EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

by

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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK

We, the indersigned, certify that this project entitled Explicit Instruction in the Special Education Classroom by Leah Hayes, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Curriculum and Instruction, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.

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Abstract

Explicit instruction has been proven to improve the abilities and outcomes in academics for students with special needs. According to Lyon, et. al. (2001), students with disabilities are at particular risk for experiencing reading difficulties; for a majority of students with learning disabilities, reading is their primary area of difficulty. This project was created in order to streamline and to incorporate explicit instruction into the district-mandated curriculum for students with special needs in the area of reading in Kindergarten and First Grade. With the addition of explicit instruction into specific curricula, can students with special needs improve academic abilities in the resource room setting? The benefits of the addition of explicit instruction to the *Read Well* curriculum were successful and productive. Students were able to grow not only academically, but also in confidence and appropriate behavior. Although there are some limitations of time and materials, this project was successful for my Kindergarten and First Grade students. They were engaged in the lesson through the activities and modeling. The students were able to produce taught sounds, blend words with known sounds and read sentences based on the data collected. This curriculum was built as a basis for teachers who utilize the curriculum with the hope that it will be built upon and future grade levels and various subject areas will use the core concepts when building lessons in the future.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Students with special needs have become an important and researched topic over the past few decades. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), in 2015 8.9% of the 6 through 21 age population was served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B. In New York State, 11.2% of the population age 6 to 21 was served under IDEA Part B. As this data indicates, students with disabilities in the 13 classifications listed under IDEA are prevalent throughout the nation as well as our state and communities. Curriculum for students with special needs should be scaffolded in a way that enables all students to succeed. According to Lyons, Fletcher, Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Torgesen, Wood, Schulte, & Olson (2001), students with disabilities are at particular risk for experiencing reading difficulties; for a majority of students with learning disabilities, reading is their primary area of difficulty. The authors state: "We contend, therefore, that it is not in the best interest of children to continue to use present policies and practices as the primary means to provide appropriate instruction to children with LD, particularly students with reading difficulties" (p.269) Lemons, Kerns, and Davidson (2014) also believe that intensive reading instruction provided by special education teachers is one of the most effective approaches for ensuring that students with special needs have the best chance of becoming successful readers.

Curriculum for students with special needs changed after the 1997 Amendment to IDEA which mandated that students with special needs have access to the general education curriculum and be helped to achieve high standards. According to Agran, Alper, and Wehmeyer (2002), there are many benefits to this type of plan but there may also be negative impacts such as student success and appropriateness of certain

assessments for students with disabilities. In the following essay, I will detail the problem of the instruction of curriculum for students with special needs as well as the goals and purpose of my thesis project.

There are many research studies performed on the appropriate interventions for students with special needs. Explicit instruction is one of those research based interventions. Explicit instruction includes 5 factors that lead to student success, clear expectations, clarity of presentation, multiple opportunities to respond, active teacher monitoring, and frequent evaluation and feedback. According to Archer and Hughes (2011), some of the essential elements focus on critical content, break skills down to smaller units, provide step-by-step demonstrations, provide guided and supported practice, require frequent responses, and provide immediate feedback. The author stated:

> The effectiveness of explicit instruction has been validated again and again in research involving both general education and special education students. While it has proven to be very helpful for normally progressing students, it is essential for students with learning challenges. Explicit instruction is absolutely necessary in teaching content that students could not otherwise discover. (p.vii)

Many researchers have concluded that explicit instruction is a valuable tool to instruct students with special learning needs.

There are essential components of instructing using the explicit instruction model. According to Hughes, Morris, Therrien and Benson (2017), there are five essential components of explicit instruction: 1. Segmenting complex skills, 2. Drawing student attention to important features of the content through modeling/think-alouds, 3. Promoting successful engagement by using systematically faded supports/prompts, 4.

Providing opportunities for students to respond and receive feedback, and 5. Creating purposeful practice opportunities. In explicit instruction the teacher plans lessons based on clear objectives that progress purposefully from less challenging to more challenging. According to Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth and Vaughn (2014), explicit instruction provides direct explanation and modeling of concepts, skills, and strategies, along with extended opportunities for guided and independent practice with clear corrective and positive feedback. Explicit instruction incorporated the tenets of theorists such as Gestalt, Neisser, Matlin, Thorndike, Pavlov, Skinner, Bandura, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner. Explicit instruction deals with organization of learning tasks, information processing, behaviorism, cognitive modeling, frequent practice, immediate feedback, and scaffolding instruction.

Huberman, Navo, and Parrish(2012) completed a study on the effective practices in high performing districts serving students in special education. The main themes of the study were the impacts of inclusion and access to the core curriculum, collaboration between special education and general education teachers, continuous assessment and use of Response to Intervention (RTI), targeted professional development, and the use of Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) (2012). A focus district created structured EDI lessons that were correlated to state standards. The district saw an increase in the Academic Performance Index (API) from 532 in 2002 to 818 in 2010. The authors of this study believe that these districts can "serve as 'lighthouses' for other districts struggling to fully incorporate their special education population and to give these students the best possible chance to succeed academically." (p. 71) This research supports in implementation of explicit instruction into curriculum.

My intentions in my thesis project are to incorporate explicit instruction into my current mandated curriculum of *Read Well* by Voyager Sopris Learning. I currently service students in Kindergarten through Grade 4. The students that I see have been identified as a students with a disability as defined by the thirteen classifications. Each of the students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). I see students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Specific Learning Disabilities, other health impairments. Each of the students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They struggle with the grade level curriculum provided and need additional support. All students receive instruction through *Read Well*. *Read Well* is a reading and language arts curriculum that builds foundational reading skills. It is a comprehensive, mastery-based program that is designed to provide instruction through a strategic blend of differentiated whole group and small group activities. Children receive decoding instruction, reading, and comprehension skills through the program. Students practice skills in the small group setting that are then to be transferred to the whole group general education classroom. This transition is not currently being seen with the current program in place, which is being noted by general education teachers as well as special education teachers. With the extension of explicit instruction added to the current curriculum already in place, I can build on the basics set by *Read Well* in order to increase the achievement of students with special needs. The goal is to increase phonemic awareness, decoding and blending skills, and reading comprehension.

Explicit instruction can also be incorporated into mathematical instruction. I currently do not have a curriculum used for math interventions. I push in as well as pull out of classrooms and use the common core as my basis of instruction. Students are

expected to be exposed and work with the current curriculum, however without the proper instructional approach it is often difficult for students with special needs to understand and comprehend what the focus and skills are. With the use of explicit instruction, students with special needs will gain a better understanding of mathematical concepts.

