

Writing as the Setting for Phonics Instruction in Whole Language Classrooms

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Abstract

This capstone uses research on the phonics and the whole language approaches to literacy instruction to develop three underlying principles for teaching embedded phonics in whole language classrooms. These principles of instruction, meeting students' needs, connected to text, and moving from whole to part, are used to analyze the environment of writing in emergent literacy classrooms as a possible context for this embedded instruction. Interactive writing and scaffolded writing are used as two examples of common writing instruction. Using the three principles, this capstone concludes that interactive writing allows for teachers to assess students' needs and cater instruction to match those needs. The interactive writing events often build from a read aloud or other meaningful literacy event that maintains the authentic purposes for writing. In addition, as a teacher walks students through writing the message, the parts are analyzed as the whole message is retained. Scaffolded writing provides similar support for students' needs and the meaningful purpose remains intact; however, scaffolded writing supports students' phonological awareness more than phonics skills because teachers provide little explicit instruction of phonics during scaffolded writing. The analysis of this capstone is critical for teacher preparation and professional development because the effectiveness of embedded phonics relies on teacher knowledge of phonics assessment and development. Professional development that provides teachers with the literacy-content knowledge needed to determine students' needs and match instruction to those needs can effectively improve the use of embedded phonics within whole language writing events.

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For decades teachers have found themselves in the middle of the debate about phonics and whole language, unsure of what approach to take to reading and writing instruction. New and old research, however, offer an alternative to this tension. The defenders of the two camps have developed components of each that no longer exclusively divide the approaches. This capstone will outline the principles of phonics instruction in early childhood classrooms that use the whole language approach, along with a consideration of the writing context as a potential setting for this instruction.

To complete this capstone, I built from a project from my previous coursework. My Inquiry Project for EDUC 3390: Literacy Development involved research on the topic, “How does phonics look in a whole language classroom?” For this project, I looked into the models and perspectives on reading and how they have influenced the debate between phonics and whole language. I then synthesized the research to find that three principles characterize effective phonics instruction in the whole language context. This previous analysis builds the foundation for this capstone, as I use the research and the three principles to determine the appropriateness of two writing instruction methods as contexts for embedded phonics.

Phonics versus Whole Language

Phonics, the explicit, systematic instruction of letter sound relationships, provides students the skills to decode unknown words using graphophonic cues. The National Reading Panel (2000) and other recommendations for phonics instruction call for explicit, systematic instruction. This specification for instruction has been defined by many in various ways. Mesmer & Griffith (2005) define explicit, systematic phonics instruction as first, the scope and sequence of what letter-sound relationships are taught and in what order, and second, as making the

instruction clear and direct for students. According to Marilyn Adams, all students must know the letters of the alphabet and their significance in language (Adams, 2001). From the phonics-first perspective, this foundational piece plays a critical role in early reading, and therefore must be a focus of reading instruction.

From this perspective of phonics, it has often been viewed as separate and distinct from whole language classrooms. In some classrooms phonological awareness and phonics knowledge were seen as obstacles that must be practiced and overcome before reading and writing of real texts could occur (Weaver, 1994). Students who were not yet proficient with grapheme-phoneme correspondence were given more work in phonics and excluded from meaningful text. Although this was not the pattern in all classrooms, these cycles of skill and drill created a pullback from phonics and a push for whole language, filled with meaningful texts and embedded instruction.

The whole language approach advocates for equipping students with strategies focused on contextual cues. Goodman (1994) explains the transactive process of reading as meaning being constructed as the reader interacts with the text. The reader uses three main cuing systems, graphophonic, lexico-grammatical, and semantic-pragmatic, to make inferences and predictions about the text. This view of reading is often termed the “psycholinguistic guessing game” because readers are encouraged to make meaning by sampling the input from these three cuing systems to find the most useful information, then using additional strategies, predicting, inferencing, confirming, and correcting to maintain a working interpretation of the text (Goodman, Goodman, & Paulson, 2009). Arguments for this whole language approach to reading include evidence from Goodman (1994) who found that readers were able to accurately identify more words in context than they were able to identify on a disconnected list. Similarly, Rhodes (1979) and Kucer (1985) found that readers decode words better when the text has a

natural syntax in contrast to when the syntax has been distorted to fit the grapheme-phoneme correspondences students have been taught. This unnatural syntax is typical of texts used in isolated phonics curriculum. Moustafa (1993) argues that these findings demonstrate the need for students to be reading authentic texts with natural syntax as they develop their mental lexicon of words.

Phonics in Whole Language

These two approaches to literacy no longer need to be contrasted. Even Marilyn Adams (2004) and Ken Goodman (1993) have published books on the connections that can be made between phonics and whole language in order to provide the support and instruction all students need to approach unknown words confidently but to also maintain an understanding of the purpose and uses of written language. Goodman (1993) and Routman (1997) argue that whole language has always incorporated phonics, but not through the usual isolated and intensive methods. As Nation (2008) describes, more than decoding is required for a reader to identify words. The complex system of English requires more strategies to be available for use to accurately recognize and remember words. Ehri and McCormick (1998) view decoding as one of four major strategies for word recognition, along with predicting, analogy, and recall. Both decoding and analogy require phonics knowledge, but they are only pieces of the strategies readers have available to them as they progress through the phases of word reading skills. Phonics instruction is a means to an end, which is reading of meaningful texts for the purpose of comprehension (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Hence, decoding is used as a temporary strategy as readers approach unknown words in the process of converting those words into sight memory. Readers who rely too heavily on phonics strategies will find it difficult to comprehend text they have to laboriously decode. They need to use the strategy when it is the most helpful, but also be

primed for moving to more efficient word identification strategies. From the literature on phonics instruction in whole language, I found three patterns in the research that I will use as the framework as the foundation for embedded phonics instruction. The overarching principles, as synthesized from the writing and research in the field, are tailoring instruction to students' immediate needs, keeping instruction connected to text, and moving from whole to part.

