of Instructional Grouping in Phonics Instruction for ELLs

A Master's Special Project

by

Julie Strickler

Approved for the Faculty

Robert P. Kraig, Faculty Advisor

Dr. Robert P. Kraig

7/12/2016, Date

Use of Instructional Grouping in Phonics Instruction for ELLs

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A Special Project

Presented to

Dr. Robert P. Kraig

Heritage University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters in Educational Leadership

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Julie C. Strickler

2016