



The **OHIO** Journal of  
Teacher Education

---

FALL 2015. VOLUME 29. NUMBER 2

# The **OHIO** Journal of Teacher Education

FALL 2015 . VOLUME 29 . NUMBER 2

**PUBLISHED BY THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS**

Dr. D. Mark Meyers, Xavier University  
Dr. Jean F. Eagle, Miami University  
EDITORS

# CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                                             |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Message from the Editors                                                                                                                                    | 1  |
| Editorial Board                                                                                                                                             | 3  |
| A Call for Editorial Board Membership                                                                                                                       | 4  |
| <b>ARTICLES</b>                                                                                                                                             |    |
| A Volunteer-Tutoring Program in Reading: Examining the growth in reading achievement of elementary grade Students with SLD in a tutoring based intervention | 5  |
| <i>David D. Hampton, Ph.D., Bowling Green State University</i>                                                                                              |    |
| <i>William F. Morrison, Ed.D., Bowling Green State University</i>                                                                                           |    |
| <i>Mary Rizza, Ph.D., Bowling Green State University</i>                                                                                                    |    |
| <i>Jan Osborn, Ed.D., Putnam County Educational Service Center</i>                                                                                          |    |
| Pre-Service Teachers and Parent Involvement: Using the Child, Family and Schools Course to Inform Practice                                                  | 24 |
| <i>Rachel J. Boit, Ed.D., University of Akron</i> 21                                                                                                        |    |
| Going to School: Employment Strategies for Teachers                                                                                                         | 37 |
| <i>Amy Szymaszek, M.S.Ed., University of Dayton</i>                                                                                                         |    |
| <i>Peter Titlebaum, Ed.D., University of Dayton</i>                                                                                                         |    |
| Executive Functions in Young Children: Supporting Their Development in Inclusive Settings                                                                   | 51 |
| <i>Evonn Welton PhD, University of Akron</i>                                                                                                                |    |
| <i>Shernavaz Vakil, EdD., University of Akron</i>                                                                                                           |    |
| <i>Lynn S. Kline, Ph.D., University of Akron</i>                                                                                                            |    |
| Reflection as a Means to Combat Superficiality                                                                                                              | 62 |
| <i>D. Mark Meyers, PhD, Xavier University</i>                                                                                                               |    |
| Publication and Manuscript Guidelines                                                                                                                       | 69 |
| Important Dates of Note                                                                                                                                     | 70 |
| Membership                                                                                                                                                  | 71 |



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome from the The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education Editorial Team. We are honored and privileged to shepherd this journal for the educational community of Ohio

The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is an online journal. We invite all forms of article formats, as seen in the publication and manuscript guidelines included inside the journal. However, we do invite authors to utilize the online format. The use of links and other interactive devices will allow the online journal to be more than simply a pdf of articles that you can print at your own workstation. In the future, the hope of the editorial team is to develop a truly functional online journal experience which can open the world of practice to our readership.

We will strive to build upon the solid foundation left by the previous editorial teams and move the OHIO Journal of Teacher Education forward as a resource for pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and all with an interest in teacher education.

Dr. Jean Eagle and Dr. Mark Meyers, Co-Editors





## EDITORIAL BOARD

Michele Beery, Ph.D.  
*Wilmington College*

Stacey Pistorova, Ph.D.  
*Heidelberg University*

Cynthia Bertelsen, Ph.D.  
*Bowling Green State University*

Carol Ramsay, Ed. D.  
*Lake Erie College*

Sue Corbin, Ph.D.  
*Notre Dame  
College of Ohio*

Linda Ingling Rogness, Ph.D.  
*Muskingum University*

Joy Cowdery, Ph.D.  
*Muskingum University*

Marlissa Stauffer, Ph.D.  
*Ohio Dominican University*

Todd Hawley, Ph. D.  
*Kent State University*

Nicole Williams, Ph. D.  
*University of  
Findlay*



## A CALL FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Ohio Journal of Teacher Education (OJTE) is looking for interested individuals to join the Editorial Board of the journal. We are looking to establish a board that represents the Colleges and Universities of Ohio as well as offers a broad spectrum of content expertise.

If interested, please submit a one page letter of intent that includes your College or University, your educational background, and your content area of interest to the co-editors.

Dr. Mark Meyers and Dr. Jean Eagle at  
[oatejournal@gmail.com](mailto:oatejournal@gmail.com)

We look forward to hearing from you.

## A Volunteer-Tutoring Program in Reading: Examining the growth in reading achievement of elementary grade Students with SLD in a tutoring based intervention

David D. Hampton, Ph.D., William F. Morrison, Ed.D., Mary Rizza, Ph.D., and Jan Osborn, Ed.D.

\* Correspondence:  
David D. Hampton, Ph.D.  
Bowling Green State  
University  
412 Education Building  
Bowling Green, OH 43403  
[hamptod@bgsu.edu](mailto:hamptod@bgsu.edu)  
Full list of author  
information is available at  
the end of the article

### *Abstract:*

*This evaluation examined the effects of a supplemental reading intervention for students identified with specific learning disabilities in reading, and who had at least one reading goal listed on their current IEP. All consented participants in the study presented with below grade level on fall benchmark scores on DIBELS 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Revised. Participants consisted of a treatment group, those who received supplemental reading instruction in addition to core + special education services and a control group of students who received only core + special education services. The students in the treatment group received 26 weeks of Project MORE instruction delivered multiple times each week from trained volunteer tutors. Using a regression-discontinuity design, condition and comparison groups were compared on reading development growth using DIBELS ORF. Significant findings were reported for grade 2, 3, and 4.*

One-to-one tutoring, provided as an extension to classroom teaching, is commonly considered to be the most effective way of increasing students' academic proficiency, particularly in the area of early reading skills. The effectiveness of one-to-one tutoring as an effective reading intervention has been validated by empirical research, especially for those children who are considered at-risk for academic failure, or have been identified as having reading or learning disabilities (Elbaum, Vaughn, Tejero-Hughes, & Watson-Moody, 2000; Osborn et al., 2007; Slavina, Lake, Davis, & Maldena, 2011; Vaughn et al., 2009). Elementary teachers routinely identify trained volunteer one-to-one tutoring, an optimal instructional strategy to implement in their classrooms. Yet, these teachers report that it is challenging to implement in their classrooms (Elbaum, et al.; Pullen, Lane, & Monahan, 2004). The importance of reading interventions in the primary grades is underscored by Hecht and Greenfield (2001), who note that few changes in individual reading skills occur after the third grade.



As other important consequences to lack of early intervention include, poor academic outcomes, increased behavioral issues, higher probability of these students dropping out of school will lead to limited employment opportunities later in life.

Many educators and researchers have found that while one-to-one tutoring can be an effective method of improving the reading skills of students who are struggling with reading, there is some debate on which type of programs provide the most effective avenue for improving students' reading through tutoring. In a review of the defining characteristics of successful tutoring programs, Power & Cummings (2011) identified eight important variables to consider when determining best practice for one-to-one tutoring programs: (1) volunteers, (2) training and supervision of volunteers, (3) tutoring strategies, (4) length and frequency of tutoring, (5) students' grade level, and (6) location of the tutoring sessions, (7) materials, and (8) finances. Addressing these variables can serve as components of effectiveness of tutoring programs on improving student outcomes were further explained as training for volunteers, connecting the tutoring program to student learning in school, providing the student with tutoring sessions over an extended period of the academic year (Power & Cummings).

### *Students with reading difficulties*

Despite the success of early reading interventions studies in assisting students to improve their reading skills, many students continue to have significant reading difficulties (Vaughn et al., 2009). Other research findings indicate that some students progress in their reading proficiency at a much slower rate, even in the presence of a highly qualified teacher and evidence-based instruction (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002). Students who may present a resistance to evidence-based reading instruction may have different characteristics from students with reading difficulties. Multiple research findings examining the differences in students' response to reading interventions indicate that the areas of phonological processing, rapid-naming ability, and verbal ability could indicate differences in the level of these students progress in reading (Al-Otaiba & Fuchs, Vaughn, Wanzek, Woodruff, & Linan-Thompson, 2007). Students who fail to respond to evidence-based reading instruction provide a population from which we can explore the development of reading skills, effective instruction, and those students who present with reading difficulties and/or disabilities (Vaughn et al., 2009).

*Volunteer Tutoring*

The implementation of tutoring programs has existed in education for several decades. Multiple reasons are frequently cited for the growth of a variety of tutoring programs in schools. The attention of the public was focused on the deficiencies of student proficiency in reading, particularly after the publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). With this increased attention came a resurgence of volunteers ready to tutor students who may be struggling in reading development. Yet, despite the increased use of volunteer tutoring in schools, particularly with volunteers considered to be “non-professional” volunteers, there is not yet a sufficient body of evidence to confirm the effectiveness of the use of a diverse population of volunteer tutors (Ritter, Barnett, Denny, & Albin, 2009).

Empirical research has been conducted in a few large-scale studies aimed at improving the academic achievement of students who struggle the most in foundational reading skills. Two important studies, Reading Recovery and Success for All (Shanahan, 1998; Wasik & Slavin, 1993) are considered to be effective tutoring programs, but both require the use of professional tutors in their implementation. The most significant limitation to these programs rests in the limited availability of professional volunteers, which in turn, limits the number of struggling students who can be assisted (Ritter et al.). In a review of 17 studies which employ volunteer tutors to improve students' reading skills, Wasik (1998) found that some of these programs could assist students who are struggling with reading development; only 2 of the 17 programs reviewed compared targeted students with a comparison group. This review has led to an increase in the evaluation of programming to meet the needs of students who struggle with reading development. Many of these studies have provided a beginning body of evidence for the effectiveness in the implementation of volunteer tutors in providing additional instructional supports for students in need of support in the area of reading ( Burns, Senesac, & Symington, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2001; Moore-Hart & Karabenick, 2009: &, Pullen, Lane, & Monaghan, 2004). The intention of continuing to build the body of evidence on the use of volunteer tutors for assisting students with reading difficulties formed the basis of this evaluation. Researchers were asked to evaluate a currently used program for using volunteer tutors to assist students with reading disabilities improve their reading development as a supplement to core reading instruction and special education services.

### *Rationale for Project MORE intervention*

When we initiated this study, the most reliable and valid empirical support for implementing interventions for students who have reading difficulties used standardized interventions (Vaughn et al., 2009). In a review of intervention studies, Wanzek & Vaughn (2007) reports findings from 18 studies conducted with primary grade students with significant reading difficulties. None of the studies reported using problem-solving or individualized instruction based upon student needs. This report defines an intervention of having high levels of standardization within the intervention and allowing for possible adjustments based upon student performance (Vaughn et al.). Project MORE (PM) incorporates the use of standardized methodologies in each of their tutoring sessions, while allowing for a small portion of the tutoring session toward meeting the students' reading needs based upon student IEP goals. The objective of PM is not to replace general education instruction in reading, including those programs considered in Tier One Response to Intervention (RTI) programming. PM is used as a supplement to core instruction and special education services (Osborn et al., 2007).

PM has been developed and funded through a partnership between state legislators and educational leaders to create a special education initiative unfolded in 15 schools in 2000, and has since grown throughout the state (Wilson & Rychener, 2009). PM used a commercially available tutoring intervention, Reading Tutors (reading-tutors.com, 2007). This program provides lessons and materials, as well as assessments pertaining to alphabet, phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, fluency and comprehension of reading. PM provides schools with over 450 tutor packets from the Reading Tutors program that are organized into the six categories stated above, covering key areas of literacy development cited by the National Reading Panel (Wilson & Rychener). This study examined the growth of reading proficiency of a group of students with SLD in reading, compared to a group of non-disabled peers. We were interested in examining whether students with reading disabilities would benefit from supplemental intervention using PM, in addition to core instruction and special education services, when compared to typical nondisabled peers.

### **Overview of the Study**

The current study was formed around the goal of comparing the reading gains of students in the Project MORE (Mentoring in Ohio for Reading Excellence) intervention program with the

reading gains of similar students who had not received the PM intervention. Our primary question was, will students with SLD in reading who receive supplemental volunteer tutoring in reading perform significantly higher on reading scores than those students with SLD in reading who did not receive the supplemental volunteer tutoring in reading. The intervention was of a comprehensive design focusing on oral language skills, phonemic sound-symbol relationship, and structural analysis, as well as morphemic awareness, vocabulary building, and reading fluency.

This study reports the relative benefits of the PM tutoring program for use as a supplemental reading intervention for students with SLD using a regression discontinuity analysis. Using regression discontinuity analysis, we were able to examine statistically significant gains in reading proficiency for students in the treatment condition when compared to their same grade level typically performing peers. The performance of the students receiving the PM intervention will be detailed relative to outcomes of DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) given at grade level three times during the academic year. The initial benchmark score served as the pretest score and the spring benchmark score served as the posttest score.

## **Method**

### **Participants and setting**

The participants in this evaluation consisted of 246 second, third, and fourth grade students from 11 schools from nine rural districts in a Midwestern state. All students were identified as having been identified with a SLD in reading as determined by IEP disability category, and each participant having at least one goal in reading listed on their respective IEP. This identification method has been used in previous research comparing the outcomes intervention research (Osborn et al., 2007 Vaughn et al., 2009; Wilson & Rychener, 2009). For the purposes of this study, students who had been identified as an English Language Learner (ELL) were not considered for either the treatment or control groups. Two groups were formed into treatment and control groups from each grade at each school. Inclusion of students into the treatment group and the control group based upon a cutoff score from the Fall DORF benchmark score. For students in grade two the cutoff score for participation in the study was a DORF fall benchmark score of 20 or below, grade three, DORF fall benchmark a score of 27 or below, and grade four, a score of 38 or below. While the sample for this study was based upon convenience

in their attendance in a school that had previously adopted the PM program for their students, for the purpose of the study, students were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group. Parental consent was required prior to being considered for this study and youth assent was obtained prior to the initial benchmark assessment at the pre-test screening.

In August of 2007, all students were screened using grade-level DIBELS ORF measures (Treatment Group:  $n = 121$ ; Control group:  $n = 125$ ). At the outset of the study, the groups were matched in sample size of 140 students in each group. The resulting sample size described in this study varied due to students leaving the school in which the study was conducted. There were 121 students in the treatment group, (63 female: 52%, 58 male: 48%). 89 students in the treatment group were Caucasian (74%), 24 were African American (20%), 6 students were Hispanic (5%), and 2 students were identified as other (2%). Free and reduced lunch status for the treatment group were 29 students (24%). For the students in the control group, there were 125 participants (59 female: 49%, 66 male: 51%). 96 students in the control group were Caucasian (77%), 18 were African American (14%), 11 students were Hispanic (8%). Free and reduced lunch status for the control group were 33 students (26%). Table 1. Lists the number of participants by grade level.