In the next chapter, I will review the relevant literature on the use of explicit instruction for students with special needs. The literature and research will answer the questions: what explicit instruction is and how I can incorporate it into my classroom and curriculum.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Explicit instruction has been proven to improve the abilities and outcomes in academics for students with special needs. According to Lyon, Fletcher, et. al. (2001), students with disabilities are at particular risk for experiencing reading difficulties; for a majority of students with learning disabilities, reading is their primary area of difficulty. Fredrick, Keel, and Neel (2002) stated that, "Many students are not able to learn to read without explicit instruction and they quickly fall behind in their reading achievement. This problem then compounds itself as students find themselves increasingly behind their peers" (p. 57). Experts in the field of education and researchers alike have found that failure to develop basic reading abilities can be related to a number of academic, economic and socio economic difficulties (Carlson & Francis, 2002). Curriculum for students with special needs should be scaffolded in a way that enables all students to succeed. Often teachers are not given to tools needed for success when teaching students with special needs. In the following chapter, I will review the literature related to explicit instruction and effectiveness for students with high needs.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction has been highly used and discussed in special education for over the past 20 years, while being given many different definitions and uses (Hughes, Morris, Therrien & Benson, 2017). Studies, synthesis, and meta analyses have been researched to find the effectiveness of explicit instruction. The authors stated:

> ….the effectiveness of explicit instruction is supported by the existence of a large volume of convergent research, conducted over almost five decades, and emanating from a variety of disciplines and theories…..identify effective

> instructional approaches used with students with LD across a variety of content areas. These reviews all identified explicit instruction as effective for teaching student with LD in area of math, reading, and writing. (p. 145)

To meet the needs of all students teachers must be able to provide the specific and explicit instruction that students with special needs require. Explicit instruction is a general strategy that can be incorporated into many curricula. According to Coyne and Koriakin (2017), there are two practices on which special educators need to focus while using explicit instruction in reading. Practice one is explicit decoding instruction that focuses on teaching students to decode and read words. The authors stated that, "most students need explicit, direct phonics instruction in order to learn how to read. Nearly all beginning readers, and many students with disabilities, can benefit from explicit decoding instruction" (p. 241). Without this direct and explicit instruction, students learn unreliable strategies for decoding. The other practice that special educators need to focus on for reading is explicit vocabulary instruction. Many students in low income districts as well as those with special needs have been shown to have a large gap in their vocabulary skills and background knowledge. The key components of explicit vocabulary instruction are: 1) select words to teach directly, 2) develop student-friendly definition, 3) provide multiple opportunities to interact with words in different contexts, and 4) promote deep understanding of vocabulary (Coyne & Koriain, p. 243). Explicit instruction has been shown to improve the reading abilities of students with learning disabilities.

Teaching reading, especially to students with reading disabilities is difficult and requires strong and effective instructional skills and strategies to be taught. According to

Moat (1999), "Teaching reading is rocket science" (p. 2). He commented:

> Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. Research now shows that a child who doesn't learn the reading basics early is unlikely to learn them at all. Any child who doesn't learn to read early and well will not easily master other skills and knowledge, and is unlikely to ever flourish in school or in life. (p. 5)

While this statement may be harsh, research has found that students who do not become fluent and strategic readers by the end of third grade have a low chance to catch up with their more successful peers (Coyne, Kame'enui, & Simmons., 2001). According to Coyne, Zipoli, and Ruby (2006), there are five big ideas in literacy and beginning reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (p. 2). Special education teachers and those teaching students at risk, should focus on these five components while deciding what to teach. The researchers included three modes of instruction that are valid for explicit instruction that consist of conspicuous instruction, instructional scaffolding, and opportunities for practice with high-quality feedback. Teachers must time their instruction appropriately. There are benchmarks and sequences for teachers to maintain appropriate timing and skill bases.

Researchers have also completed studies to show the effectiveness of explicit instruction in decoding and the ways in which it benefits children, even those high in phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge. Fielding-Barnsley (1997) studied 32 preschool children and found that, "the results support the contention that explicit instruction in decoding is helpful even when children have high levels of phonemic awareness" (p. 85). This raises the question, can explicit instruction help all learners no

matter their level? There is not a great deal of data on explicit instruction in the general education setting as it is mainly seen in the small group response to intervention (RTI) or special education settings. Reutel, Child, Jones and Clark (2014) studied five widely marketed core reading programs (CRPs) in order to answer the following questions: What types and occurrences of explicit instructional moves are recommended in CRP teachers' edition lessons for instruction each of the five essential elements of reading instruction? And what types and occurrences of explicit instructional moves are recommended in CRP teachers' editions by grade level? Research does tell us that explicit instruction is successful for students with special needs, but are students receiving this intervention in their classroom? In the study 290 lessons were chosen to be studied coming from grade one, three, and five material. The researchers found that the five publishers did incorporate some explicit instruction into the curriculum, however, "revealed highly variant and often insufficient attention to the explicit instructional mover of independent practice, feedback, and monitoring" (p. 425). The study also showed that of the explicit instructional moves utilized, guided practice was used most frequently followed by modeling and discussion. Incorporating the seven explicit instructional moves into curriculum will benefit students.

Guided Reading

With the discussion of tiered intervention of students with disabilities there is often a recommendation of Guided Reading. Guided Reading is one of the most widely used approaches for early reading instruction; however, Guided Reading deemphasizes explicit instruction and practice of reading skills in favor of extended time reading text. A study conducted by Denton, et. al. (2014) evaluated two intervention groups for

students who were at risk. One of the groups focused on explicit intervention and one focused on Guided Reading. The study consisted of 218 students. The students were randomly split between the two intervention groups and typical general education classroom instruction. The results showed that both groups did better than the general education classroom. The study did reveal that the students who were receiving explicit instruction were "more likely to substantially accelerate student progress in phonemic decoding, text reading fluency, and reading comprehension than Guided Reading" (p. 268). An interesting finding was that students with learning difficulties may benefit from instruction in listening and reading comprehension that is more structured, sequential, and explicit than is typically provided. While Guided Reading is beneficial, explicit instruction will provide many students with learning difficulties greater success than originally thought.

Mathematics Instruction

Explicit instruction is also a valuable intervention and instructional tool that can be used in mathematics. According to Doabler and Fien (2013), explicit instruction has been one of the most beneficial and effective approaches for teaching students with mathematical difficulties. The elements of explicit math instruction are teacher modeling of new concepts, teacher guided practice opportunities, teacher checking for student understanding, teacher providing academic feedback, and the students engaging in independent practice. During explicit instruction in mathematics, teachers model and use think-alouds. They encourage and guide students through the process while giving feedback, and give time for independent practice that is based on instruction to check for student understanding of the content.

Doabler and Fien (2015) examined the relationship between the explicit instruction interactions that occur between teachers and Kindergarten students during core mathematics instruction and the mathematical achievement of the students. The authors stated that, "When orchestrated well, explicit instruction is an effective approach for helping improve students' opportunities for long term academic success (p. 304). The researchers posed the following research question: What is the association between frequency-based components of explicit instruction and student mathematic achievement? The study focused on 129 Kindergarten classrooms in Oregon and Texas. The sample size was 2,681 students. The students were given a pre- and post-test on measures of foundational aspects of number proficiency by completing the *Test of Early Mathematics Ability - Third Edition* and the *Early numeracy curriculum-based measurement measures.* Observers used the Classroom Observation of Student-Teacher Interactions—Mathematics (COSTI- M), to measure the frequency of explicit instruction interactions during the mathematics lesson, while focusing on the six instructional interaction behaviors. The findings were that there was a positive gain with using the components of explicit instruction in the classroom and student achievement. The authors concluded: "One finding aligned with our prediction showed fairly strong evidence supporting the frequency of response opportunities for individual students to verbalize and physically demonstrate their mathematical knowledge and thinking during interactions with the teacher. Results suggest that this type of student response is associated with student achievement on proximal and distal measures of mathematics" (p. 323). The research shows that explicit instruction in mathematics is beneficial in the

small group intervention groups with students with mathematical difficulties, as well as the whole group setting.

