**Statement of Purpose**

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Reading is the fundamental skill through which higher education is accessed. Low reading achievement has been the main cause of low-performing schools. When the students do not learn to read, the school will not be regarded as successful. The question is what is the best way to teach children to read?

The U.S. Department of Education conducted the largest ever educational experiment, Project Follow Through, and compared a systematic, comprehensive, phonics-based approach to teaching reading against eight other styles of reading instruction and “the results indicated overwhelmingly superiority of the phonics-based approach” (Ziffer). Not only were the students better readers, but it also showed improved thinking skills and self-esteem than students with other types of reading instruction (Ziffer). This evidence demonstrates that all learners, not just those that struggle with reading, will benefit from phonics-based reading instruction.

Dr. G. Reid Lyon states,

“Our research has consistently shown that if children do not learn to understand and use language, to read and write, to calculate and reason mathematically, to solve problems, and to communicate their ideas and perspectives, their opportunities for a fulfilling and rewarding life are seriously compromised. Specifically, in our NICHD-supported longitudinal studies, we have learned that school failure has devastating consequences with respect to self-esteem, social development, and opportunities for advanced education and meaningful employment. Nowhere are these consequences more apparent than when children fail to learn to read. Why? Simply stated, development of reading skills serves as *THE* major foundational academic ability for all school-based learning.” (2001)

Teaching students to read is more important to them than just a reading grade, or a score on a standardized reading test, it affects many areas of learning. Almost all higher level learning requires reading for acquisition of knowledge, whether it’s reading a chapter in a social studies textbook, a question on a test, or instructions to complete a science experiment.

The state of Ohio’s content standards list specific goals for the acquisition of phonics skills in grades pre-Kindergarten to third. The benchmarks are:

● Use letter-sound correspondence knowledge and structural analysis to decode words.

● Demonstrate fluent oral reading, using sight words and decoding skills, varying intonation and timing as appropriate for text.

Daniels (2005) states, “To date, over 180 research studies have confirmed that phonics is the best way to teach children how to read. Unfortunately, 80% of our nation’s schools do not use an intensified phonics approach for reading instruction. They use a whole word approach (see and say) or a combination of phonics and whole word.” The goal of a phonics-based reading instructional program is to give all students the skills necessary to become good readers and successful in school. Research has shown that a phonics-based approach benefits all students and should be included in every reading curriculum beginning in early education.

References

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