Table 1. Sample size by grade.

| Grade   | Treatment Group | Control Group |
|---------|-----------------|---------------|
| Grade 2 | 24              | 27            |
| Grade 3 | 21              | 26            |
| Grade 4 | 76              | 72            |
| Total   | 121             | 125           |

**Volunteer tutors.** For the PM intervention, volunteer tutors were used at each school site ( $n = 37$ ). Volunteers were recruited from the community and varied in their age from 16-67 years old, gender, and previous education and work experience. Tutors can be high school students, retirees, college students, professionals, laborers, parents, and anyone who the school can recruit, train, and commit to the PM tutoring program (Osborn, et al 2007). Use of tutors with a diverse background is widely supported in the literature (Al-Otaiba & Pappamihel, 2005; Caserta-Henry, 1996; Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000; Morris, Tyner, & Perney, J., 2000).

All tutors were trained by local school staff that were trained by supervisory personnel in charge of the state's Project MORE programming from the county Educational Service Center (ESC). Training consisted of one 2-hour session, and included treatment of fidelity in implementation of tutoring sessions conducted at the end of the training session and at the end of the first month of tutoring services. Any tutor who scored below the minimum 95% accuracy in the tutoring sessions based upon a checklist and inter-observer reliability were remediated in their training and were reassessed until they met the minimum accuracy level.

Detailed records were obtained over the 26 weeks of the intervention and were verified by members of the research team as well as through on-site observation and interviews with tutors and supervisory personnel at each of the 11 sites in order to assure accurate data entry.

### **Independent and dependent variables**

Given that this study involves the evaluation of a standardized intervention by using a quasi-experimental design it is important to distinguish the variables that drive the evaluation of the study outcome. The independent variable for this study is the student outcomes for the intervention, PM that would be delivered to the treatment group but withheld from the control group. The dependent variable for this study is the Project MORE intervention programming.

### **Procedures**

The treatment for this study consisted of the PM intervention delivered three times each week for approximately 30 minutes for each session. This intervention was delivered in addition to any reading instruction given in the general classroom or during special education minutes. The control group differed from the treatment group in only the delivery of the PM intervention. PM provided the overall structure to deliver the reading intervention. The goal of PM is to supplement reading instruction for students who have been identified with disabilities in reading proficiency, with each participant having at least one IEP goal in reading (Osborn, et al, 2007). The program delivers structured tutoring to a student who is identified as a struggling reader via data derived from curriculum-based measurement screening at grade-level in reading.

The PM intervention consisted of one-on-one tutoring by trained volunteer tutors conducted in a room outside of the classroom, and was conducted during the school day. There were three sessions each week over 26 weeks, each lasting 30 minutes. All students in the PM

intervention were given an initial screening using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Revised (DIBELS). Once a student's reading proficiency was determined, PM sessions were created from the Reading Tutors reading program (reading-tutors.com, 2007). The Reading Tutors program contains 450 comprehensive lesson plans with teaching tips, instructional resource packets, formative and summative assessment, and resources in alphabet, phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, fluency, and comprehension. The 450 tutor packets are organized into six categories covering six areas of literacy development cited by the National Reading Panel. They include alphabet recognition, phonological awareness, high-frequency word recognition, fluency, and reading comprehension. The Reading Tutors program conforms to the National Reading Panel's recommendations for successful reading programs (Osborn, et al, 2007). Students and tutors met in one-to-one tutoring sessions three times each week. A student may have as many as three different tutors in a week, but typically, tutors remained consistent throughout the year. The use of multiple tutors during the week could be problematic, but using an intervention system that is considered highly standardized lessens the impact of multiple tutors (Vaughn & Wanzek, 2007). Each session consisted of three instructional segments, with the first segment lasts for five to 10 minutes consisting of fluency building activities which included timed cold, warm, and hot reading, based on the premise of repeated reading. The second segment of each session focused attention on skills targeted at building reading comprehension by using predicting, previewing, and asking questions in advance of reading passages, followed by tutor reading aloud as the student follows along as a model of proficient reading. The final 10 segment focused on high-frequency response type reading games related to specific skill development based upon the specific needs of the student as outlined in the student's IEP. Activities included high response instructional games, manipulatives, and kits or cards to promote specific skill development. Areas of reinforced practice included work analysis, vocabulary, comprehension, study skills, and writing (Osborn, et al).

Table 2.

*Means and Standard Deviations for DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency( DORF) scores*

| <i>Measure</i> | <i>Treatment Group</i><br>M (SD) | <i>Control Group</i><br>M (SD) |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| DORF           |                                  |                                |
| Fall Grade 2   | 15.69 (7.36)                     | 15.96 (7.41)                   |
| Fall Grade 3   | 21.91 (9.35)                     | 21.05 (9.18)                   |
| Fall Grade 4   | 28.67 (13.87)                    | 27.58 (12.94)                  |
| DORF           |                                  |                                |
| Spring Grade 2 | 22.02 (8.43)                     | 18.47 (6.28)                   |
| Spring Grade 3 | 27.67 (11.31)                    | 24.33 (11.02)                  |
| Spring Grade 4 | 31.26 (12.26)                    | 29.19 (11.86)                  |

### **Data Collection**

A team of trained graduate students traveled to each school to administer the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF) screening that were administered to each student and used as pretest and posttest scores to both the treatment and comparison groups. Co-primary investigators (PI) completed fidelity of implementation checks on the graduate students for 25% of DIBELS administrations and these checks resulted in a 96% correct administration rate. Additionally the PI's verified the scores listed on the scoring booklets on 50% of the students' booklets in both the treatment and control groups for each administration.

***DIBELS DORF.*** DORF is a standardized, individually administered test of accuracy and fluency with connected text. The passages are calibrated for the goal level of reading for each grade level. Student performance was measured by having students read three passages aloud, each for one minute. ORF scores are derived from the number of correct words per minute, is considered the oral reading fluency rate. The DORF test-retest reliability over the course of several days is .90 (DIBELS Technical Reports, 2003). The DORF is highly correlated with the Woodcock-Johnson reading subtests among students with SLD ( $r = .89$ ) (DIBELS Technical Reports). Additionally, the DORF is significantly correlated with the state high-stakes annual assessment for fourth grade students (Vander Meer, Lentz, & Stoller, 2005).



### **Regression Discontinuity Research Design**

The effectiveness of the PM intervention was evaluated using a regression-discontinuity (RD) research design. This quasi-experimental design is a particularly strong alternative to the use of randomized control research design to evaluate the efficacy of an intervention (Trochim, 1984). It is appropriate to use RD when the group receiving the condition and the comparison group are intentionally selected to differ in ability as assessed by a quantitative criterion prior to the introduction of the condition. When used with a strictly enforced cutoff score for inclusion into the condition group, RD provides a robust alternative to randomized experimental design, with additional benefit of not having to construct a comparison group by denying the intervention to those who need it (Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Vaughn et al, 2009).

The core assumption of RD is that the relationship between the pretest criterion score and the posttest outcome measure would be the same for all students. A program effect is obtained by examining the degree to which the regression line for students in the condition group differ from the expected line that is based in the pre-post relationship in the comparison group. RD can be used to determine both if a main effect exists for the condition group and if an interaction effect also exists. A main effect is evidenced when the regression line for the condition group is shifted above the expected line. This shift raises the regression line of the condition group above the line of the comparison group by a constant value. When the lines are prepared visually, the result is a vertical gap between the two lines at the location of the cutoff score on the x-axis. An interaction effect indicates that the effect of the condition differs across members of the treatment group based on their pretest scores (Gersten & Dimino, 2006).

### **Results**

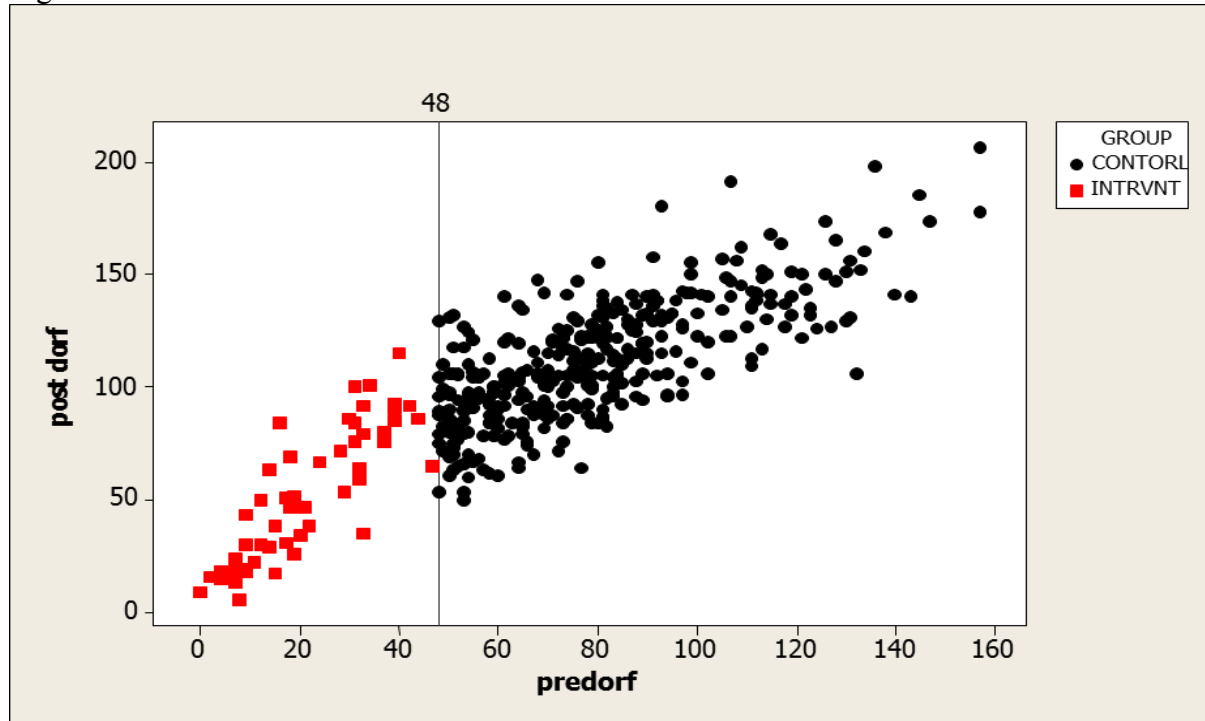
To address our question of interest, examining whether students with reading disabilities would benefit from supplemental intervention using PM, in addition to core instruction and special education services, when compared to typical nondisabled peers. Pretest and Posttest variables included in this analysis was the appropriate grade level DORF. Each of the grade level pretest measures was administered in the spring of 2007, and the posttest measures were administered in the spring of 2008. We determined that the use of RD analyses would best suit the data that we generated for this study.

The validity of RD is dependent on meeting five assumptions (Trochim, 2007). First, the cutoff score criteria have been consistently applied in assigning students to the condition and comparison groups. In our study we used a standard cutoff score to determine inclusion into both the treatment and control groups. Second, the statistical model applied to the data contains sufficient terms to provide an unbiased estimate of the main and interaction effects. For this study, we used a density test and by examining the continuity at pre-test were obtained and were well within the range of acceptable to proceed with RD analysis. Third, there are a sufficient number of observations in the comparison group to reliably estimate the pre and posttest regression line. Our study did contain both pre and post-test observations that framed the data collection timeframe. Fourth, subjects were chosen from a group with a continuous distribution of pretest scores, thereby avoiding selection bias. And lastly, the PM intervention is provided to the condition group in a uniform manner (i.e. equivalent sessions over the weeks for all participants). Each of these assumptions has been attended to in the design and data analysis of the within study.

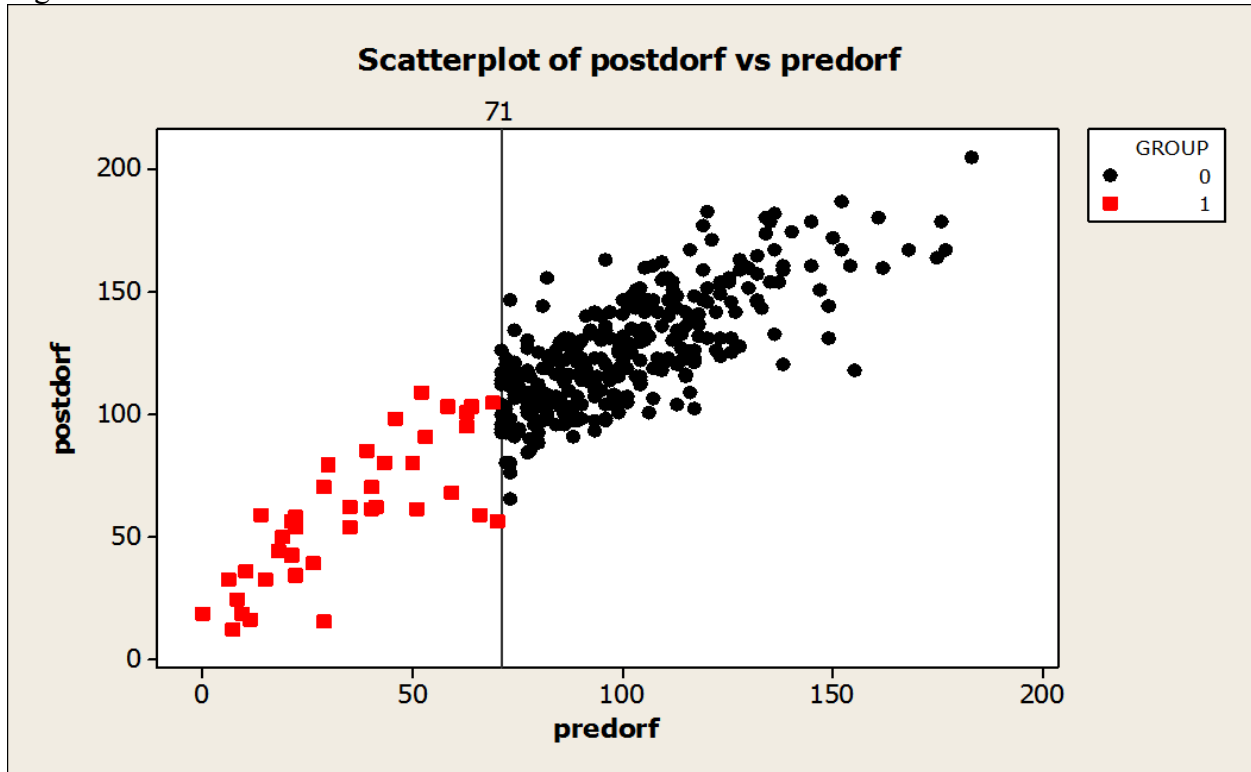
Results of the regression discontinuity analyses are presented in the following figures by outcome and grade level. To aid in the visual presentation of the results, these data used the cutoff score which was determined from the mean PM DORF score for students identified for participation in our study at the fall benchmark from each grade. In order to find scores that are not only statistically significant, but practically advantageous, the treatment group must have significantly higher reading gains (DORF) than their counterparts in the control group. It is generally considered difficult for an intervention to produce this type of reading gain at a statistically significant level (Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Wilson et al., 2007). To ensure the most rigorous cut score to determine the relative shift in group results, we used the mean DIBELS score at each grade level from the fall benchmark to serve as the position from which we could determine reading gains. In order to illustrate significant reading gains over an academic year for the treatment group relative to the control group. The treatment group which had similar pretest scores, must have significantly higher gains than the control group of students who had similar pretest scores. The results suggest that the DIBELS posttest scores for the treatment group increased at a higher rate than for the control group during the academic year.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Results

Figure 1. 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade DORF Effects.