Conclusions

This literature and research helps answer the questions about what explicit instruction is, how I can incorporate it into my classroom and curriculum, and the basis for my project. Explicit instruction is an important tool to use in my elementary special education classroom. There are currently no studies regarding the effects of incorporating explicit instruction into the *Read Well* curriculum for students with special needs. With the addition of explicit instruction into specific curricula, can students with special needs improve academic abilities in the resource room setting?

In the next chapter, I will discuss the methods and procedures that I will use to develop a curriculum for first grade students with special needs to gain a greater understanding of the pillars of reading using explcit instruction.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Introduction

This curriculum project was intended to incorporate the implementation of explicit instruction in the special education resource room while following the district mandated *Read Well* curriculum. There are currently no studies regarding the effects of incorporating explicit instruction into the *Read Well* curriculum for students with special needs. With the addition of explicit instruction into specific curricula, can students with special needs improve academic abilities in the resource room setting? Explicit instruction was integrated into the current curriculum of students in Kindergarten to Fourth Grade that are currently being serviced for Response to Intervention (RTI) services or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) minutes. The students receive anywhere from 40 to 90 minutes of reading instruction and 30 to 50 minutes of mathematics instruction daily. The students received small group instruction based on the five principles of explicit instruction. The majority of the students are classified as learning disabled and at least two level below their age mates. This curriculum project was developed to create an engaging 1st grade small group intervention reading curriculum that incorporates explicit instruction into the current district mandated curriculum of *Read Well* by Voyager Sopris Learning. The following essay will detail the methodology used to develop this proposed curriculum.

Conceptual Framework

Explicit instruction includes 5 factors that lead to student success, clear expectations, clarity of presentation, multiple opportunities to respond, active teacher monitoring, and frequent evaluation and feedback. According to Archer and Hughes

(2011), some of the essential elements focus on critical content, breaking skills down into smaller units, providing step-by-step demonstrations, providing guided and supported practice, requiring frequent responses, and providing immediate feedback. These five principles will be embedded into the lessons created for students to succeed with the *Read Well* curriculum. Explicit instruction is successful due to the structure and process that it incorporates. According to Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth and Vaughn (2014), explicit instruction provides direct explanation and modeling of concepts, skills, and strategies, along with extended opportunities for guided and independent practice with clear corrective and positive feedback. Rupley, Blair, and Nichols (2009), described explicit instruction as imparting new information to students through meaningful teacher-student interactions and teacher guidance of student learning. Many researchers have made strong conclusions on the effectiveness of explicit instruction and the impact it has on students with special needs.

Audience

My proposed curriculum was utilized in my current teaching placement at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Jamestown, New York. Abraham Lincoln Elementary School is an urban area public school in the city of Jamestown, NY. There are currently 387 students enrolled from grades Pre-K to Grade 4. This school is also considered a school of choice, which enables students from other elementary schools within the district to attend this school. According to New York State data, 79% of the students are White, 11% Hispanic, 9% Multi-Racial, and 2% African American. 11% of the students are identified as having a disability and 65% are identified as economically disadvantaged (NYSED, 2018). The school currently has a chronic absenteeism rate of

6%. Attendance is a huge concern for all students in the district, and especially for those students that have academic concerns. When the student is not present in the classroom the instruction does not happen. Jamestown Public School District is also considered a walking district so transportation is not provided, unless noted in the student's IEP. This does cause issues for some students to get to school, especially when the weather is poor. This is a transition period for the district with the appointment of a new superintendent. With many new and inventive ideas he is leading the district in a new direction. There are community programs at Lincoln Elementary to assist students such as LINC (an after-school program), Striders (Grade 3 and 4 tutoring), and PACERS (a community liaison between school and parents). The district is also implementing a summer reading intervention program, LitCamp, which works with local agencies to provide students with transportation to and from school, an extra curricular afternoon activity, and breakfast and lunch in all of the elementary schools. I have taught at one of the pilot schools for this program and the amount of regression during the summer has shown to be very minimal due to the success of the program. There has been data that supports the growth of reading skills and abilities by the students that regularly attend and a decline in the "summer slide" that is very prevalent in the district.

I currently have a caseload of 19 students in Kindergarten through Grade 4. The students are receiving Response to Intervention (RTI) services or special education services based on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Some of the students have been identified as having a reading or print disability. The curriculum I created has been used for students lacking the skills expected of the K/1st grade level. Groups were formed based on grade level data as well as Special Education requirements. The students received a minimum

of 40 minutes of intervention daily in a group of no more than 5 students per state regulations.

Procedure

During the course of developing this curriculum, I took the following steps:

Step 1: Background

I attended school in Sherman, NY where I received a deep and meaningful education. I attended Jamestown Community College for Business Administration, and after working in management for many years, I attended SUNY Fredonia as an adult learner. As a parent, I wanted to my job to be meaningful and to have the opportunity to help those in need. I student taught in the Jamestown School District and upon graduation was offered a job as a special education teacher. I immediately accepted the position, and I love every minute of my job.

Step Two: Choosing a Topic

I decided to create a curriculum that utilizes the district mandated curriculum, while incorporating explicit instruction. *Read Well* is a reading and language arts curriculum that builds foundational reading skills (Fidanque, Howard, Jones, & Sprick, 2006). It is a comprehensive, mastery-based program that is designed to provide instruction through a strategic blend of differentiated whole group and small group activities. Children receive decoding instruction, reading, and comprehension skills through the program. Students practice skills in the small group setting that are then to be transferred to the whole group general education classroom. This transition is not currently being seen with the current program in place, which is being noted by general

education teachers as well as special education teachers. The students needed more than the current curriculum was giving them access to.

Step Three: Conducting a Needs Assessment/ Audience

Young students needs must be met and standards should be implemented with an understanding of the "whole child." This project started with students in Kindergarten and Grade 1 based on the need, however is morphing into something much bigger for students in Grades 2,3, and 4. Students in the younger grades are expected to know letter sounds and letter names, blending and decoding. Many of my students were struggling in the general education classroom to remember the skills and strategies they were learning without the implementation of explicit instruction.

Step Four: Conduct Literature Review

I began my research with the use of Fredonia's online database. I utilized the Educational Resourced Informational Center (ERIC) as my primary source of information. I searched many terms such as special education, explicit instruction, decoding, and phonics to find empirical articles relating to my topic. I ensured that the articles were mainly current and peer reviewed. I thoroughly read the articles and made connections on how I would successfully incorporate explicit instruction into my curriculum to see an increase in student success.

Step Five: Goals and Framework

The goal of this curriculum model was to increase phonemic awareness, decoding and blending skills, and reading comprehension. My design was based upon the research that has been completed about explicit instruction. According to Denton, Fletcher, Taylor, Barth and Vaughn (2014), explicit instruction provides direct explanation and

modeling of concepts, skills, and strategies, along with extended opportunities for guided and independent practice with clear corrective and positive feedback. My intention was that with the addition of explicit instruction in the curriculum, I would see an increase in student success.

