**Laura J. Oeder**

**EDAS 7100**

**Start Smart Reading**

**Statement of Purpose**

Reading, Writing, and Communication is based on the belief that language is recognized not only as a means of communication, but also as a means of personal knowledge and development.  Language is not only what is studied and learned; it is also a major mode of learning. First grade reading students use their understanding of books and phonics.  Their knowledge of the make-up of words and vocabulary continues to grow.  They are able to talk and write about stories they have read.  They choose to read a variety of books for pleasure. First Grade readers become aware of how reading can be a pathway to learning and discovery in all content areas. Reading opens the door to learning about math, history, science, literature, geography and much more. Thus, young, capable readers can succeed in these subjects, take advantage of other opportunities (such as reading for pleasure) and develop confidence in their own abilities. On the other hand, those students who cannot read well are much more likely to drop out of school and be limited to low-paying jobs throughout their lives. Reading is undeniably critical to success in today's society (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), students should be systematically and explicitly taught the following five skills identified by research as critical to early reading success. The definitions are:

* *Phonemic awareness:* the ability to hear and identify sounds in spoken words.
* *Phonics:* the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.
* *Fluency:* the capacity to read text accurately and quickly.
* *Vocabulary:* the words students must know to communicate effectively.
* *Comprehension:* the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read.

With this in mind, the three week Start Smart Reading Unit for First Grade will target these skills and provide a strong foundation from which to build life-long reading skills.