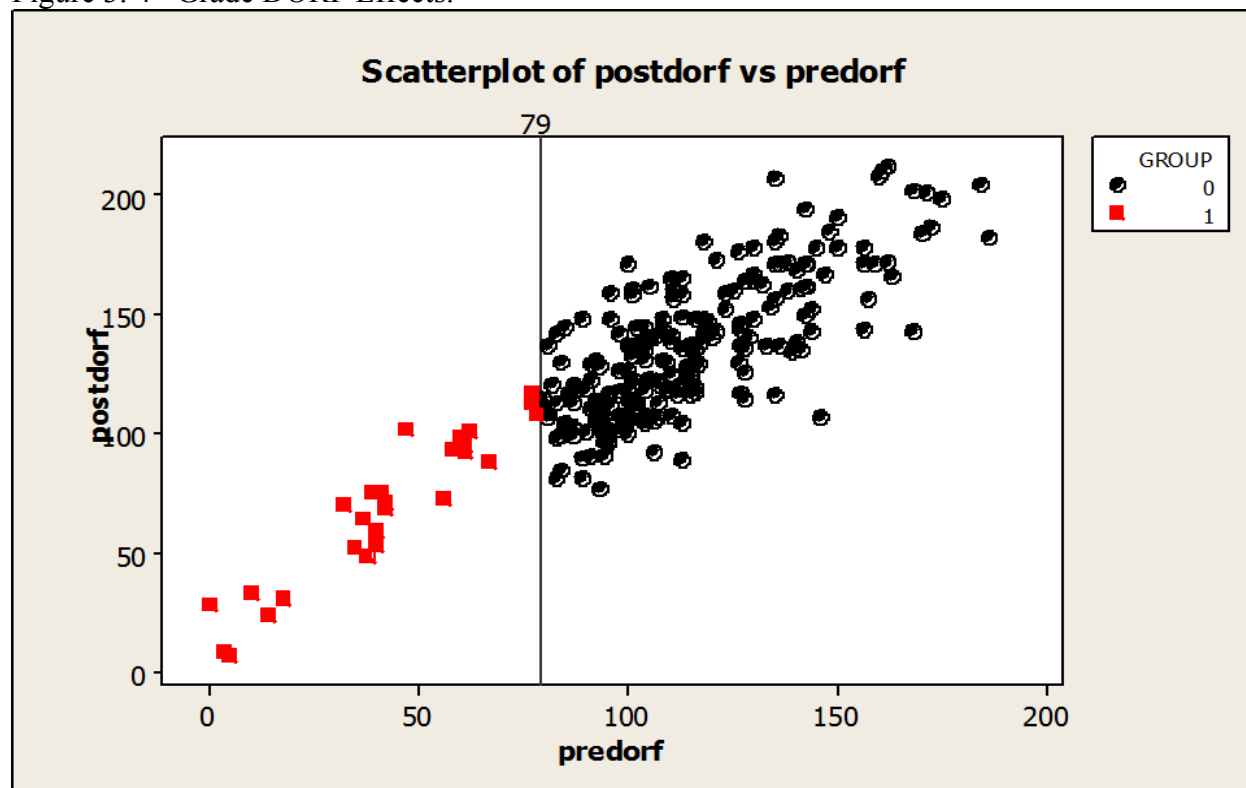
For students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade treatment group, fall-to-spring reading gains on the DORF increased at a statistically significant rate than those scores of the control group ( $T= 7.55, p < .00^{**}$ ). As shown in the scatterplot (Figure 1) the regression line is significantly different in position on the x-axis and in slope to the line for the control group.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Results**Figure 2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade DORF Effects.

For students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade treatment group, fall-to-spring reading gains on the DORF as evidenced by the posttest DORF scores increased at a statistically significant rate than those scores of the control group ( $T= 4.20, p < .00^{**}$ ). As shown in the scatterplot (Figure 2) the regression line is significantly different on the x-axis and in slope to the line for the control group.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Results

Figure 3. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade DORF Effects.



For students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade treatment group, fall-to-spring reading gains on the DORF as evidenced by the posttest DORF scores increased at a statistically significant rate than those scores of the control group ( $T=2.25, p < .03^*$ ). As shown in the scatterplot (Figure 3) the regression line is significantly different on the x-axis and in slope to the line for the higher responder group. It is important to note that the analysis of the participants in 4<sup>th</sup> grade revealed the lowest differences in the gain scores, although they were still statistically significant.

### Discussion

This evaluation reports the response to the PM reading intervention program of students with SLD in reading who were below benchmark in their respective grade level reading screening scores at the beginning of the academic year. Using a regression discontinuity design the research team evaluated the performance at the end of the academic year of students with SLD who received the same core reading instruction in the classroom and special education services, but differed in only the delivery of an experimental intervention, PM.

When comparing the ORF scores for each grade, all grade levels reported statistically significant growth in overall reading proficiency when compared to students who did not receive the PM intervention. Students in the treatment group reported the largest growth in second grade and students in the treatment group in fourth grade reported the lowest growth rate, while all were statistically significant. This effect can be best seen in the scatterplots presented. In each grade-level scatterplot presented reveal a larger shift or discontinuity when plotted along the control group of students who did not participate in the intervention. The group comparisons suggest that for each grade, students in the treatment group in reading made significant progress in their reading proficiency during the academic year over their control group peers who did not receive the PM intervention.

These comparison results may suggest important outcomes for students with reading disabilities who receive supplemental volunteer tutoring in reading during their instructional day in addition to core + special education instruction. These students who are most in need of support in reading development as evidenced by their identification as having a SLD in reading showed significant progress after an academic year program of supplemental reading instruction provided by trained volunteer tutors. This may suggest that the delivery of supplemental instruction can be provided by trained volunteers who may not be professional intervention specialists. An interesting question that may be a result of this evaluation can be, would the format and delivery of the PM intervention by volunteer tutors constitute a special education, and could the PM intervention be as effective if given in small group instruction versus one-on-one delivery?

#### *Implications for Practice*

One practical implication emerging from this study is the need for schools and communities to emphasize the potential benefits of utilizing a trained cadre of volunteer tutors within their schools. This would assist educators and administrators emphasize educational partnerships and cooperative associations with the community at-large that could invigorate community involvement in their local schools. Another implication for practice lies in the notion of supplemental reading programs that do not take the place of core instruction or special education services can serve to support those services, this is extremely timely as populations of students with disabilities continues to grow, and the ability for all educators to support those students in effective and sustained one-one instruction becomes more difficult. While the results

of this present study represent the outcomes for students with SLD in reading, the notion of one-on-one volunteer tutoring could help students who struggle, yet are not identified, and can be seen as helpful for all students who may need extra help learning new concepts.

### *Limitations*

There are some limitations that are present in this evaluation. Our student participants were selected from several school districts, but there was limited diversity in the population and there was limited availability of urban students. We were able to utilize both benchmark and growth data to differentiate the groups, but we did not have the benefit of developing a random-control experimental design study that is optimal for intervention evaluation. To counter this significant limitation we did utilize regression discontinuity design that the literature suggests is robust in analyzing data without the requirement of random assignment of treatment and control groups (Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Trochim, 2007; Vaughn et al, 2009). Future examination using the standard criteria of experimental design while examining the PM intervention effects for students with SLD in reading and students who struggle with reading development who do not present with SLD could benefit all students in reading development.

## References

- Al-Otaiba, S. & Fuchs, D. (2002). Characteristics of children who are nonresponsive to early literacy intervention: A review of the literature. *Remedial and Special Education* 23, 300-316.
- Al-Otaiba, S. & Pappamihiel, N. E. (2005). Guidelines for using volunteer literacy tutors to support reading instruction for English language learners. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 3 (6), 6-11.
- Burns, M., Senesac, B., & Symington, T. (2004). The effectiveness of HOSTS program in improving the reading achievement of children at-risk for reading failure. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 43, 87-104.
- Caserta-Henry, C. (1996). Reading buddies: A first grade intervention program. *The Reading Tutor*, 49, 500-503.
- DIBELS Technical Reports (2003). *Assessment committee analysis of reading assessment Measures*. Report retrieved November 11, 2013 from [http://dibels.uoergeon.edu/techreports.dibels\\_6th\\_ed.pdf](http://dibels.uoergeon.edu/techreports.dibels_6th_ed.pdf).
- Elbaum, B. Vaughn, S., Hughes, S. V., & Moody, S. W. (2000). How effective are one-on-one tutoring programs in reading for elementary students at risk for reading failure? A meta-analysis of the intervention research. *Journal of Education Psychology*, 92, 602-619.
- Fitzgerald, J. (2001). Can minimally trained college student volunteers help young at-risk Children read better? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36, 28-46.
- Gersten, R., & Dimino, J. A. (2006). RTI (Response to Intervention): Rethinking special Education for students with reading difficulties (yet again). *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(1), 99-108.
- Hecht, S. A., & Greenfield, D. B. (2001). Comparing the predictive validity of first grade teacher ratings and reading related tests on third grade levels of reading skills in young children exposed to poverty. *School Psychology Review*, 30, 50- 69.
- Mather, N., & Woodcock, R. W. (2001). *Woodcock Johnson III Test of Achievement Examiner's Manual*. Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing Company.
- McGrew, K. S. & Woodcock, R. W. (2001). *Woodcock Johnson III Technical Manual*. Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing Company.
- Moore-Hart, M. & Karabenick, S. A. (2009). Becoming successful readers: A volunteer tutoring program for culturally diverse students. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 48, 149-171.



- Morris, D., Tyner, B., & Perney, J. (2000). Early steps: Replicating the effects of a first-grade reading intervention program. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*, 681-693.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.
- Osborn, J., Freeman, A., Burley, M., Wilson, R., Jones, E., & Rychener, S. (2007). Effect of tutoring on reading achievement for students with cognitive disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and students receiving title 1 services. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 42*(4), 467-474.
- Power, M. A. & Cummings, K. (2011). The effectiveness of one-on-one tutoring in elementary reading. *Executive Summary*, Read2Me.org retrieved November 24, 2013.
- Pullen, P. C., Lane, H. B., & Monaghan, M. C. (2004). Effects of a volunteer tutoring model on the early literacy development of struggling first grade students. *Reading Research and Instruction, 43*(4), 21-40. doi: 10.1080/19388070409558415
- Readinga-z.com: The Online Reading Program. (2007). Retrieved November 11, 2013 from <http://www.readinga-z.com/index.php>
- Ritter, G. W., Barnett, J. H., Denny, G. S., & Albin, G. R. (2009). The effectiveness of tutoring programs for elementary and middle school students: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(3), 3-38. doi:10.3102/0034654308325690.
- Shanahan, T. (1998). On the effectiveness and limitations of tutoring in reading. In P. D. Pearson & A. Iran-Nejad (Eds.), *Review of research in education* (pp. 217-234). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Slavina, R. E., Lake, C., Davis, S., & Maddena, N. A. (2011). Effective programs for struggling readers: A best-evidence synthesis. *Educational Research Review, 6*(1), 1-26.
- Trochim, W. M. K. (2007). *Regression-discontinuity analysis*. Retrieved November 12, 2013, from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/statrd.thm>.
- Trochim, W. M. K. (1984). *Research design for program evaluation: The regression-discontinuity approach*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Vander Meer, C. D., Lentz, F. E., & Stoller, S. (2005). The relationship between oral reading fluency and Ohio proficiency testing in reading. (Technical Report). Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.
- Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., Scammacca, N., Linan-Thompson, S., & Woodruff, A. L. (2009). Response to early reading intervention: Examining higher and lower responders. *Exceptional Children, 75*(2), 165-183.

- Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Woodruff, A. L., & Linan-Thompson, S. (2007). Prevention and early identification of students with reading/learning disabilities. In D. H. Haager, S. Vaughn, & J. K. Klingner (Eds.). *Evidence-based practices for response to intervention* (pp. 11-27). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Wansek, J., & Vaughn, S. (2007). Research-based implications from extensive early reading interventions. *School Psychology Review, 36*, 541-561.
- Wasik, B. A. (1998). Volunteer tutoring programs in reading: A review. *Reading Research Quarterly, 33*, 266-292.
- Wasik, B. A. & Slavin, R. A. (1993). Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: A review of five great programs. *Reading Research Quarterly, 28*(2), 179-200.
- Wilson, R. & Rychener, S. (2009). Project MORE 2007-2008: An independent evaluation. The Center for Evaluation Services, Bowling Green State University, OH:
- Wilson, R., Jones, E., Rychener, S., & Current, K. (2005). Project MORE: Evaluation Report 2004-2005. Bowling Green State University, OH. Center for Evaluation Services.