Following the concepts and framework of explicit instruction, the curriculum I created is appropriate and necessary for students with special needs and benefits the students through repeated modeling and repetition.

Scope and Sequence

Students will be working on priority standards based on their academic and grade level. The basis of the instruction follows the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010), and the upcoming implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS, 2017). The curriculum also follows New York States principles and practices for all students with disabilities and the Jamestown Public School's following of Charlotte Danielson's Framework.

Domain 1 – Planning and Prep: The first domain deals with teacher's planning and preparation. This domain covers the knowledge of content, the knowledge of individual students, setting instructional outcomes, knowledge of available resources, designing coherent instruction, and designing student assessments. The curriculum was based on the need for a more explicit approach in teaching phonics and reading skills to students with special needs in Kindergarten and First Grade. Various resources, manipulatives, research based practices, and knowledge of current curriculum and expectations were included in the development of this curriculum and the lessons within. Lessons were created on the basis of and increase in modeling and repetition for student success. The

instructional outcomes of each lesson were based upon the presented information, expectations, and knowledge of individual and grade level student ability. Various assessments, formal and informal, were made to assess student success including sound charts, sight word recognition, blending and decoding skills sheets. Individual students abilities, personal goals, and IEP goals should be taken into consideration when implementing this curriculum. During this planning stage, information was taken from valuable and reliable research to develop a curriculum that was appropriate and engaging for students with special needs.

Domain 2 – Classroom Environment: The next domain incorporates the classroom environment. This is always an area of importance, especially for students with special needs. The classroom should be an environment of respect and rapport, a culture for learning, with set procedures and behavior expectations. The physical space and placement of students is also an important piece when implementing a new curriculum or procedure. The lessons were created to be engaging and meaningful for students to work together and individually which will increase the culture for learning. The teacher needs to be culturally responsive to specific students within the class. This curriculum was developed with all students in mind, however specifically students with learning disabilities. In the classroom, students should feel comfortable and safe in the areas that learning is happening, free from distractions and angst. Student placement near the teacher is often necessary for many students. When working with students, certain behavior expectations need to be reinforced and modeled. This can be done for all ages of students, through the use of set expectations, behavior monitoring, and positive reinforcement. Student supplies and materials must be easily accessible and managed.

This domain is one of the most valuable to establish and maintain. Without an effective classroom environment, learning will be difficult for many students.

Domain 3 – Instruction: The third domain deals with the instruction of lessons. This includes communicating with students, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. Questioning and discussion using explicit instruction follow the "I Do, We Do, You Do" mantra. There is a lot of modeling and repetition involved by both the students and teacher. Daily assessments and checklists provide the instructor with information to drive instruction. If assessments do not show growth or understanding, the lesson may be repeated. There is a great deal of repetition throughout the scope of the lessons to increase exposure and hopefully mastery of skills. Research states that the more a student is engaged the more successful they will be. By including protocols and strategies into the lesson the students will be more likely to engage in the lesson. Some of the strategies utilized in this curriculum were based on the research of Dr. Spencer Kagan. Dr. Kagan researched and created strategies and structures to be used in classrooms which have been shown to increase academic success, classroom community, and engagement. "Kagan strategies are instructional strategies designed to promote cooperation and communication in the classroom, boost students' confidence and retain their interest in classroom interaction" (Kagan, 2009). The essential strategies that were incorporated into this explicit instruction based curriculum were rally robin, timed-pair-share, rally coach, and stand up-hand up-pair up. For the purpose of this curriculum the structures are used in the following way:

Rally Robin: Students are paired with a partner or the teacher and take turns reading the sounds or text. They may answer a general question, such as, "What skills do we need to become a successful reader?" This may also be used during reading comprehension after a questions is posed. Partners are changed and grouped based on teacher knowledge.

Timed-Pair Share: Students are paired for a set amount of time to discuss a particular sound, come up with a list that start with sound we are discussing, or other various ways.

Rally Coach: Students are paired where one student becomes the teacher. They may help another student decode and blend a word, or sound out and write a spoken word.

Stand-Up, Hand-Up, Pair-Up: Students stand up, put their hand up and quickly find a partner to discuss the topic. This structure is good for reviewing information, pre-assessment, or exit tickets. With the implementation of explicit instruction and the use of these structures and strategies, students are taught to take ownership of their learning and work with others in a safe and collaborative environment.

Domain 4 – Professional Responsibilities: The fourth domain focuses on what happens after the lesson is completed. This includes reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with families, participating in the professional community, and growing and developing professionally. This curriculum encourages the teacher to reflect on student growth and success. Lessons are created in a way that allows for additional or various protocols to be incorporated when deemed necessary by the teacher. Students respond in different ways and being responsive to their needs is key. Assessments and data tracker sheets are available to evaluate where students are struggling and areas of strength. Making a connection with families and increasing the communication has also shown success in student growth. When families are more aware of what students are

doing in school they are more likely to reinforce those skills, academic or behavioral, at home. This can be done through letters home, worksheets, or technology such as the Remind app. Professional development and opportunities are important for all teachers and will morph the way that this curriculum is implemented in the special education classroom.

The content of this curriculum focuses of the following Next Generation Standards:

1.RF.2a Count, blend, and segment single syllable words that include consonant blends.

1.RF.2b Create new words by manipulating individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken one-syllable words.

K.RF.3a Demonstrate one-to-one letter sound correspondence by producing the primary sound or most frequent sound for each consonant.
- containing these sounds : m, s, a, t, n

1.RF.3c Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
1.RF.3g Read most common high-frequency words by sight.

1.RF.4 Read beginning reader text, appropriate to individual student ability, with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

1.R.1 Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text.

These standards address the first 5 units of the created curriculum using *Read Well* and explicit instruction. Students are to be assessed on sounds, blending, tricky words, sentence accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Validity

This proposed curriculum would be acceptable for students in various settings. While it was utilized for students with special needs at Lincoln Elementary School, struggling students and those receiving Tier 1 and 2 services could benefit from its implementation. *Read Well* is a reading curriculum that is used by districts across the

United States in both general education classes as well as special education classrooms, therefore this proposed curriculum would be beneficial for various districts.

There are some limitations to the success of this curriculum. Attendance is a key issue and current concern in our district. With the chronic absenteeism, students are not in class to get exposure to the curriculum and miss important instructional time. Without the repetition and explicit instruction of skills students will not acquire the skills needed to move along the continuum. Transportation is also an issue for many students in our district, since this is a walking district when snow and cold temperatures are present students struggle to get to school. Building a good relationship with parents, as suggested in Domain 4 may help this conversation of importance to parents.

Conclusions

By creating and implementing curriculum based on the needs and areas my students are lacking, my goal was to provide all students with the skills necessary to see academic gains and transfer into the general education setting. The benefits of the addition of explicit instruction to the *Read Well* curriculum were successful and productive. Students were able to grow not only academically, but also confidence and appropriate behavior also increased.

In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the plans that were created for my First Grade intervention group which include four units of instruction.

Chapter 4 - Results

This section includes the lessons for the four units created for this curriculum, as well as the proposed rules and procedures deemed necessary by the Danielson Framework's second domain. The lessons utilize the district mandated *Read Well* curriculum and supplies as well as additional supplies and materials which are included in each lesson.