Authors:

David D. Hampton, Ph.D.  
Bowling Green State University  
412 Education Building  
Bowling Green, OH 43403  
[hamptod@bgsu.edu](mailto:hamptod@bgsu.edu)

William F. Morrison, Ed.D  
Bowling Green State University  
419 Education Building  
Bowling Green, OH 43403  
[fmorris@bgsu.edu](mailto:fmorris@bgsu.edu)

Mary Rizza, Ph.D.  
Bowling Green State University  
419 Education Building  
Bowling Green, OH 43403  
[mrizza@bgsu.edu](mailto:mrizza@bgsu.edu)

Jan Osborn, Ed.D  
Putnam County Educational Service Center  
124 Putnam Pkwy  
Ottawa, OH 45875  
[josborn@pm.noacsc.org](mailto:josborn@pm.noacsc.org)

## Pre-Service Teachers and Parent Involvement: Using the Child, Family and Schools Course to Inform Practice

Rachel J. Boit, Ed.D.

\* Correspondence:  
 Rachel J. Boit, Ed.D.  
 Assistant Professor –  
 Department of Curriculum  
 and Instruction  
 College of Education  
 University of Akron  
[boit@uakron.edu](mailto:boit@uakron.edu)  
 Full list of author  
 information is available at  
 the end of the article

### *Abstract:*

*There is consistent evidence suggesting a strong association between parent involvement and student success in school. Therefore, the need for teacher preparation programs to equip pre-service teachers on strategies of working with parents cannot be overlooked. This manuscript discusses a project which assessed the extent to which pre service teachers in a teacher education course gained a deeper understanding of parent involvement through real life experiences working directly with families. The project was completed as part of the requirements for a course offered for pre-service teachers working towards their early childhood licensure. Activities undertaken in this project and the*

The importance of parent involvement in children's education is a subject that continues to occupy center stage in our discussions today. Research has consistently provided evidence of a strong association between students' success in school and parents' involvement in children's education. A review of research from the past 20 years presents positive and convincing evidence that when families are involved in their children's learning in and out of school, the children do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In her analysis of research concerning parental involvement in schools, Fullan (2001) notices one general theme, "The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement." Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement and school improvement (Harris and Goodall 2008). The major notion of parent involvement is that parents know what they want for their children and therefore should be involved in the school. Thus the role of parents' involvement in their children's lives cannot be neglected.

A recent review of early childhood literature (Harris et al. 2008) reinforces the finding that engaging parents in schooling at an early stage leads to more positive engagement in the learning processes. Moreover, education policies continue to encourage or mandate that schools include goals related to parental involvement in their programs (Fields-Smith, 2005). For instance, extensive parent involvement was introduced via Head Start in the 1960's and 1970's. Head Start was designed particularly for disadvantaged families and its main philosophy was that parents were equal partners with education professionals in children's education and both parents and teachers were considered to be experts on children with each bringing different levels of expertise.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) brought the importance of parent involvement to the forefront of school improvement initiatives mandating that every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) initiative ushered in new federal policies mandating that every school; district and state department of education communicate effectively with all parents and the public at large about student achievement. The legislation required schools to organize and implement programs to engage families in their children's education in ways that help students improve skills and achievements. Other numerous opportunities that mandated parents to be involved included programs such as Even Start, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, most recently reauthorized as Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004.

### **Parent Involvement in Teacher Education Programs**

Clearly, teacher preparation programs were challenged by this mandate which led few teacher education programs to include formal coursework in parent involvement although practicing teachers recognized the need for better preparation in this area (Chavkin and Williams, 1988). Becker and Epstein (1982) found that few elementary teachers attributed their family engagement practices to formal pre service coursework. Hinz, Clarke and Nathan (1992) as quoted in Flynn (2007), reported that more than half of the degree granting undergraduate education programs in Minnesota failed to offer any course related to parent involvement for K-

12 teacher candidates. Therefore, for many years, educators and researchers have puzzled over how to prepare teachers to interact effectively with students' families and diverse communities.

Rigorous standards for teacher preparation programs, licensure/certification and professional practice ensure that teachers at all levels recognize that effective teaching depends upon partnerships with children's families. "Educators know about, understand and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities" (NAEYC, 2011, p. 30). They are responsible for interacting with families in respectful ways that support student learning; emotional and physical development and mental health (Standards for Ohio Educators, 2005).

Organizations dedicated to promoting and supporting excellence in education such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession (OSTP) have recognized and included standards of professional practice in the area of school, family and community partnerships. Danielson's (2013) *Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument* launched a variety of tools that included focused attention to development of family collaborations as part of teacher evaluation systems used by states to make licensure decisions with Praxis III® and by school districts for professional development, induction and mentoring with Pathwise® protocols and materials. All of these acknowledge the value family and community involvement as integral components in the complex business of teaching and learning. Effective teachers create learning environments in which parents and families are active participants in the student's learning.

Key program accreditation organizations including the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) all of which are dedicated to quality assurance and accountability of teacher preparation programs, have addressed the issue of school, family and community partnerships to varying degrees in their standards. Moreover, Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have identified knowledge, skills and dispositions related to parent, family and community connections in their standards for professional practice. Knowing that parents provide the emotional, cultural and social supports that are vital to children's school success, educators often encourage beginning teachers to ensure that parents are their allies in the task of teaching (Rohr & He, 2010). Therefore, the need

for teacher preparation programs to train pre-service teachers on strategies of working with parents cannot be overemphasized. This is especially important for early childhood pre-service teachers as this is an essential ingredient for student learning and also parents have the right to know what is happening in schools.

Knowing that parent involvement in schools is one topic dominating our discussions today; teachers need to be equipped with ways to involve parents/guardians. Successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children's families and communities and students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand and value the importance and complex characteristics of children's families and communities. They use this understanding to create respectful, reciprocal relationships, support and empower families, and involve all families in their children's development and learning by focusing on the educational, social and cultural aspects of home, school and community collaboration.

However, whether or not pre-service teachers will work to involve parents in the classroom might ultimately depend on assumptions about parents in general and also how prepared they are to make parental involvement a reality. A significant question for teacher preparation programs is how to effectively address the issue of pre-service teachers' preparedness for parental involvement. Rohr and He (2010) in Hiatt-Michael 2001 state that several research studies have found that pre-service teachers receive little training regarding parent involvement and interaction in their education programs. It is not surprising, therefore, that novice teachers often report that they do not know how to effectively incorporate parents into the classrooms once they are hired as in- service teachers.

In the next section of this paper, I discuss a project which aimed at assessing the extent to which pre service teachers in a teacher education course gained a deeper understanding of parent involvement through a real life experience opportunity where they worked directly with families. The project was completed as part of the requirements for a course taken by early childhood pre-service teachers working towards their early childhood licensure. The activities undertaken in this project as well as the findings are discussed.

### **Methods and procedures**

The project title was Family Engagement and Advocacy (FEA) Experience. Pre-service teachers were partnered with an identified family of a preschool student with whom they

engaged in communication for nine weeks during the semester. The goal of this activity was to engage with families of young children, understand the goals for their children, and help to support and enhance their relationship with the school. There were four parts to this project, namely; teacher interview, in-class observation and mentoring, family correspondence and a family fun night/festival.

First, the pre-service teachers conducted a short interview with the teacher to gain a greater understanding of the student's performance, interaction, and strengths in the classroom as well as teacher-parent interaction. Teacher interview questions were developed as a class by the pre-service teachers. The second part involved the pre-service teachers conducting in-class observation and mentoring of the preschool children paying particular attention to the child's learning styles, interaction with peers, potential challenges, and overall success in the classroom setting. The first one hour was spent observing the student from the observation booth. The next nine hours were completed in nine, one hour long visits over a period of nine weeks. During these nine one-hour long visits, the pre-service teachers and students worked on activities that the pre-service teachers had prepared. These were put in folders that went back and forth between home and school. Part three was the family correspondence. Parent/guardian contact information was given to the pre-service teachers who were then required to communicate with the families. They were expected to:

1. Write and send an introductory letter to the child's family
2. Send home the child's folder containing work to be done at home at least five times.
3. Arrange to have an informal interview/conversation with the child's parents
4. Maintain contact with the child's family via email or messages sent in the child's folder and
5. Send a "Thank You" letter to the family and invite them to the family fun night at the end of the semester.

This project took place at a pre-school in North East Ohio. Participants included fifty pre-service teachers enrolled in the Child, Family and Community course. Fifty pre-school children were randomly selected by the teachers and matched to the pre-service teachers. Prior to starting the project, the course instructor sent a letter to all the families of the fifty children participating. The letter read in part like this:

Dear Parent/ Guardian or Caregiver:

We are pleased to inform you that you and your student have been selected to participate in an exciting program aimed to strengthen and develop better relationships among parents, children and schools!

In partnership with the Early Childhood Program, your child’s preschool center is offering our pre-service teachers the opportunity to interact with the children and their families. The students will be partnered with an identified family of a preschool student with whom they will engage in communication during the semester. The goal of this activity is to engage with families of young children, mentor a preschool child and work with families to understand their goals for their children, as well as help, support and enhance their relationship with the school. As a family, you and your preschooler will participate in the following activities:

a) FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

The pre-service student will write and send an introductory letter to the child’s family. The pre-service teacher will send home a folder containing work done by the child and the pre-service teacher (at least, work will be sent home five times)

Parents are to return these folders to the child’s teacher on a weekly basis or as requested by the pre-service teacher. Pre-service teachers will arrange to have an informal interview/conversation with the child’s parents/guardians.

The pre-service teacher will send a “Thank You” letter to the family and invite them to the Spring Carnival.

b) STUDENT MENTORING

Your student will be mentored once a week for 9 weeks by a pre-service teacher attending the University. During each hour-long session, your child will participate in activities prepared by the pre-service teacher. These activities are both academic and fun and are geared towards offering support to each student personally and academically. As a parent/guardian, you will be able to see these activities in the folders that will be sent home.

c) FAMILY NIGHT

At the conclusion of this program, your child (and family) will be invited to attend our FAMILY NIGHT at your preschool. This event will be hosted by the pre-service teachers for all the families attending this preschool. At this event, we will have community organizations and local businesses that offer support services for families with school-aged children, activities for you to do with your child, and resources that will help you support your child to be successful in school! This will be a great evening of activity, entertainment, food and fun!

We look forward to working with you and your student!

Name: xxx (Course Instructor)



## Findings and Discussion

Findings from this project reinforced the pre-service teachers' understanding of the importance of parent involvement in their children's schooling and most importantly the collaboration between parents and teachers. Secondly, it suggested the critical need for pre-service teachers to understand and value a good relationship between themselves and parents of the children that they will be teaching. Third, challenges of parent involvement was a factor that became very clear to the pre-service teachers and finally, it was clear that the pre-service teachers found this course project to be of great value to them as they prepare to pursue their teaching career in future.

In most of our teacher preparation programs, the opportunity for pre-service teachers to work directly with families is lacking in the curriculum. This is despite the fact that when they enter the teaching force they are expected to have gained the skills to successfully interact and involve parents in their classrooms. This truly suggests that when it comes to parents and parental involvement in schools, we are asking a new generation of teachers to do a great deal in the classroom. In this case therefore, this new generation of teachers must leave our teacher education programs knowing how to effectively communicate with and involve parents of all students (Rohr & He, 2010).

In his evaluation, one student summed up his thoughts this way:

*"During the nine weeks I spent with the child and corresponding with his family, I learned a lot about family involvement and communication...this was the first time I have ever been required to interact not just with the student but with their family in a direct way."*

Communication in parent involvement is critical. Epstein (1994) posits that parents are eager to help their children if schools will help them understand what they should do. The kind of information we send out to parents, the way we hold conversations with parents and any other kind of interaction must be clear for all parents. One pre service teacher noted:

*"... I learned that it is sometimes difficult to find just the right words to use when telling them about their child. Even when I was not saying anything negative, I needed to be aware not to use slang terms. I do not think a teacher should use slang terms in general but I felt especially strongly about using very clear language with my student's family because English was their second language."*

Furthermore, another pre service teacher added that:

*“I learned that you have to be clear in what you would like the parents to do. I know I would have gotten more activities completed with the family if I had asked more directly for what needed to be done rather than ask in a manner that allowed them to choose not to complete or return activities... I think it’s really important for teachers to be very direct and concise about what they are expecting families to do while still being very respectful”*

Parents need to be updated on what their child is doing and on any in-class or school activities. This makes them feel more involved and they would get a chance to know what is going on with their child. Communication is very important. Without it, no one would know what is going on. The parents would not know about their child’s school life and the teacher would not know about the home life. It is important to keep this communication open and allow for the parents to be involved, have an open door policy so they can come and visit and simply allow them to be a part of their child’s education.

A myriad of circumstances may place families in situations that present challenges to their ability to be involved in their children’s schooling and school activities. These may range from work place demands i.e. having to work for long hours or sometimes conflicting schedules. Furthermore, there are challenges associated with the family’s socioeconomic status, child care, parent educational levels, inadequate language proficiency, a parent’s own previous negative school experiences, family make up i.e. in cases of divorce, separation, children with disabilities present in the home, families with incarcerated parents, and other diverse issues. All these among many others will most likely play a vital role in the way families are going to be involved in their children’s educational progress. A clear understanding of these social and economic issues is crucial in maintaining strong teacher-family partnerships. The statements below sum up the thinking of some pre-service teachers:

*“...many family members work during the day so they are unable to come to the classroom to participate in that manner and this does not mean they are uninterested in their child’s education...”*

*“...as a teacher, I learned a lot from this process...I learned that parents may be involved but may just not have the time to communicate as much with the teacher...I recommend that we do not judge a family before really getting to know them...you may have a preconceived notion about them but you could be completely wrong...”*

Furthermore, rather than pointing to weaknesses in parental involvement, one teacher, who participated in the teacher interviews seemed to see the high level of involvement of some parents and the complete lack of involvement of other parents as a natural continuum or a matter of fact. While this teacher would likely see it as positive if each learner's parents attended some or all the available events, she understood that the home and work life of some parents prohibits their involvement. She did not seem to label or speak negatively of these parents. Other teachers pointed to a lack of resources (time, financial resources, and educational resources) as one reason for the lack of involvement (both in school and at home) of some parents. These teachers do not blame parents, but rather explain their circumstances as simply how things are for some parents.

Interaction with the children in the classroom and family night event was a powerful experience for the pre-service teachers. One of them noted;

*“...I learned from this experience that while family members may sometimes not be willing to help in the classroom, they typically really enjoy getting to see their child’s educational environment and meet with the child’s teacher during other school events...”*

Most of the pre-service teachers agreed that the opportunity to work with families allowed them to learn the role that teachers have as mediators, specifically the role of commitment. Coleman (2013) affirms that demonstrating a commitment to the family-teacher relationships is one of the professional standards that teachers will be expected to demonstrate and in fact, their commitment to children will in part be judged by their commitment to the children’s families. We all agree that without a commitment to involving families in their children’s educational experience, the children would not gain much success. As such, future teachers should be passionate about conveying a strong sense of commitment to the students and their family’s involvement. When teachers and families work together, the children are bound to be more successful in their academic pursuits. The statements below were common among the pre-service teachers:

*“...this course project has made me realize how important family involvement is in the school setting...the experience gave me a good idea of what it will be like communicating with families and getting them involved...”*

*“...As a teacher, I will need to make sure I create a strong relationship with my students and their families so that everyone can feel comfortable...these relationships are crucial in helping the child create a bridge between school and home life...”*

In terms of involvement and knowledge, most of the pre-service teachers reported that the parents were truly engaged and informed. They have a strong relationship with their children's teachers and schools, and most importantly with their children. While not all parents can be this involved and aware, some parents are a good example of a home-school connection that is likely to provide for the needs of learners. Parents know their children well. They know their interests, hobbies, and their strengths and weaknesses. They can talk about their children as though they are their only focus and they understand the limitations on themselves and their children as they all work to strengthen their weaknesses. In addition to knowing their own children, parents, most often, know the school system quite well. They understand not only what their children need as students, but also what the school expects of learners and parents. They have a grasp on what teachers can need in the classroom, and what the school needs from parents in terms of working with learners at home. It is quite obvious that parents are very committed to working hard to ensure that their children get the best education that they can from whatever school they attend and just as obvious and important is the fact that these parents allow their children to be who they are.

From the teacher interview, the information gathered indicated that teachers perceive parents as collaborators in their classrooms. The teachers seem to have a firm grasp on the issues their learners face on a daily basis from basic needs not being met to their educational struggles and triumphs. Teachers realize that they are not super heroes, but that they do in fact have an impact on the learners in their care. They also have a clear idea of what each learner needs in the classroom.

Teachers expressed how grateful they are to have parent help in their classrooms. They value the contribution that parents and community members can make. They are not threatened as professionals by parents being in or helping in the classroom. Their understanding of their students' and their parents' needs and abilities likely helps to create a welcoming atmosphere in which children are more likely to learn, and parents are more likely to engage in helpful and encouraging activities with their own children. As they mentored the students one-on-one, the pre service teachers came to fully understand the child and his/her learning styles. The back to back communication with the parents via the folders sent home became the best channel for the pre-service teachers to involve the parents in what the children were doing in the classroom.

Across the world, research continues to point to the importance of engaging parents, families and communities in raising the educational aspirations and attainment of young people (DEECD 2008). There is a wealth of evidence which highlights that parental engagement in schooling positively influences pupil achievement and attainment (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003). Such evidence should be compelling enough to drive changes in the way teachers are prepared. Most often than not, we are requiring that new teachers become innovative with new ways of communicating and involving parents yet in most cases, their teacher education programs have not prepared them in this way. As educators we have the responsibility to equip our pre-service teachers with the skills they will need to succeed as they work with personnel in their schools and the community and especially as they work with parents. This may require revising our teacher preparation programs to align with the best practices in teacher-parent partnerships.

In conclusion, I posit that parent engagement is a critical factor for every child's educational success. Without doubt, parental engagement in children's learning makes a difference and remains one of the most powerful school improvement levers that we have (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Parents should be encouraged to be a part of their children's education and as such it calls for a strong team of educators who are committed to actually make this happen. We know that pre-service teachers and novice teachers need to work together with parents, however, for this relationship to be productive teachers need to be confident in their abilities to involve parents. The building of such confidence needs to begin at the teacher preparation stage.

**References:**

- Chavkin, N & Williams, D. (1988). Critical Issues in Teacher Training for Parent Involvement. *Educational Horizons* (66)2, 87-89
- Coleman, M (2013). *Empowering Family-Teacher Partnerships: Building Connections With Diverse Communities*. Los Angeles: Sage
- Danielson, C. The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument. 2013 Edition. Teachscape, Danielson Group
- DEECD 2008: Families as Partners in Learning.  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/partnerships/Pages/familypartnership.s.aspx>. Retrieved July 13, 2015
- Desforges, C & Abouchaar, A. (2003). The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustments. Research Report Number 433
- Epstein, J. (1994). Family Math that's Above Average. Take-Home Activities for Kids and their Parents. *Instructor* (103)8, 17-18
- Epstein, J & Becker, H (1982). Teachers' Reported practices of Parent Involvement: Problems and Possibilities. *Elementary School Journal* (83)2, 85-102
- Fields-Smith, C. (2005). African American Parents Before and After Brown. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* (20)2, 129-135
- Flynn, G. (2007). Increasing Parental Involvement In Our Schools: The Need To Overcome Obstacles, Promote Critical Behaviors, And Provide Teacher Training. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning* (4)2, 23-30
- Fullan, M (2001). The new meaning of educational change. New York: Teacher's College
- Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. 1994. Public Law 103-227.
- Harris, A. & Goodall, J. (2008). . Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research* 50(3), 277-289.

Henderson, A & Mapp, K . A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis, 2002. National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools.

NAEYC, 2011. 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs. *NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards*, p. 30

*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Pub. L. No 107-110, 3 U. S. C. (2002)

Ohio Department of Education: Standards for Ohio Educators, 2005  
<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Equity/Ohio-s-Educator-Standards>. Retrieved, July 13, 2015

Rohr, J. & He, Y ( 2010). Preservice teachers and parents: using a reading course to change perceptions and practice. *Educational Studies* (36)1, 35-45

**About the Author:**

Rachel Boit, Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Akron where she teaches undergraduate Early Childhood courses in the Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies. Her main areas of research focus range from early literacy and language development and reading; child development; parent involvement and issues in teacher training from an international perspective.

## Going to School: Employment Strategies for Teachers

Amy Szymaszek, M.S.Ed., and Peter Titlebaum, Ed.D.

\* Correspondence:

Amy Szymaszek, M.S.Ed.  
Graduate Research  
Assistant, Early Childhood  
Education  
University of Dayton  
4558 Dolley Dr.  
Kettering, OH 45440  
Phone: 734-552-2933  
[szymaszeka1@udayton.edu](mailto:szymaszeka1@udayton.edu)

Full list of author  
information is available at  
the end of the article

### *Abstract:*

*Upon completing higher education degrees, prospective teachers have met competencies determined by individual states. Despite availability, graduates lack skills to identify, apply for, and obtain desired teaching positions. While few have experience with résumé and interview techniques, others have limited knowledge about the application process and gaining competitive edge. This article provides these teachers some valuable insights into the perspective of hiring, including data from about résumé and portfolio development, networking, professional development, and self-branding.*

Advice from mentors or current teachers has emphasized substitute teaching in as many districts as possible, a foot-in-the-door strategy employed by many recent graduates. Hart (2010) recommended substitute teaching as one effective tool toward getting hired, providing the opportunity to hone teaching skills and network with administrators. While this strategy can be helpful with regard to networking, many weeks and even months can pass before a long-term substitute position becomes available or a job within a desired district opens. And of course the goal is to focus on such a desired job, taking the most efficient and direct route as possible. Why should graduates who spent a significant amount of time and money on degree completion resign themselves to the idea that “I’ll take any teaching job, anywhere”?



## LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's competitive job market, simply having the desired qualifications is hardly enough. This is true both inside and outside the field of education. According to Jacobson, as many as 500 job candidates might apply for a single teaching position in the Midwest (2011). She further described how "A teaching certificate on its own isn't enough to stand out in the current job market. Young teachers need to bring more to the table if they want to attract the attention of bombarded administrators and personnel directors" (Jacobson, 2011). English, Manton, & Walker (2005) noted a discrepancy between what was emphasized by college instructors and what hiring professionals sought. University courses emphasized skills, extracurricular activities, and references, while human resources personnel rated these items lower in importance than relevant experiences and knowledge in the field. Certainly it would be difficult for applicants to activate knowledge regarding job search when such a gap exists between what has been taught them and what is required.

While some students work to complete a degree, others already with diplomas struggle to advance beyond the application stage in the interviewing process. Although secondary education programs have helped students gain content knowledge, graduates may not be considered career-ready. Gysbers described, for example, how multi-faceted job applicants must be in order to gain a competitive edge, with knowledge in both the theoretical and philosophical sides of the field (2013). Young professionals will also need to possess experience and have insight into future possibilities within the field.

The focus shifts from creating a résumé that leads to an interview, to making one's learnings and qualifications visible to potential employers. Branding oneself in such a way that highlights one's knowledge, skills, and experiences on a résumé can illustrate one's qualifications in a convincing way that speaks to employers (Morgan, 2011). How can teachers prepare themselves for such a demand, developing necessary skills, gaining experience, and acquiring knowledge that is marketable and valuable, and ultimately making them more hireable? A combination of focusing on past knowledge and identifying gaps in experience can aid in the job search process (Fry, 2014). The next section will focus on both tangible products and processes for increasing applicants' success in obtaining employment regardless of school district or age level.

Locating teaching jobs is significantly less difficult than acquiring a position. According to Ayers and Senne, "Using Google to search for teaching jobs yields over 20 million hits. While all of these links are not actual positions, the sheer volume of links indicates how widespread the use of

the Internet has become in the hiring process” (2011). However, being qualified is often not enough to secure the teaching jobs identified in a search engine because of the large number of equally-qualified and certified candidates. According to Jacobson, “Young teachers need to bring more to the table than a teaching certificate if they want to attract the attention of bombarded administrators and personnel directors” (2011, p. 19).

In this age of technology, candidates have the added difficulty of appearing qualified, personable, and standing out from the crowd using only online applications, email, and electronic portfolios. Principals in hiring districts often have specific criteria that must be met to hire a teacher with explicit knowledge and skills, in addition to someone with an intrinsic motivation to continue to grow and improve. Kersten stated that for a candidate “to be successful in the job hunt, it is helpful to understand how school districts and principals recruit candidates for available positions. Principals in Illinois rated the district web site and job fairs as primary sources of applicants, followed by a University placement center (2008). In some instances, entire counties offer a standard cover letter and application site to be utilized for all public school districts.

How can prospective teachers stand out in a system designed for uniformity and with such a large applicant pool? Understanding how the system works is vital in this application process and is a first step many applicants overlook. In general, applicants should know how electronic job application processes work. Researchers have sought to establish baseline empirical data about acceptable and preferred résumé content and charted trends over two decades (Hutchinson & Brefka, 1997). Methods for this field of study are consistent: Researchers survey managers, job recruiters, university professors, and students to determine preferences for résumés, including type, style, and delivery method. Hutchinson and Brefka summarized key factors that eliminate candidates from the interview pool. Other studies included a vague list of suggested strategies for applicants, including increasing field experience and adapting a résumé for a specific job (Balachandran & Blair, 2007; Shullery, Ickes, & Shullery, 2009). While this list contained some valuable information, a comprehensive guide for teachers was lacking.

### **Methodology**

What does the aforementioned literature mean for prospective teachers? First, they should understand that “principals...want teachers who present themselves as hard workers with a strong work ethic. They prefer to hire teachers who are highly self-motivated, enthusiastic, and energetic as well as willing to invest the time and energy necessary to make a difference both with students and

in the school” (Kersten, 2008, p. 364). Utilizing a carefully drafted résumé and a succinct cover letter, as well as understanding common interviewing practices, can help teachers transition from “prospective” to “employed” educators.

### **Application**

Many hiring districts have required online application due to ease of access for applicants and the large candidate pools. Understanding how to dissect the wording and phrasing in a job description a job description included on a school district website or similar site that includes a large number of available positions with the application can provide candidates with critical insight into what a school needs. Figure 1 includes a sample job description, outlining both the skills required for the position and the knowledge essential for success. In an indirect way, schools are emphasizing the values, skills, and knowledge that are important within the school community and what characteristics are desired in a candidate. To be successful in a large pool of applicants, a prospective teacher who can use the language found in the job description is someone who has completed an imperative step in the application process.

An online application typically includes several required forms and paperwork, including a résumé, cover letter, letters of recommendation, and a copy of one’s teaching certificate. According to Ayers and Senne, “the application and support materials are often the only information a school has about the candidate. Mistakes can be costly. Given the current economy and hiring limitations that have made job searches ultra-competitive, it cannot be overstated that developing and submitting clear, clean, and classy documents is essential” (2011, p. 19). These authors also suggest creating a checklist to ensure all required materials are submitted. Creating this checklist could be incorporated in a cover letter format, shown below in Figure 2. This sample letter succinctly illustrates how a candidate meets the requirements and includes all necessary materials for application in a manner that makes a hiring professional’s job easier. Often referred to as an executive summary, this cover letter highlights key knowledge and skills the candidate possesses, but it also guides the applicant to acknowledge separate parts of the checklist. The first paragraph includes how the candidate identified the open position, providing an opportunity to include the names of people the applicant may know within the school. This also allows the applicant to show that he or she has knowledge about the school’s mission and community. These details demonstrate that the candidate researched the school and invested time and energy into the application.

One mistake teacher candidates often make is creating a generic cover letter and résumé, not one specific to the individual school. Just as applicants do not want to be placed in a pile of interchangeable applicants, hiring schools do not want to be just one more school in a group of many. One suggested strategy to avoid this is to personalize the cover letter to include the name of a secretary or principal within the specific school, tailoring the résumé to each individual job description:

*Creating a bank of cover letters and application information can be a helpful approach to streamlining the application process. One caution about creating such a collection is to back up these data in more than one place. Losing all the application materials developed for that first teaching position could be an expensive and time-wasting lesson (Ayers & Senne, 2011, p. 20).*

A résumé is considered by many to be a living document that is constantly growing and changing. It is important for candidates to adjust the focus of the résumé for the type of teaching position for which they are applying.

In prior literature, little insight is given to the résumé drafting process. Key advice for applicants would include three areas of focus: order, measurability, and relevancy. Figure 3 emphasizes these areas of focus based on the job description provided in Figure 1. Regarding order, Schullery, Ickes, and Schullery (2009) suggest a chronological résumé to outline key experiences, when the experience occurred, and what skills were required for the job. These authors also suggest using a word-processed document, as opposed to a web-based or scanned résumé as it is easy to read, user friendly, and printed at the will of the receiver.

Measurability is a critical element often overlooked by applicants, both in the field of education and in the field of business in general. Schools are looking for qualified candidates with a variety of experiences. For example, the job description states the ideal candidate will be required to “plan, prepare, and deliver instructional activities.” A candidate who wishes to show that she or he has experience with this might include a previous work experience in which this action occurred. The savvy candidate will include how often these instructional activities were created and how many students were involved in the process. Figure 4 shows a comparison of common phrases used in résumés and the more easily measurable versions of the same statements. A candidate can show how much of an expert he or she is by using more succinct and precise language.