The following rules and expectations are meant to be explicitly taught to students. While this is optional, it was shown to be successful during the implementation of this curriculum.

Be Responsible

- I will raise my hand.
- I will complete my work.
- I will double point when reading and tracking my text.

Be Safe

- I will keep my hands to myself.
- I will use my materials wisely.

Be Respectful

- I will use good manners and kind words.
- I will listen to my teacher and classmates.
- I will take turns and work with my classmates appropriately.

Overview of Units 1-4

Unit Name/ Sound	Vocabulary	Sight Words – Fry List	Activities
Snazzy Snake - s	Slither, shed, anaconda, molting	said, I, the	Think-pair-share Sight word finger painting
What Do You See? – ee, e (long sound) Decode and blend - see	Emu, problem, famous	said, I, the, of, a, and	Picture walk Stretch and shrink High Fives

Smart Little Monkeys – m Decode and blend – me, see	monkey, blind, screech, rainforest, perch, Mangrove tree, explore	said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in	Magnetic word building Sound chips
Rhyming Fun – a,t,n Decode and blend – me, see, mat, sat, tan, man, mam, Sam	rhyming	said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in, you, it, he	Chaining Round Robin Dr. Seuss

Unit 1 - /s/

Learning Target(s):
- I can give the sound for /s/.
- I can read with accuracy.
- I can read my sight words.
- I can answer questions about the story I read.

Objectives:
- The student will give the correct sound for /s/ in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors.
- The student will read sight word in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will answer at least two oral comprehension questions each day about the story.

Materials:
Unit 1 Teacher's Guide
Sound and Word Cards
Unit 1 Storybook - *Snazzy Snake*
Decoding Book 1
Comprehension and Skill Book 1
Additional Explicit Instruction Materials (In specific lesson)
- construction paper
- paint
- craft sticks

Unit 1 Homework

Differentiation:
1. The pace of each lesson will be adjusted to student needs.
2. Each student will be given extra practice with he individual words and sounds they have missed (as assessed on progress monitoring sheets).
3. The students will be provided instruction in a small group setting due to intense needs.

Assessment:
1. The student will give the correct sound for /s/ in 2 out of 3 trials as measured by teacher recorded observation.

2. Student will correctly answer at least 2 oral comprehension questions each day as measured by teacher recorded observation.
3. The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors as measured by teacher-recorded observation.
4. The student will read new sight words 2/3 trials as measured by teacher checklist over the course of the unit.

Standards

K.RF.3a Demonstrate one-to-one letter sound correspondence by producing the primary sound or most frequent sound for each consonant.
1.RF.2a Count, blend, and segment single syllable words that include consonant blends.
1.RF.3c Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
1.RF.3g Read most common high-frequency words by sight.
1.RF.4 Read beginning reader text, appropriate to individual student ability, with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
1.R.1 Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text.

Read Well 1 - Unit 1

Lesson 1 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 1 – sounds s
- Unit 1 Warm-Up – Think Pair Share (What do you already know about snakes? Where do snakes live?)
- Vocab – slither, shed
- Read *Snakes Old Clothes* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What was the snake's problem?, What do you think snake is doing?, What happened in the end?)
- Explicit instruction of the sound s
  - Teacher writes letter s, S.
  - Teacher - This is the sound /s/.
  - Student repeats
  - Teacher – What does this make?
  - Student answers
  - Teacher – Put your hand on your throat and make the /s/ sound. You cannot feel the s sound in your throat.
  - Student practices
  - Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it.
  - Students write sound
- Skill Work 1 – Student produces S and s

Read Well 1 - Unit 1

Lesson 2 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 1 – sounds s
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – I'm, see, mad, sad

- Unit 1 Warm-Up – Rally Coach – What do we know about snakes?
- Reread *Snakes Old Clothes* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What was the snake's problem? What do you think snake is doing? What happened in the end?)
- Review Explicit instruction of the sound s if needed from lesson 1
- Sight word – Teacher reads sight words and explains that for many sight words you can not sound out (stretch and shrink). These are words that you just have to know. Introduce sight words: said, I, the

Read Well 1 - Unit 1

Lesson 3 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 2 – sounds s, words that begin with /s/
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – I'm, mad, Sam
- Read *Snake Smiles a Little Smile* – Students double point and read large print.
- Vocabulary - molting
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Where is snake going? What is the snake's problem? What did the snake do to keep the farmer's wife from running away? Show me a wink and a smile. What happened in the end? How did snake feel?)
- Explicit instruction – Teacher retells the story. Teacher and students retell the story. Student retells story to partner.
- Comprehension 2 – Student illustrates a snake molting(vocab). Teacher may first model is necessary.

Read Well 1 - Unit 1

Lesson 4 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 3 – sounds s, words that begin with /s/
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – I'm, see, seed
- Read *Snake, Poor Thing* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What is the snake's problem? How does the snake smell? Where are the snake's ears? How does the snake get around?)
- Activity – Alphabet detective game – students circle all the letter s
- Sight word – Students paint sight words on construction paper.

Read Well 1 - Unit 1

Lesson 5 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 4 – sounds s, tracking text
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – mad, sad, see
- Vocab – Anaconda – Show visual on YouTube
- Read *The Awesome Anaconda* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Where does the anaconda live? Where

does the anaconda swim? Where does the anaconda hide? What does the anaconda eat? How long is an anaconda? Do you think an anaconda is awesome? Why?)
- Activity – Beginning sound – Students write the s sound and circle the picture that starts with the s sound.
- Sight word – Students finger trace sight words on construction paper.

Read Well 1 - Unit 1
Lesson 6 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Read *Facts About Snakes* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Are there snakes where you live? Are all snakes the same size? What does a snake do with its old skin? Do snakes have bones? Do you think a snake's skeleton looks like a person's skeleton? Why?)
- Assessment – student produces sounds/words: s, I, said, the
- Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back.

Unit 2 - /e/ and /ee/ word - see

Learning Target(s):
- I can give the sound for /e/ and /ee/ (long sound).
- I can read with accuracy.
- I can read my sight words.
- I can answer questions about the story I read.

Objectives:
- The student will give the correct sound for /e/ and /ee/ (long sound) in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors.
- The student will read sight word in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will answer at least two oral comprehension questions each day about the story.

Materials:
Unit 2 Teacher's Guide
Sound and Word Cards
Unit 2 Storybook – *What Do You See?*
Decoding Book 1
Comprehension and Skill Book 1
Additional Explicit Instruction Materials (In specific lesson)
- pictures of emus
- high five laminated cards – to write sight words on
- dry erase markers
- individual white boards
- craft sticks

Unit Homework

Differentiation:
1. The pace of each lesson will be adjusted to student needs.
2. Each student will be given extra practice with he individual words and sounds they have missed (as assessed on progress monitoring sheets).
3. The students will be provided instruction in a small group setting due to intense needs.

Assessment:
1. The student will give the correct sound for /e/ and /ee/ in 2 out of 3 trials as measured by teacher recorded observation.
2. Student will correctly answer at least 2 oral comprehension questions each day as measured by teacher recorded observation.
3. The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors as measured by teacher-recorded observation.
4. The student will read new sight words 2/3 trials as measured by teacher checklist over the course of the unit.