Relevancy is another benefit of tailoring a résumé to a specific hiring district. The résumé can include teaching experience or skills aligned with the job description, showing thought and

attention to detail. Candidates can also utilize a portfolio of experiences to further emphasize how they obtained skills and knowledge. According to Sivakumaran, Holland, & Heyning, “an increasing number of universities across the country are adopting the pre-service teaching portfolio as an integral part of teacher education programs” (2010, p. 2). These authors found that teaching certificate hiring agents, though not required, would review applicant portfolios when available. These agents preferred contents to include the following: a résumé, recommendations, lesson plans, artifacts illustrating teaching philosophy, and academic transcripts. Mosely (2005) also describes how “more and more states now require demonstration in a teaching portfolio of an acceptable level of proficiency on a set of externally defined teaching standards as part of the initial teaching licensure process” (p. 58). Keeping a portfolio in mind and thinking ahead to the interview, a candidate can draft a résumé that highlights experiences, thus gaining a competitive edge.

An important piece of advice for applicants, specifically young professionals applying for their first teaching position, is to step outside of the virtual realm. Many hiring professionals, while using electronic application processes, appreciate candidates who add a personal, human touch to the process. Note in Figure 2 how the final paragraph states, “Follow-up within one week’s time is to be expected.” Researchers “strongly recommend that applicants remember that many of the folks involved in the hiring process are not in their 20s and often appreciate that extra ‘personal touch’ of a phone call to confirm receipt of submitted materials instead of an email message” (Ayers & Senne, 2011). Stating this in the executive summary/cover letter shows that the candidate is actively pursuing the job posted, instead of passively applying to a large number of schools.

### **Interview**

In preparation for an interview, candidates can create a portfolio to guide the conversation with examples that support experiences relevant to the position available. While some students opt to create an electronic portfolio, the medium used to document and illustrate learning is not as important as the content. Typically, “a portfolio is generally characterized by depth of learning” and “teaching portfolios in pre-service teacher education can be used as a way of encouraging student teachers to document and describe their skills and competence as a teacher” (Mosely, 2005, p. 59). An increasing number of university programs are requiring students to create a portfolio as an integrated element of the curriculum. Clement (2006) describes how teaching portfolios are common now:

*A good portfolio is short and clear, with six to eight examples that showcase your work. Include a lesson plan, a classroom management plan, some student work (with names removed), a newsletter sent to parents, an outline of a unit plan or syllabus, a few pictures that will help you explain how you set up a classroom, and perhaps a certificate or award received. Employers don't say, 'show me your portfolio,' but you should use it as a visual aid when you answer questions. (p. 117)*

The portfolio could be described to some as a professional version of show and tell, giving interviewees an opportunity to tell about key experiences with the evidence to show how they happened. Using a portfolio skillfully within a conversation can underline one's preparedness, making connections between a hypothetical conversation and the practical application of desired skills.

In a highly competitive environment with a large number of qualified candidates, interviewers typically skip over the traditional getting-to-know-you questions and focus instead on carefully worded, multi-faceted questions. Typical questions posed in interviews are considered to be behavior-based, focusing on what a candidate may do in a specific scenario. When responding to these questions, a candidate is expected to answer how she or he would respond in the scenario described. These questions are used because an interviewer can gain insight into someone's experience and a sense of whether that candidate is suitable for a specific teaching environment. Analyzing how a candidate responds to these questions based on behaviors and actions can be predictors of future job performance (Clement, 2009). Such questions can focus on classroom management, lesson planning, communication with families, or collaboration with colleagues, and they can help interviewers ascertain the level of a candidate's professionalism.

Two key pieces of advice identified in the literature relate to appearance and preparedness. According to Kersten, "principals identified personal appearance as one of the two most common reasons that candidates were unsuccessful. Casual or distracting dress, unkempt clothing and appearance, gum chewing, and revealing clothing were mentioned most often....those who were unprepared hindered their employment success" (2008, p. 365). The old adage of "dressing for the job you want" applies in this sense: Candidates who look like they may fit in with the school environment are more likely to be perceived as qualified for a job. All the details in preparing for the interview, including dress and portfolio preparation, give candidates a personal brand separating oneself from the generic group of other qualified candidates. Another way to stand apart from the crowd involves having a question prepared for the interviewer. Often, at the close of an interview,

the candidate will be asked “Do you have any questions for me/us?” Not having a question prepared may make a candidate seem aloof or less invested in the school. A candidate’s having a question about the future as a school employee illustrates how that candidate envisions himself or herself as part of the team, as though that candidate has thought through the future within the school. Some recommended questions focus on professional development opportunities or tools available for new hires (Clement, 2008), rather than on salary or benefits associated with the job.

### **Discussion**

Understanding the elements of a teaching job description and the tools helpful in obtaining these jobs are often not taught explicitly in teacher education programs. Strategies described in this article are intended to support candidates in their search for the job desired, not just any job for which one’s qualifications match. Many applicants utilize the Internet to identify available jobs and use social networking sites to support the process. However, networking is a key differentiator. Brown (2013) has contrasted the process of branding to generic prescriptions in grocery stores, describing how there is nothing fundamentally wrong with generic brands, but that these versions lack branding to get noticed on the shelf. In a competitive job market, “a generic person is someone who may be perfectly nice, intelligent and talented, but has not made any effort to stand out” (Brown, 2013, p. 8). Standing out from a pool of highly qualified candidates can be as simple as hand-delivering a résumé occasionally substitute teaching in the district, or just generally meeting people within the district.

It is helpful for job candidates to remember the following advice: “The old saying ‘It’s not what you know, it’s who you know’ contains an element of truth when it comes to career development strategy. This phrase refers to the banding together of like-minded people for the purpose of professional development, and it simply refers to ‘networking’” (Ismal & Rasdi, 2007, p. 53). There is no substitute for prospective teachers’ meeting people who can support them professionally and pass their names along when a position opens up. It is also important to “remember that references are used to provide information about a candidate’s professional preparation, skills, and experiences. As such, the selection of people who can speak to these attributes is essential” (Ayers & Senne, 2011, p. 20). Thus a strategic plan of action in actively pursuing a job involves thought and preparation in a competitive environment. Knowing the rules of the game and understanding how to stand apart from the pack can translate directly into employment.

Figure 1

**1) Responsibilities:**

Duties of this job include, but are not limited to:

- A. Teaches reading, language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, art, health, physical education, and music to students in a classroom, utilizing course of study adopted by the Board of Education, and other appropriate learning activities.
- B. Instructs students in citizenship and basic subject matter.
- C. Develops lesson plans and instructional materials and provides individualized and small group instruction in order to adapt the curriculum to the needs of each student.
- D. Uses a variety of instruction strategies, such as inquiry, group discussion, lecture, discovery, etc.
- E. Translates lesson plans into learning experiences so as to best utilize the available time for instruction.
- F. Establishes and maintains standards of student behavior needed to achieve a functional learning atmosphere in the classroom.
- G. Evaluates students' academic and social growth keeps appropriate records, and prepares progress reports.
- H. Communicates with parents through conferences and other means to discuss students' progress and interpret the school program.
- I. Identifies student needs and cooperates with other professional staff members in assessing and helping students solve health, attitude, and learning problems.

**2) Qualifications:**

- a. Bachelor's degree of related subject from accredited university
- b. Texas teaching certificate.
- c. Experience is preferred but not necessary for hiring.



Figure 2

## Jane Doe

987 Main St. • Smallville, MI 00000 • jane.doe@email.com • (555) 123-4567

Dear Mrs. Smith,

The intent of this letter is to express my interest in the open position for an elementary school teacher at Generic Elementary School. Ms. Sally Jones informed me of a Kindergarten teaching position available in your district. Thank you for your consideration for this opportunity to teach within a district which sets a high standard of excellence and has received the highest possible ratings from 2012-2015.

| Qualifications                                           | How Qualifications are Met                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BA in Elementary Education, with minors in Math, Language Arts and Early Childhood, University of Michigan</li> </ul>                                                                     |
| <b>Teaching Certificate</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary Education Certification</li> <li>Early Childhood, Middle School Math, Middle School Language Arts endorsements</li> </ul>                                                      |
| <b>Develops Lesson Plans and Instructional Materials</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned and implemented daily project work based on a project-based philosophy</li> <li>Established digital lesson plan book utilized by 18 staff members using GoogleDocs</li> </ul>     |
| <b>Communicates with Parents</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Created daily documentation and monthly newsletters to email to families</li> <li>Utilized classroom website to communicate classroom needs for 28 families</li> </ul>                    |
| <b>Evaluates Students' Academic and Social Growth</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessed 32 children using Guided Reading and Creative Curriculum standardized assessment</li> <li>Developed print and electronic portfolios for 28 parent-teacher conferences</li> </ul> |
| <b>Maintains Professional Competence</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member, National Association for the Education of Young Children</li> <li>Attended Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children, 2014</li> </ul>                              |

All items requested have been enclosed. I follow up within a week's time for receipt of this application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

Figure 3

## Jane Doe

987 Main St. • Smallville, MI 00000 • jane.doe@email.com • (555) 123-4567

### Experience

---

#### *Student Teaching* **2014**

Kindergarten, Typical Elementary School

- Planned daily lesson plans for 32 children aligned with a project-based curriculum
- Designed one month-long discovery-based unit guided by 32 individual goals and IEPs
- Implemented small group literacy-focused lesson plans for 32 children
- Differentiated instruction for 32 children in collaboration with cooperating teacher and therapist
- Assessed 32 children using Guided Reading and Creative Curriculum standardized assessment
- Generated 32 print and electronic portfolios illustrating student growth and progress
- Utilized electronic portfolios and standardized assessments for 28 parent-teacher conferences
- Participated in a 3 hour handwriting workshop and integrated support strategies
- Established digital lesson plan book utilized by 18 staff members using GoogleDocs
- Utilized classroom website to communicate classroom needs for 28 families
- Created daily documentation and monthly newsletters to email to families

#### *Reading Methods Practicum* **2013**

Second Grade, Park Elementary School

- Observed 28 students in a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom 3 hours each week
- Developed tutoring lesson plans for 3 students over the course of 6 weeks
- Analyzed veteran teacher's weekly lesson plans regarding readers' workshop instruction
- Watched 8 individual student Guided Reading assessments
- Drafted 4 lesson plans for 28 students focusing on direct reading instruction
- Supervised 10 students in a special education classroom 3 hours weekly

### Memberships and Professional Development

---

- Student Member, National Association for the Education of Young Children **2012-Present**
- Attended Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference **2014**

### Education and Certifications

---

#### *The University of Michigan* **Graduated 2014**

Ann Arbor, Michigan

- Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education with High Distinction
- Certifications: Elementary Education, Early Childhood, Language Arts and Mathematics

Figure 4

| non-specific                                                                                                 | measurable                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Develops lesson plans and instructional materials</b>                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Responsible for planning lessons</b>                                                                      | Planned and implemented daily lesson plans for 32 children aligned with a Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum                                                                                    |
| <b>Uses a variety of instruction strategies, such as inquiry, group discussion, lecture, discovery, etc.</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Wrote lesson plans using different teaching methods</b>                                                   | Differentiated instruction for 32 children in an inclusive environment utilizing whole group, small group, inquiry and center-based instruction strategies guided by individual goals and IEPs |
| <b>Evaluates students' academic and social growth</b>                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Assess children's developmental levels using 2 standardized assessment</b>                                | Assessed 32 children annually using Guided Reading and Creative Curriculum standardized assessments                                                                                            |
| <b>Communicates with parents</b>                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Participated in parent-teacher conferences</b>                                                            | Developed 32 print and electronic portfolios illustrating student growth and progress utilized for 2 parent-teacher conferences                                                                |
| <b>Maintains professional competence</b>                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Attended professional development meetings</b>                                                            | Participated in a 3 hour handwriting workshop and integrated support strategies identified in training                                                                                         |

## REFERENCES

- Ayers, S.F., & Senne, T.A. (2011). Getting into the game: Helping preservice candidates find initial teaching positions. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 82 (3), 19-22.
- Balachandran, M. & Blair, R.B. (2007). Résumé preferences of U.S. businesses. *Business Education Digest*, 16, 60-69.
- Brown, M.D. (2013). Build a personal brand or soon become an extinct generic. *Sales & Service Excellence*, 13(8), 8.
- Clement, M. C. (2006). The game has changed: Tips for finding a new teaching position. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 42(3), 115-119.
- Clement, M.C. (2008). What women need to know about today's teacher job searches and interviews. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 74 (4), 44-47.
- Clement, M.C. (2009). Hiring highly qualified teachers begins with quality interviews. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 91 (2), 22-24
- English, D.E., Manton, E.J., & Walker, J. (2005). Résumés: Human resource managers', communication instructors', and business students' opinions. *Business Education Digest*, 14, 39-58
- Fry, J.A. (2014, Jan 20). Put undergraduates to work, for their own good. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Put-Undergraduates-to-Work/144103/>
- Gysbers, N.C. (2013). Career-ready students: A goal of comprehensive school counseling programs. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 61, 283-288.
- Ismail, M., & Rasdi, R. M. (2007). Impact of networking on career development: Experience in high flying women academics in Malaysia. *Human Resource Development International*, 10 (2), 153-168.
- Jacobson, L. (2011). Jobs, jobs, jobs. *Educational Horizons*, 89(2), 16-21.
- Kersten, T. (2008). Teacher hiring practices: Illinois principals' perspectives. *Educational Forum*, 72 (4), 355-368.
- Morgan, M. (2011). Keeping your 2011 Career Resolutions. *Strategic Finance*, 92 (7), 15-17.
- Mosely, C. (2005). The value of professional teaching portfolios to prospective employers: School administrators' views. *Professional Educator*, 27 (1-2), 58-72.
- Schullery, N.M., Ickes, L., & Schullery, S. E.(2009). Employer preferences for résumés and cover letters. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 72 (2), 163-176.

Sivakumaran, T., Holland, G., Heyning, K. (2010). Hiring agents' expectations for new teacher portfolios. *National Forum of Teacher Education Journal*, 20 (3), 1-6.

Titlebaum, P. & Szymaszek, A. (2014). Students uncover hidden tools for noteworthy career: Closing the gap between theory and practice. *Applied Research in Recreation Annual*, 4(1), 139-155.

#### **About the Authors:**

*Amy Szymaszek, M.S.Ed.*

Graduate Research Assistant, Early Childhood Education  
University of Dayton  
4558 Dolley Dr.  
Kettering, OH 45440  
Phone: 734-552-2933  
[szymaszeka1@udayton.edu](mailto:szymaszeka1@udayton.edu)

Amy Szymaszek is a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, studying Educational Leadership and Advocacy. She is currently researching strategies in curriculum and instruction, cultural diversity in education, and bridging the theory-practice gap in education. She may be contacted at [szymaszeka1@udayton.edu](mailto:szymaszeka1@udayton.edu).

*Peter Titlebaum, Ed.D.*

Full Professor, Dept. of Sport Management  
University of Dayton  
300 College Park  
Dayton, OH 45469  
Phone: 937-229-4222  
Fax: 937-229-4244  
[ptitlebaum1@udayton.edu](mailto:ptitlebaum1@udayton.edu)

Dr. Peter Titlebaum, Professor of Sport Management at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, has over twenty-five years' experience in management in the profit, non-profit, private, and public sectors. He speaks and writes on areas of networking, organizational and personal development, educating audiences to be their own advocates. He may be contacted at [ptitlebaum1@udayton.edu](mailto:ptitlebaum1@udayton.edu).

## Executive Functions in Young Children: Supporting Their Development in Inclusive Settings

Evonn Welton, Ph.D., Shernavaz Vakil, Ed.D., and Lynn S. Kline, Ph.D.

\* Correspondence:  
Evonn Welton PhD  
University of Akron  
[welton@uakron.edu](mailto:welton@uakron.edu)  
Professor, Dept. of Curricular  
and Instructional Studies  
CHCS 309T  
Akron, OH 44325-4205  
Phone (330) 972-6742

Full list of author  
information is available at  
the end of the article

### *Abstract:*

*Executive functions are defined as the ability to apply complex skills including planning, organization and abstract problem solving. In addition, cognitive flexibility, time management and self-monitoring are also included. As children progress beyond preschool, they are expected to apply these skills at an increasingly complex level. This can be especially challenging for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. This article explores the concept of executive functioning in young children and suggests strategies to support their development thus increasing academic and social development.*

Increasingly, young children with disabilities are being served in inclusive environments and the least restrictive environment is defined as within the general education setting. While inclusion emphasizes the need to educate students with disabilities in the regular educational setting, it is much more than just the physical placement of a student with disabilities in this setting (Allen & Cowdery, 2009). Inclusion truly is a dynamic and fluid process that creates a learning environment in which all children can optimally learn those skills expected of them.

Part of education in the least restrictive setting includes access to testing and assessment. The past several years have seen an increased emphasis on accountability for schools and educators and this accountability has been defined as the performance of students on high stakes testing. The teacher's ability to teach academic content is then also assessed from the students' performance on these measures. Therefore, assessment has become high stakes for all involved. Concerns have been raised regarding this emphasis upon group testing and the potential consequences for children and educators. In addition, it is of concern that the curriculum is developmentally appropriate and accommodations are implemented as needed for children with disabilities

Teacher education, charged with preparing teacher candidates who demonstrate skills with academic content, pedagogy and dispositions should be afforded a curricula which remains current and relevant for the preschool teacher. One of the results of the increased emphasis on accountability and high stakes tests is the demand on academic skills at the kindergarten level (Miller & Almon, 2009). No longer is kindergarten considered a time for play and socialization. Rather, there is a focus on core executive functions needed to succeed with learning. Executive functions include skills such as planning, organizing, time management, working memory, metacognition, response inhibition, self-regulation of affect, task initiation, flexibility, and goal-directed persistence (Dawson & Guare, 2004) which result in purposeful, goal directed behaviors that impact cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, behavior, and social interaction (Salt & Redshaw, 2006; Ciccantelli & Vakil, 2011). These skills become critical for success with both learning and test taking.

While these complex executive functions may provide a challenge to many young children, they are especially challenging to young children with disabilities who struggle with social and academic situations at the informal level and more formal level in the inclusive kindergarten classroom. Young children with mild disabilities such as autism, attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity, specific learning disorders, and emotional disturbances struggle with skills involving planning, organization and abstract thinking. Other children may not meet the criteria for an identified disorder; however, nonetheless have an area of relative need with executive functioning (Hosenbocus & Chahal, 2012). Difficulty with executive functions relative to the child's age level may result in additional barriers both with academic tasks and with social interactions. Children who tend to respond impulsively, have difficulties with memory, flexibility, time management and other skills related to executive functioning are at significant risk as they begin their formal school experiences. They appear disorganized, inattentive, forgetful, impulsive, and lagging behind peers in initiating and completing tasks, and tend to have an underdeveloped sense of awareness of time and space, have trouble multitasking, and may have difficulty with written or verbal expression (Krumm et al, 2008; Ciccantelli & Vakil, 2011). Those in inclusive settings may be additionally disadvantaged as these are specific skills expected of all children at grade level and beyond. School activities become more structured with a larger number of students in the classroom thus making executive functioning

important for academic and social success. For the child who has needs in this area, they may potentially fall farther behind or be unable to demonstrate their skills on formal assessments administered in group settings.

### *Assessment of Executive Functions*

Referrals for assessment generally result from parents' or teacher observations of elevated levels of impulsivity, reports of decreased concentration, increased distractibility, difficulty modulating emotional responses and bringing excessive responses to situations, and an inability to plan or stay on task. At times, the referral may be to a pre-referral or Intervention Assistance Team in the school setting. If these strategies are ineffective, a referral for eligibility for a suspected disability may occur. In other instances, the parent may pursue an evaluation for the presence of a possible attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder through a physician.

The first step in effective intervention is obtaining an accurate assessment of executive dysfunctions which can be a challenge for the educational team. Initially, the team should carefully describe the problematic behaviors and how they are impacting learning. The comprehensive assessment should include norm referenced, criterion referenced assessments and observation. In addition, it is important to gather background information from parents/caregivers and teachers. It must be remembered that there is no specific recognized "executive functioning disorder" with defined and research based criteria. Therefore, this is likely often part of another disorder such as attention-deficit disorder or a specific learning disorder. In addition, there are recognized disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of abuse or other mental health issues that may appear as a problem with executive functioning when in fact, the etiology is something different. It is possible that the parents or teachers may be unfamiliar with the often difficult, yet typical, range of behaviors which young children demonstrate. It is also possible that the parents or teachers experience personal stress, which may result in inconsistent rules, daily routines, or disciplinary procedures; therefore, it becomes very important of the evaluation team or Response to Intervention Team to carefully consider a variety of alternative explanations before concluding that executive functions are of concern (Welton, Vakil, & Schwartz, 2004). If executive functioning is an area of concern, it



must be determined how it is impacting learning and which, if any, specific disability category is applicable.

The educational team members' familiarity with the concept of executive functions and their role in learning and socialization is critical. There are often complex issues surrounding executive dysfunctions and the subsequent intervention, and often the risk for team members and test interpretation is placing emphasis on either the individual areas of strength or weakness of the child rather than describing the child as a whole. In addition, because there is no recognized "executive function disorder" there is the possibility of these specific areas being considered simply as part of the acknowledged overarching disorder rather than a set of discreet difficulties requiring assistance. In general, assessment of young children is less reliable and less valid due to their young age (Carter, Briggs-Gowan, & Davis, 2004). Because many of the difficulties with executive functioning are often attributed to lack of maturation and development, it is important to continually assess the child in those skills expected of typically developing children of the same age. Development of young children occurs rapidly, so the team should consider development in terms of ranges of months rather than years. For example, if the child is the youngest child in a preschool class, it is very possible that the observed differences are a function of the child's young age rather than a specific difficulty with executive functions. On the other hand, if the child's ability to plan, organize and inhibit inappropriate behavior is outside of the range of other children of a similar age, then it is possible that this child is at risk. It is critical that the evaluation team recognize the interactive nature of young children's learning and development with the appropriate level of executive functioning. Therefore, team members must carefully review and share well-articulated explanations of all areas assessed, pace the meeting slowly, and frequently check with all team members for clarification and questions (Carter, Briggs-Gowan, & Davis, 2004).

In order to facilitate a valid assessment, The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood recommends that assessing executive functions in young children be authentic and if possible in the natural environment which is where children spend time and includes the activities and routines in which they participate (<http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>). Authentic assessments should be ongoing, purposeful and used to determine intervention. The use of authentic assessment settings can also facilitate reliable and valid comparisons of the child

relative to similar age ranged peers. It is especially important that the child be observed relative to other children of a similar age range as developmental issues can impact the behavior demonstrated by a given child. For example, if a young child is placed in a program in which a large number of children have been retained, that child may appear to have difficulties in these areas compared to peers when in actuality; it is simply that the peers are chronologically much older. The assessment should involve multiple sources of information including observations, informants, checklists and rating skills to form a holistic view of the child (Grisham-Brown, Hemmeter & Pretti-Frontczak, 2005). Parents and others familiar with the child may be used as informants. It is imperative to observe patterns of behavior across settings and in order to determine whether the child's difficulties are actually beyond the range that one would expect of a typical young child.

### *Response to Intervention*

Early identification and intervention of children with learning problems has long been acknowledged as an important proactive, preventative strategy and supports the need for early assessment of children's functioning, rather than focusing on a diagnosis or medical condition to guide instruction and interventions (Burns, Jacob & Wagner, 2008). This is especially true for young children when reliable and valid identification of a disorder is often difficult. Research suggests that young children's behavior and socio-emotional functioning can be significant predictors of their skills in behavior and mental health outcomes in later years, there is a strong correlation between a students' classroom behaviors and academic achievement, and the rapid change in motor proficiency and executive functions takes place in the early childhood years (Ciccantelli & Vakil, 2011; Elliott et al, 2007; Livesey et al, 2006).

Response to Intervention (RTI) is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying data to inform important educational decisions. These core practices interact continuously, increasing in intensity as students' progress through the multi-tiered system to optimize learning while reducing behavioral challenges (Cummings, Atkins, Allison & Cole, 2008). Effective RTI starts with assessments where data accurately reflects ecological decisions including instruction. Assessments which are precise, frequently used and sensitive to the specific executive needs of young children are used with

increasing intensity as the demands of young children with executive dysfunctions escalate (Ysseldyke, Burns, Scholin & Parker, 2010). Embedded within the multi-tiered framework for the RTI model are interventions and supports validated by research, delivered in a timely manner and designed to match learner needs with instructional strategies that fosters their skills and abilities. RTI requires both general and special education teachers to collaborate to monitor student progress through curriculum-based assessments (Smith & Tyler, 2010).

### *Interventions*

The crucial role of executive function processes begins in the early years before kindergarten, and increases as students' progress through their school years where they are expected to apply complex skills that involve summarizing, note-taking and writing. Academic success depends on their ability to plan, organize and prioritize tasks, materials and information, separate main ideas from details, think flexibly, memorize content and monitor their own progress (<http://www.nclld.org/images/content/files/executive-function-101-ebook.pdf>).

One component of the executive functions and a key factor that influences children's ability to learn is working memory which allows persons to hold something in their mind and manipulate it to complete a task-a skill and is essential to school success. For children with executive dysfunctions the demands on working memory is incredibly challenging (Ciccantelli & Vakil, 2011). Children with memory problems appear distractible in that they may lose focus due to forgetting task expectations. In addition, intervention strategies addressing attention, distractibility, work quality, work completion and problem solving should be initiated at the earliest possible time to support time management, space and materials. Listed below are some of the challenges faced in schools (<http://www.nclld.org/types-learning-disabilities/executive-function-disorders/executive-functioning-strategies-success-teaching-students>). Specifically, children with executive functioning difficulties may:

- struggle with open-ended tasks (e.g., organizing their calendars) because they are unable to prioritize and organize the various steps; have difficulty shifting between different aspects of the task (e.g., switching from outlining to writing, from one academic subject to another, or from calculating a math fact to checking the answer);
- over-focus on the details, ignoring the bigger picture;
- struggle to take notes or to outline because they lose track of the main ideas;
- have difficulty checking their work without structure or guidance;
- forget to hand in completed work.

In addition, it is important that teachers and parents understand that executive functions do need specific strategies. Because of the nature of a deficit with executive functioning as described above, the child may be described by an unknowledgeable educator as “immature or lazy”. In addition, retention may be recommended as a solution. It has long been recognized that retention is an ineffective strategy for academic or social improvement (Jimerson, Woehr, and Kaufman, 2007).

### *Direct Instruction*

Children with executive dysfunctions do not generally learn incidentally, and direct instruction must be used to augment any teaching strategy; therefore, serving to scaffold future learning. Though early childhood educators question that direct instruction is developmentally appropriate for young children and should only be used on a limited basis, its effectiveness as an intervention strategy in teaching children executive skills cannot be understated (Raver, 2009). Strategies to support learning and help children with executive dysfunctions should be linked directly to the curriculum, and taught explicitly. They should be taught in a structured, systematic ways which include teacher modeling and opportunities for extensive practice (Meltzer, 2011). The focus of direct instruction should include task analysis, where executive function skills are broken into various successive steps and taught incrementally. Rather than providing direct instruction of executive functions in isolated special education classroom, where the emphasis is placed on the types of stimuli and prompts provided, direct instruction should be embedded in the natural environment where young children learn through authentic experiences throughout the day (Raver, 2009).

### *Cognitive Behavior Modification*

Students with executive dysfunctions often struggle with generalizing or discrimination conceptual information which results in problems regarding self-regulation and problem solving. The focus of cognitive behavior management is the premise that language and reflective thinking affects the thought process as well as socialization. A combination of cognitive strategies and applied behavior analysis (ABA) should be the focus of the intervention used to teach young children with executive dysfunctions to monitor and regulate their thought processes effectively. In this approach, the teacher models his or her thinking process by verbally self-instructing

when performing a task, and young children listen and perform the same task by imitating instructions modeled and spoken (Henley, Ramsry & Algozzine, 2009; Olson & Platt, 2000).

### *Supports*

Because their ability to focus their attention varies, young children, especially those with executive dysfunction, benefit from intentional supports in the curriculum and environment. A variety of educational accommodations may be implemented which address these concerns and support the child. Organizational and time management strategies, facilitating understanding of task completion, shortening lessons, and use of computers and media may all be beneficial for the child. Time management is especially important and young children may have difficulty with telling time or understanding time as a concept. Therefore, visual aids such as egg timers that do not require specific understanding of the concept of time and reading a clock may be especially helpful. It may also be helpful to provide specific activities that will assist the child in comprehension of how long they may have to finish an assignment or when an activity is completed. These are complex skills and may be difficult for some children, especially those with disabilities.