Standards
K.RF.3a Demonstrate one-to-one letter sound correspondence by producing the primary sound or most frequent sound for each consonant.
1.RF.2a Count, blend, and segment single syllable words that include consonant blends.
1.RF.3c Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
1.RF.3g Read most common high-frequency words by sight.
1.RF.4 Read beginning reader text, appropriate to individual student ability, with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
1.R.1 Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text.

Read Well 1 - Unit 2
Lesson 1 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 1 – sounds e and ee
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – me, mad, add, am
- Vocab – emu, problem
- Read *What Is an Emu?*– Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What is an emu? How big can an emu get? What is a fact you know about emus?) Explicitly model for students how to restate question when giving an answer.
- Explicit instruction of the sound e
  Teacher writes letter e, E, ee, Ee.
  Teacher - This is the sound /long e/.
  Student repeats
  Teacher – What does this make?
  Student answers
  Teacher – Sometimes e says /long e/ like in emu or me and sometimes it says /e / like in elephant. We will practice that more later. When you see two e's together ee it always has the long e sound.

Student practices
Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it. Sometimes we hear the saying when two vowels go walking the first one does the talking.
Students write sound

- Skill Work 1 – Student produces e and ee on white board.

Read Well 1 - Unit 2

Lesson 2 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 1 – sounds long e
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – I'm, see, mad, sad
- Unit 1 Warm-Up – Rally Coach – What do we know about emus?
- Read *What Do You See, Emu?* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Who is in the story? What is Emu's problem? What does the snake think Emu should do? What happened in the end? Compare – How did Emu feel at the beginning compared to the end of the story?)
- Review Explicit instruction of the sound e, ee if needed from lesson 1
- Sight word – Teacher reads sight words: said, I, the, of, a, and. Students repeat after teacher. Teacher uses words in sentence and students attempt to use sights words in complete sentences.

Read Well 1 - Unit 2

Lesson 3 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 2 – sounds long e, words that have a long e sound
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – seed, seat, man
- Vocab - famous
- Read *Colorful Emus Everywhere?* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What did the farmer find? What was the farmer's problem? What do you think this story is about?)
- Students write and illustrate a sentence about emus. Students will write, "I see." After being given the example. Students will also draw a picture of an emu.
- Sight word – Teacher places high five hands around the room for students to find, read the word and give a high five: said, I, the, of, a, and

ReadWell 1 - Unit 2

Lesson 4 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 3 – sounds long e, words that have a long e sound
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – Sam, sees, sad
- Read *See* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What did you see in this story? Look at the picture. What else did you see?)
- Students retell the story with teacher scaffolding and promoting when needed.
- Students circle the letter e in a one page poem.

- Sight word – Teacher places high five hands around the room for students to find, read the word and give a high five: said, I, the, of, a, and

Read Well 1 - Unit 2
Lesson 5 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 4 – sounds long e, review previous sounds, tracking text
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – me, see, sees
- Read *Looking at Me* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Who is looking at you in the story? What did the monkey cry? What do you see?) Teacher models through think-alouds.
- Teacher models the s and e. Students practice with the teacher and then independently complete on worksheet.
- Sight word – Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back. Words: said, I, the, of, a, and
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 2
Lesson 6 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Decoding Review – sounds long e, review previous sounds
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – me, see, sees
- Read *I See* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What do you predict this story is going to be about? What did you see in the story? What do you think is going to happen next?)Teacher models through think-alouds.
- Assessment – Student reads the following sounds and words: e, ee, s, see, I, said, the, of, and, a
- Sight word – Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back. Words: said, I, the, of, a, and
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

<u>Unit 3 - /m/ - me, see</u>

Learning Target(s):
- I can give the sound for /m/.
- I can read with accuracy.
- I can read my sight words.
- I can answer questions about the story I read.

Objectives:
- The student will give the correct sound for /m/ in 2 out of 3 trials.

- The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors.
- The student will read sight word in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will answer at least two oral comprehension questions each day about the story.

Materials:
Unit 3 Teacher's Guide
Sound and Word Cards
Unit 3 Storybook – *Smart Little Monkeys*
Decoding Book 1
Comprehension and Skill Book 1
Additional Explicit Instruction Materials (In specific lesson)
- pictures of monkeys, rainforest
- high five laminated cards – to write sight words on
- dry erase markers
- individual white boards
- craft sticks
- magnetic letters
- baking sheet

Unit 3 Homework

Differentiation:
1. The pace of each lesson will be adjusted to student needs.
2. Each student will be given extra practice with he individual words and sounds they have missed (as assessed on progress monitoring sheets).
3. The students will be provided instruction in a small group setting due to intense needs.

Assessment:
1. The student will give the correct sound for /m/ in 2 out of 3 trials as measured by teacher recorded observation.
2. Student will correctly answer at least 2 oral comprehension questions each day as measured by teacher recorded observation.
3. The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors as measured by teacher recorded observation.
4. The student will read new sight words 2/3 trials as measured by teacher checklist over the course of the unit.

Standards
K.RF.3a Demonstrate one-to-one letter sound correspondence by producing the primary sound or most frequent sound for each consonant.
1.RF.2a Count, blend, and segment single syllable words that include consonant blends.
1.RF.3c Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
1.RF.3g Read most common high-frequency words by sight.
1.RF.4 Read beginning reader text, appropriate to individual student ability, with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
1.R.1 Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text.

Read Well 1 - Unit 3
Lesson 1 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 1 – sounds m
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – man, mad, miss, sad
- Vocab – monkey, blind, screech
- Read *Three Blink Monkeys* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What did the first monkey feel? What did the second monkey smell? What did the third monkey hear? What did the snake see? What did the snake want? What happened in the end?) Explicitly model for students how to restate question when giving an answer.
- Explicit instruction of the sound m
  Teacher writes letter m, M.
  Teacher - This is the sound /m/.
  Student repeats
  Teacher – What does this make?
  Student answers
  Teacher – Put your hand on your throat and make the /m/ sound. You can feel the sound of /m/ in your throat.
  Student practices
  Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it.
  Students write sound
- Skill Work 1 – Student produces m on white board.

Read Well 1 - Unit 3
Lesson 2 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 1 – sounds m
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – man, mad, miss, sad
- Read *Eee* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What do you think the main character in this text is? If the snake sees the monkey, what do you think will happen? How do you think the monkey feels? What do you think the monkey should do?) Explicitly model for students how to restate question when giving an answer.
- Review the explicit instruction on m if needed.
- Comprehension – Students will write and illustrate "See me." A model should be made available for students as needed.
- Sight words – Teacher will provide students with sight word cards. Teacher will read. Student will repeat. Student will read on own. Words: said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 3

Lesson 3 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 2 – sounds m, words that begin with the m sound
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – seed, dad, Dan
- Vocab – Mangrove tree, rainforest, perch
- Read *Monkeys Growing Up* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Who is this story going to be about? Connection – How many of you have a baby brother or sister? What do they spend most of their time doing? What happened first? What do you think will happen next? What do you see playing in the Mangrove tree? What happened at the end?)
- Activity – Alphabet detective – Students will circle the letter m on their one page poem.
- Sight words – Teacher will provide students with sight word cards: said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in. Students will help the teacher build words using magnetic letters on a baking sheet. The teacher will model how the is done and build the words together. (Not able to do independently at this time).

Read Well 1 - Unit 3

Lesson 4 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 2 – sounds m, words that begin with the m sound
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – seed, dad, Dan
- Read *See Me* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (Who was this story about? What did she see? What did she do with the flower?)
- Students write the M, m and circle the picture that has the m sound at the beginning of the word.
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 3

Lesson 5 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 3 – sounds m, decodes and blends words me, see, I'm
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – man, dad, sat
- Vocab - explore
- Read *Three Grown-Up Monkeys* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What do you think the monkeys will do in this story? What did the monkeys do next? What were the monkey's problems? How did they solve their problems? Do you think the monkeys were happy in their rainforest homes?)
- Students will write the sentence I see. Teacher will scaffold this for students as needed. The student will then illustrate something that they see.
- Sight word – Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back. Words:

said, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in
- Student takes decoding review as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 3
Lesson 6 of a 6-day plan
- Sound and word cards
- Practice 4 – sounds m,e,s, blending and reviewing
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – man, dad, sat
- Read *Mmm* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What did the monkey say? What do you think the monkey wants to do with the flowers?)
- Story retell. Teacher will model, students will repeat, students will work in pairs to retell.
- Students will write the sounds M, m, and s. They will then circle the corresponding picture with the beginning sound.
- Assessment – Students will be assessed on the following sounds and words: m, s, e, ee, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in sentence: I see me.
- Sight word – High five words around the room: said, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in
- Student takes story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Unit 4 - /a/, /t/,/n/ - words – me, see, mat, sat, tan, man, mam, Sam

Learning Target(s):
- I can give the sound for /a/, /t/,/n/.
- I can read with accuracy.
- I can read my sight words.
- I can answer questions about the story I read.

Objectives:
- The student will give the correct sound for /a/, /t/,/n/ in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors.
- The student will read sight word in 2 out of 3 trials.
- The student will answer at least two oral comprehension questions each day about the story.

Materials:
Unit 4 Teacher's Guide
Sound and Word Cards
Unit 4 Storybook – *Rhyming Fun*
Decoding Book 1
Comprehension and Skill Book 1
Additional Explicit Instruction Materials (In specific lesson)
- high five laminated cards – to write sight words on
- dry erase markers
- individual white boards
- craft sticks
- magnetic letters

- baking sheet

Unit 4 Homework

Differentiation:

1. The pace of each lesson will be adjusted to student needs.
2. Each student will be given extra practice with he individual words and sounds they have missed (as assessed on progress monitoring sheets).
3. The students will be provided instruction in a small group setting due to intense needs.

Assessment:

1. The student will give the correct sound for /a/, /t/,/n/ in 2 out of 3 trials as measured by teacher recorded observation.
2. Student will correctly answer at least 2 oral comprehension questions each day as measured by teacher recorded observation.
3. The student will read a page of their storybook with 0-2 errors as measured by teacher recorded observation.
4. The student will read new sight words 2/3 trials as measured by teacher checklist over the course of the unit.

Standards

K.RF.3a Demonstrate one-to-one letter sound correspondence by producing the primary sound or most frequent sound for each consonant.
1.RF.2a Count, blend, and segment single syllable words that include consonant blends.
1.RF.3c Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
1.RF.3g Read most common high-frequency words by sight.
1.RF.4 Read beginning reader text, appropriate to individual student ability, with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
1.R.1 Develop and answer questions about key ideas and details in a text.

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 1 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 1 – sounds a
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – sat, that, did, dad
- Vocab – rhyming
- Round Robin – student will work in partners to come up with rhyming words for the following words: sat, dad
- Read *Rhyming Words* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What did the girl do? What kind of words are sat and hat? Cat and bat both end with at so cat and bat are…..? Can you think of words the rhyme with an? Can you think of words that rhyme with am? Students may struggle with this. Visuals of rhyming words or a Dr. Seuss book may be an appropriate scaffold.
- Explicit instruction of the sound a
  Teacher writes letter a, A.
  Teacher - This is the sound /a/.

Student repeats
Teacher – What does this make?
Student answers
Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it.
Teacher – Let's come up with some words that have the a sound.
Watch as I write the a sound.
Students write sound

- Skill Work 1 – Student produces a, A on skills paper.

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 2 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 1 – sounds a
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – sat, that, did, dad
- Use counting sound chips to count sounds. Model for students to put a chip down for each sound you say and then count sounds. They may need additional practice with this.
- Read *Me* – Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (In this story, who is "me"? What is Sam looking in? What does he see in the mirror?) Explicitly model for students how to restate question when giving an answer.
- Review the explicit instruction on a if needed.
- Comprehension – Students will write and illustrate "I see me." A model should be made available for students as needed.
- Sight words – Teacher will provide students with sight word cards. Teacher will read. Student will repeat. Student will read on own. Words: said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in, you, it, he
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 3 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 2 – sounds t, review a, s, m,e
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words –Dan, than, meet, mat
- Read *Seuss on the Loose* – Students double point and read large print. Show students Dr. Seuss text for reference.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What is this part of the story about? What does she see? Which words rhyme? What is the boy's name? Which words rhyme?) Explicitly model for students how to restate question when giving an answer.
- Students will find pictures that rhyme in the text. It is important for future skills that students understand the patterns in rhyming words.
- Explicit instruction of t
  Teacher writes letter t, T.
  Teacher - This is the sound /t/.

Student repeats
Teacher – What does this make?
Student answers
Teacher – Put your hand on your throat and make the t sound. You cannot feel the t sound.
Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it.
Teacher – Let's come up with some words that have the t sound.
Watch as I write the t sound.
Students write sound

- Sight words – High five words around the room: said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in, you, it, he

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 4 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Review Practice 2 – sounds t, review a, s, m,e
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words –Dan, than, meet, mat
- Read *I'm Sam*– Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What do you think this story is about? What are the rhyming words? Can you think of other words that rhyme with am? Can you think of other words that rhyme with see?)
- Stand-up, hand-up, pair up – Students will me given a word and will follow the Kagan protocol to come up with matching words. Students will be asked to switch.
- Review explicit instruction of t if needed
- Activity – Alphabet detective – Student will circle a, and put a box around t in the one page poem.
- Sight words – High five words around the room: said, I, I'm, the, of, a, and, to, in, you, it, he
- Student takes home story as homework to read to parent and return to school.

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 5 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 3 – sound n, review a, s, m, e, t
- Stretch and shrink and count sounds of the following words – dad, add, sees, seem
- Read *Sam's Inside Game*– Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What is the title of this chapter? Who is the main character? What is Sam doing? What is Sam's problem? Do you have an idea of how Sam could solve his problem? How did Sam feel at the end of the story?)
- Explicit instruction of n
  Teacher writes letter n, N.
  Teacher - This is the sound /n/.
  Student repeats
  Teacher – What does this make?