Supports may be provided in the materials, classroom activities, and classroom routine to maximize participation and make learning accessible to students with executive dysfunctions. Providing routine and consistency, supplementing oral directions with written or visual cues, social stories, reviewing the school day/daily schedule and provide a visual schedule or calendar of the day are all supports that assist young children with executive dysfunctions make sense of their day. Additionally, support can be provided by preparing specific adaptations unique to the child's needs ahead of time, arranging grouping of children, and creating uncluttered work spaces so that children with executive dysfunctions are not further disadvantaged (Ciccantelli & Vakil, 2010).

Understanding the connection between executive function and academic achievement can greatly assist the early childhood educator with more effectively and efficiently addressing the needs of all children, even those challenged by deliberate, goal-directed thought and actions. In addition, it may also serve to improve an understanding of disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as well as other disability classifications.

## References

- Allen, K.E., & Cowdery, G.E. (Eds.). (2009). *The exceptional child: Inclusion in early childhood education*. New York: Thomson Delmar Learning.
- Burns, M. K., Jacob, S., & Wagner, A. (2008). Ethical and legal issues associated with using response-to-intervention to assess learning disabilities. *Journal of School Psychology, 46*, 263-279.
- Carter, A. S., Briggs-Gowan, M. J., & Davis, N. O. (2004). Assessment of young children's social-emotional development and psychopathology: recent advances and recommendations for practice. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(1), 109-134.
- Ciccantelli, L. & Vakil, S. (2011) Case study of the Identification, Assessment and Early Intervention of Executive Function Deficits, *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education 3*(1), 1-12.
- Cummings, K. D., Atkins, T., Allison, R. & Cole, C (2008). [Response to Intervention Investigating the New Role of Special Educators](#), *Teaching Exceptional Children 40* (4), 24-31
- Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2004). *Executive skills in children and adolescent::A practical guide to assessment and intervention*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.dec-spced.org/recommendedpractices>
- Elliott, S., Huai, N., & Roach, A.T. (2007). Universal and early screening. *Psychology, 45*, 137-161.
- Grisham-Brown, J., Hemmeter, M.L., & Pretti-Frontczak, K, (2005). *Blended practice for teaching children in inclusive settings*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Henley, M., Ramsey, R. & Algozzine, R. (2009). *Characterizes of and strategies for teaching students with mild disabilities. 6<sup>th</sup> ed.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hosenbocus, S., & Chahal, R. (2012). A review of executive function deficits and pharmacological management in children and adolescents. *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 21*(3), 223.
- Jimerson, S., Woehr, S, Kaufman, A. (2007). Grade retention and promotion: Information for parents. Retrieved from <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisedpdfs/graderetention.pdf>.
- Krumm, S., Ziegler, M., & Buehner, M. (2008). Reasoning and working memory as predictors of school grades. *Learning and Individual Differences, 18*, 248-257.
- Livesey, D., Keen, J., Rouse, J., & White, F. (2006). The relationship between measures of executive function, motor performance and externalizing behaviour in 5- and 6-year old children. *Human Movement Science, 25*, 50-64.

- Meltzer, L. (Ed.). (2011). *Executive function in education: From theory to practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Miller, E. and Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED504839)
- Olson, J., & Platt, J. (2000). The instructional cycle. *Teaching children and adolescents with special needs*, 170-197.
- Raver, S. A. (2009). *Early Childhood Special Education-0 to 8 years: Strategies for positive outcomes*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Salt, A., & Redshaw, M. (2006). Neurodevelopmental follow-up after preterm birth: Follow up after two years. *Early Human Development*, 82(3) 185-197.
- Smith, D.D., Tyler, N. C. (2010). *Introduction to special education: Making a difference*. Boston MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Welton, E., Vakil, S. & Schwartz, R. (2004). Attention-deficit hyperactive disorder: The role of the psychotherapist, *Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association*, 7(2), 31-34.
- Ysseldyke, J., Burns, M. K., Scholin, S. E., & Parker, D. C. (2010). Instructionally valid assessment within response to intervention. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(4), 54-61.

**About the Authors:**

*Evonn Welton PhD*

*University of Akron*

[welton@uakron.edu](mailto:welton@uakron.edu)

*Professor, Dept. of Curricular and Instructional Studies*

*CHCS 309T*

*Akron, OH 44325-4205*

*Phone (330) 972-6742*

*Shernavaz Vakil, EdD*

*University of Akron*

[svakil@uakron.edu](mailto:svakil@uakron.edu)

*Professor, Dept. of Curricular and Instructional Studies*

*CHCS 309X*

*Akron, OH 44325-4205*

*Phone (330) 972-6747*

*Lynn S. Kline, PhD*

*University of Akron*

[Kline@uakron.edu](mailto:Kline@uakron.edu)

*Associate Professor, Dept. of Curricular and Instructional Studies*

*CHCS 309Z*

*Akron, OH 44325-4205*

*Phone (330) 972-6150*



## Reflection as a Means to Combat Superficiality.

*D. Mark Meyers, Ph.D.*

---

\* Correspondence:

*D. Mark Meyers, Ph.D.*

Professor

Program Director

Educational Administration

Xavier University

[Meyersd3@xavier.edu](mailto:Meyersd3@xavier.edu)

513-745-2821

Full list of author

information is available at

the end of the article

### *Abstract:*

*The lack of depth can be countered by means of reflection. This presentation will offer advice and information as well as two exemplars for practical use in teacher education and in the K-12 classroom.*

There have been many in teacher education who have opined over the lack of depth of coverage of content areas in preparation programs. Whether one is talking about content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, or any other form, teacher education has been asked to quantify the knowledge of our candidates by a variety of sources, from State Boards of Education, to National Accrediting Organizations, Politicians, and Professional interest groups, each ask teacher education programs to demonstrate the knowledge of the teacher candidates. Individual Teacher Education programs often put even more pressure upon themselves in these areas, as the programs themselves want their candidates to succeed as well. This quest for knowledge can form the basis of a search for reflective opportunities by and for teacher candidates during their programs of study.

Reflection is a term that is used quite often in academic circles, however it can be defined insufficiently or impractically. Providing teacher candidates with opportunities for reflection does not offer practical results without the development and use of clearly defined situations of practice ((Parsons & Stephenson, 2005). The development of a clear framework within which teacher candidates develop their knowledge also allows teacher candidates to process and document the development of their reflective abilities (Chitpin, 2006). It is through the development of a clearly articulated and recognized process that teacher candidates will not only develop reflective abilities grounded in their professional development, they will be able to understand and be able to replicate the process.

As put forward by Liu (2015), teacher education programs should focus not only on the process of reflection, programs should also the content of the reflection, the goal of the reflection, and the connection of the reflection to their own teaching practice. This idea presents teacher education programs with the opportunity to develop the means for candidates to practice reflection targeted on all four areas and not merely on the process of reflection itself. As teacher candidates need to develop the of the power of reflection, they also need to further develop the idea that decision making is tied to understanding (Meyers and Castell, 1999).

By means of example, two types of journaling techniques will be discussed, which can provide the frame work requisite for successful acquisition of the concept of reflection. In the first example, referred to as a J3 journal a form of a triple entry journal (Carroll in Watts, 1998). This technique is one that can be practiced by teacher candidates in their methods courses and used in the field with their students at a variety of levels.

In this adaptation of a triple entry journal, teacher candidates work in partnerships in response to a reading prompt.

### J<sub>3</sub> or Triple-entry Journal (Carroll in Watts, 1998)

First reader notes key observations about text, questions about text, quotes from text.

First reader responds to each key observation, question, or quote s/he noted in left column.

---

Second reader responds to first reader's double-entry (information in both columns above) with general comments, further questions, and/or other observations about the text (from second reader's understanding of the text/ideas or those evoked by the first reader's double-entry).

In the J3 process, teacher candidates receive more immediate feedback from their classmates, rather than waiting for responses from the instructor. Teacher candidates are provided with the opportunity to initiate a reflective dialogue with both a classmate and their instructor, providing the framework for a type of dialogue when interacting with written material that can support them in numerous future interactions. The J3 process then leads into other triple entry journal methods such as those proposed by Miller & Veatch, (2010), Allen, (2008), Harvey & Goudvis (2007), Marzano, et. Al (2001). These triple entry journals are focused on the individual reflection, which can be more powerfully implemented when combined with the J3 method as an introduction to the concept of reflection.

Triple Entry journal can also be utilized on a semester long basis to add in comprehension, especially during methods courses. In the semester long triple entry journal, teacher candidates apply typical double entry journal techniques through the course of the semester. The double entry journal could include the following pages:

1. A listing of events during the week including learning activities both inside and outside of the classroom. These events should be divided between college based course experiences and field based experiences. However in both instances, the listings need to include unstructured activities that can occur outside of the classroom.
2. A reflection page, which allows the teacher candidate reacts to the events and items listed on the first page, is vital. The candidates are advised to be as open and honest as possible to allow the reflection to be impactful. This type of reflection will need practice, so the first couple of entries should be reviewed for feedback and advice.
3. The third page is left blank for each week until the last week of the semester. During the last week, the teacher candidates revisit each weeks entries and fill in their reflective responses for the week on the third page.

In this type of journal, the power of the third page develops exponentially. Teacher candidates in general, and methods course participants in particular, strive for the means to “connect the dot” of teaching. They have a great deal of material and methods thrown at them with little time for reaction and even less for reflection. At the end of the semester, the reflection of the third page will allow the students to develop a more global sense of the methods and methodologies discussed during the semester. In this manner, they will not only be able to develop their own “guided reflection framework,” which Parsons and Stephenson (2005) recommended in their research, but more importantly each candidate will develop their own reflective practice directly connected to their personal learning styles and preferences. This would allow teacher candidates to experience all three areas of importance in reflection developed by Liu (2015).

Teachers are working with students today who seemingly have less time for learning and a desire for vast amounts of superficial information. Through the personal development of reflective practice, teacher candidates will be able to not only develop a deeper connection to the content and pedagogy of their teaching methodologies, which they will be able to share with their future students, they will be more practiced in the art of reporting and describing these methodologies to a variety of audiences, a skill required of teachers more often each day.

## References

- Allen, J. (2008), *More Tools for Teaching Content Literacy*, Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers
- Chitpin, S. (2006). The use of reflective journal keeping in a teacher education program: A Popperian analysis. *Reflective Practice* 7(1), pp. 73-86.
- LIU, K. (2015). Critical Reflection as a Framework for Transformative Learning in Teacher Education. *Educational Review*. 67, 2, 135-157
- Harvey S., & Goudvis A. (2007). *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* (2nd ed.). Portland, U.S.A: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* McREL: Danvers, USA: ASCD publications.
- Meyers, D.M. and Casteel, J.D. (1999). *Dealing with Dilemmas*. Good Year Books, Glenview, IL.
- Miller, M., & Veatch, N. (2010). Teaching literacy in context: Choosing and using instructional strategies. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(3), 154-165.
- Parsons, M. & Stephenson, M. (2005). Developing reflective practice in student teachers: collaboration and critical partnerships. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 11(1), pp. 95-116.
- Ross, J. A., & Bruce, C. D. (2007). Teacher self-assessment: a mechanism for facilitating professional growth. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(2), 146-159.

**About the Author:**

*D. Mark Meyers, Ph.D.*  
*Professor*  
*Program Director*  
*Educational Administration*  
*Xavier University*  
[Meyersd3@xavier.edu](mailto:Meyersd3@xavier.edu)  
*513-745-2821*



# PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

for the OHIO Journal of Teacher  
Education

The following guidelines are presented for publication opportunities for OJTE (the OHIO Journal of Teacher Education).

The OHIO Journal of Teacher Education provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas concerning the improvement of teaching and teacher education. Articles submitted should reflect this mission. Their focus should concern concepts, practices, and/or results of research that have practical dimensions, implications, or applicability for practitioners involved with teacher education. The journal is regional in scope and is sent as a benefit of membership in the Ohio Association of Teacher Education.

Manuscripts are subject to review of the Professional Journal Committee (co-editors and editor consultants). Points of view are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of either Association. Permission to reproduce journal articles must be requested from the editors.

## MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

**Content:** Journal issues may be “thematic” or “open.” Currently, all future issues are designated “open.”

**Length:** Manuscripts, including all references, bibliographies, charts, figures, and tables, generally should not exceed 15 pages.

**Style:** For writing and editorial style, follow directions in the latest edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Omit the author’s name from the title page. Include an 80-100-word abstract.

**Please do not use auto-formatting when preparing the manuscript!**



**Cover page:** Include the following information on a separate sheet attached to the manuscript: title of the article; date of submission; author's name, author's terminal degree; mailing address, e-mail address, business and home phone numbers, institutional affiliation; and short biographical sketch, including background and areas of specialization.

**Submission:** Submissions must be word processed using Microsoft Office Word (Microsoft Excel tables are permitted). Submit the manuscript as an attachment to an e-mail to [oatejournal@gmail.com](mailto:oatejournal@gmail.com)

### EDITORIAL PROCEDURES

Authors will be notified of the receipt of the manuscript. After an initial review by the editors, those manuscripts which meet specifications will be sent to reviewers. Notification of the status of the manuscript will take place after the deadline date for each issue. The journal editors will make minor editorial changes; major changes will be made by the author prior to publication. Manuscripts, editorial correspondence, and questions can be directed to Dr. Mark Meyers and Dr. Jean Eagle at [oatejournal@gmail.com](mailto:oatejournal@gmail.com)

## IMPORTANT DATES OF NOTE:

- |                          |                                                                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January 4, 2016</b>   | Closing date for acceptance of manuscripts for Spring Journal 2016 |
| <b>Publication Date:</b> | <b>March, 2016 at OCTEO Conference</b>                             |
| <b>July 30, 2016</b>     | Closing date for acceptance of manuscripts for Fall Journal 2016   |
| <b>Publication date:</b> | <b>October, 2016 at OCTEO Conference</b>                           |



## MEMBERSHIP

Interested in becoming a member of OATE (Ohio Association of Teacher Educators)? Please visit the following website for current information: <https://sites.google.com/site/ohioate/home>

Additionally, information about OCTEO (Ohio Confederation of Teacher Education Organizations), Fall and Spring OCTEO Conferences, and presentational opportunities, can be found at the following site: <http://www.ohioteachered.org>.

Our organization looks forward to your interest in OATE and OCTEO in 2015 and 2016.