Student answers
Teacher continues modeling with I, We, You – Watch my mouth as I say it, and then you say it.
Teacher – Let's come up with some words that have the n sound.
Watch as I write the n sound.
Students write sound

- Students write the a, A, m, t sounds and circle the corresponding picture with the sound.
- Sight word – Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back. Words: said, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in, you, it, he

Read Well 1 - Unit 4

Lesson 6 of a 6-day plan

- Sound and word cards
- Practice 4 – sound n, review a, s, m, e, t – Decode words am, me, Sam, seem
- Read *Sam*– Students double point and read large print.
- Ask comprehension questions throughout – (What does this story tell you about Sam?)
- Explicit instruction of chaining.
  Teacher will write am on the white board. Chaining with s, m, t
  Students will work with teacher and copy chaining for an, man, tan
- Assessment – Students will read the following sounds and words: a, M, A, e, ee, s, n, N, t, T, said, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in, you, it, he sentences: See me. I am Sam.
- Sight word – Sight Word Game – Optional – Teacher makes sticks with taught sight words. She includes sticks with Kaboom written on it. If students correctly read the sight word they get the stick. If they get a Kaboom all sticks go back. Words: said, I, the, of, a, and, I'm, to, in, you, it, he

Conclusions

The purpose of this curriculum project was to create a curriculum based on the *Read Well* curriculum that incorporated the principles of explicit instruction. The completed curriculum addresses the need for more frequent and explicit instruction for students in Grade 1. The students were explicitly taught sounds and words through modeling. Feedback was also frequently given after various attempts to produce sounds, decode words, or comprehend the text. I modeled for the students by producing these sounds and words. I was able to teach students how to answer comprehension questions

more effectively by using think-a-louds. Students were able to comply with the tasks given and were able to transfer the skills learned in the small group setting to the larger general education setting. Students were engaged and followed the curriculum based on the lessons and procedures that were in place. This will increase success in the follow lessons and will hopefully increase upcoming test scores and student confidence.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

This curriculum project was developed in order to increase the engagement and academic success of students in Kindergarten and First Grade in the area of reading and phonics skills. The project was based upon the district-implemented curriculum, *Read Well,* for students with special needs. The need for such a program emerged after data showed that the students needed a more explicit approach to the curriculum in order to show success in the small group and also to transfer the skills to the general education setting. This project was created in order to incorporate and to implement explicit instruction into daily curriculum to increase engagement and academic success. Research has shown that explicit instruction is very beneficial to students with special needs. According to Hughes, Morris, Therrien, and Benson (2017), incorporating explicit instruction into curriculum is effective for teaching students with special needs in the areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. While building the curriculum, the key components of explicit instruction were often reviewed in order to ensure their implementation. These key components include segmenting, modeling, scaffolding, feedback and repetition. In the following chapter, I will discuss the significance, results, limitations, and the future investigation of explicit instruction in the special education classroom.

Significance

This curriculum project was beneficial for instruction and the academic success of my students. Students saw success in sound retention as well as in reading and writing skills. Compared with last year, the students were more successful with *Read Well* due to the additions and modifications made with the incorporation of explicit instruction. They

were able to identify and to produce taught sounds and words with increased accuracy. Students were more engaged in the lessons and benefited from the repetition of sounds daily. Modeling and think-a-louds were prevalent in many of the lessons. Students with special needs benefited from the "I do, we do, you do" process. During this process, students were constantly given examples through think-a-louds or through modeling, working cooperatively in order to complete the skill or task, and then independently completing the work with immediate teacher feedback. This reinforced the skill automatically so it was not practiced and completed incorrectly.

For educators who utilize the *Read Well* curriculum, this curriculum project would be very beneficial to their instruction. The lessons are detailed with very thorough step-by-step teacher directives. A teacher could very easily review the lesson and implement the instruction with very little work on their part. Teachers may find the time needed for the lessons difficult to find: however, the benefits of student success far outweigh the negatives. Students with special needs benefit from the repetition and observed practice that is provided in each of the lessons. Many of the curricula that are utilized in the general education classroom far exceed the amount of time that is allotted. This impacts the amount of time that is spent on one skill whether the student is ready to learn a new skill or not. With this developed program, teachers could pull the skill that the student needs to work on and remediate when deemed necessary.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to this developed curriculum. It is intended for districts that utilize the *Read Well* curriculum. While this is not used in every district, it is used in many schools throughout the nation as a tiered services intervention. While the

general concept of explicit instruction can be used for any grade level, my project is intended for students in Kindergarten and First Grade, therefore any students who have mastered letters, sounds, and beginning sight words, would not be using this specific curriculum. Expansion of the general ideas and concepts of explicit instruction is something that I would like to incorporate into more of my curriculum. The *Read Well* curriculum does not necessarily follow the sequence of skills that is taught in the general education classroom so that needs to be taken into consideration during implementation and intervention. For example, this curriculum teaches the long e sound prior to the short e sound, while the general education teacher has taught the short e sound and has not yet moved on to the long sounds at the time of implementation.

Time is also a factor that needs to be considered when working with my curriculum. Due to the nature of explicit instruction, time needs to be allotted for repetition and modeling. Explicit instruction follows an "I do, we do, you do" mantra that enables each student multiple means of exposure to the content. With time schedules and expectations, teachers often feel the need to move on even though students might not have understood the content. Each of the lessons is expected to take approximately 45 minutes which some teachers may not have available for this intervention.

Another limitation of the study is the teacher's awareness of various protocols and their implementation. The Kagan structures that are embedded in the curriculum need to be completed with fidelity (Kagan, 2009). If this is not done, the structure loses its effectiveness. Many districts encourage the use and allow for professional development in order to learn about the Kagan structures in detail and seen it put into action.

In conclusions, this curriculum project is limited to teachers that use the *Read Well* curriculum while teaching students in Kindergarten or First Grade. The teacher must have the time to implement the lessons in the way that they are designed and have previous knowledge of the protocols used in the lessons.

Future Investigations

If given additional time to research and build on my curriculum, I would add additional lessons and activity descriptions. The curriculum would benefit from additional units that would take the students through all of the letters and sounds, while working on blending and sight words.

As previously mentioned, this project was intended for Kindergarten and First Graders; however, the concepts used to develop the units could be used across all the grade levels that I currently service. I have implemented some of the explicit instruction modeling in my Second, Third, and Fourth grade reading and writing groups. I model the tasks for the students and we work together before I expect them to work independently. I am also incorporating these elements into my mathematics groups. I take the time to model for students the ways in which to solve a problem through think-a-louds. The students then work with me in order to solve problems. When students are successful they are asked to complete work independently and are then confident enough to teach others the ways to solve the problem.

When given the time, I would also like to continue the research on explicit instruction in the classroom. While there is a plethora of research on explicit instruction in the general education classroom, there was far less on explicit instruction for students with special needs.

If given the opportunity I would continue to build curriculum with this similar approach in order to increase the success of my students.

Conclusions

This project was created in order to streamline and to incorporate explicit instruction into the district-mandated curriculum for students with special needs in the area of reading in Kindergarten and First Grade. Although there are some limitations regarding time and materials, this project was successful for my Kindergarten and First Grade students. They were engaged in the lessons through the activities and modeling. The students were able to produce taught sounds, blend words with known sounds and read sentences based on the data collected. This curriculum was built as a basis for teachers who utilize the curriculum with the hope that it will be built upon and future grade levels and various subject areas will use the core concepts when building lessons in the future.

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