Meet Students' Needs

In contrast to the scripted programs that fail to take into account what students might already know, phonics taught within a whole language approach builds on the patterns students have discovered and values the interactions they might have with texts, making for learner-focused instruction (Craig, 2006). Instruction builds upon the students' current understandings and their immediate needs for instruction. Freppon and Dahl (1991) argue that phonics must be presented after foundational concepts are learned. Phonics should be catered to the learners' needs rather than a set sequence for all students. This sequence should begin after students have learned the purposes and uses of written language. In addition, Dahl and Scharer (2000) discuss that phonics instruction must first begin with assessment of students' individual needs, both in advance and at the moment of need during literacy tasks. Similarly, Stahl (1992) makes recommendations for exemplary phonics instruction that builds from what a child knows to what they need to know to become readers and writers. Students must have some understanding of the uses of print and the connection of written to spoken language to make phonics meaningful for them. By providing instruction to students who are ready for the connections between print and spoken language, teachers can avoid phonics becoming an abstract unusable skill. Spelling patterns are learned and utilized by students when they need them to read or write, not when the curriculum requires it (Brumer, 1996).

Connected to Text

Once a teacher knows the appropriate instruction to provide the students, authentic literacy events provide not only the background for these discussions, but also the context in which patterns are discovered and analyzed. Phonics instruction in whole language classrooms occurs within meaningful reading and writing events (Dahl & Scherer, 2000).

In *Phonics Phacts*, Goodman (1993) attempts to defend the presence of phonics in whole language classrooms. By placing students in authentic reading and writing contexts, teachers can give plenty of opportunities for students to discover and use the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they are exposed to. Rather than worksheets that skill and drill specific rules outside of the context of reading, students can begin to recognize the patterns as they read and write (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001). Not only does this create meaningful connections for students that will be more memorable, but it also promotes the transfer of these skills to other literacy events.

Dahl and Scherer (2000) found that students' application of phonics skills improves when the skills are taught within meaningful and purposeful language events. In addition, all language events are contexts in which phonics instruction can take place, including independent and shared reading and writing. Kane (1999) argues that the need for a focus on phonics is valid, but that it should, like all instructional choices, be intentionally incorporated into contexts that are meaningful to students. By carefully choosing texts and questions, teachers can provide introduction to, instruction on and practice of letter-sound relationships within literature contexts.

Whole to Part

Whole to part is a strategy that builds from meaningful text to a focus on specific words in the text that exemplify a pattern and are used for word study. Basing the patterns that are taught on words chosen from the meaningful text ensures that the patterns present are worth teaching because they naturally appear in children's literature or writing. Rather than following a strict sequence, teachers make choices allowing them to prioritize the most important and common grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This approach also agrees with the research on the use of predictable texts for the advantages they provide (Goodman, 1993; Watson, 1997). Students practice phonics using familiar words through the repeated readings of a predictable text.

Moustafa and Maldonado-Colon (1999) describes this specific strategy that begins with the larger context of a meaningful text and moves readers to one-to-one correspondence of first print and spoken words and then letters and sounds. Instruction begins with a shared reading of a predictable text. The initial shared reading is followed by repeated and partner readings of the text. Once students are familiar with the words, the teacher uses whole to part phonics to breakdown the words and identify patterns. The students are active in choosing their favorite words and they discuss with each other and the teacher what patterns and similarities they notice in the words they chose. The word features the teacher chooses for instruction are specifically designed from the words chosen from the text and intended to match the level of the students. The words are sorted and placed on an ongoing Word Wall that gathers all of the words studied from the class' reading. Similarly, in their approach Whole to Part to Whole, Routman and Butler (1998) contend that pieces of text can and should be taken out of context to analyze

because it provides the opportunity to place the parts back into the larger context for the whole view of the text again.

Why Writing?

From the framework created by these three principles, writing presents the ideal context for phonics instruction in a whole language classroom. Emergent literacy classrooms, prekindergarten through first grade, provide the opportunity to combine early writing experiences with the beginning phonics skills appropriate for these grades (Bradley 2001; Tolentino, 2013). Writing provides the context within which students use the grapheme-phoneme correspondence they have learned. Their writing shows what patterns and words are immediately relevant for the students to know and learn. While reading can easily provide a context for instruction of decoding, writing is ideal for instruction and practice of encoding. The expressive nature of writing creates an environment for students to incorporate all of the phonics strategies they know to write the words they wish to convey. Writing events promote students' problem solving of word spelling as they discover patterns (Craig, 2006). As they progress as writers, children learn that the alphabetic principal provides them with a systematic form to represent any word, and thus, they begin to discover this complex system (Tolchinsky, 2006).

Many researchers have found that using grapheme-phoneme correspondences through spelling events facilitates use of these skills in reading (Chomsky, 1971, 1979; Frith, 1985). Alphabetic writing provides a foundation of skills that learners carry over to their reading and word recognition. Phonics skills learned while writing transfer easily to reading as the demand for using the letter-sound relationships to encode allows for easier retrieval when decoding while reading. Many studies have found that early writing skills transfer to and enhance future reading and literacy abilities (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Roberts & Meiring, 2006;

Boscolo, 2008). With this important connection, early writing becomes a promising avenue to prepare students for future literacy.

In Manning and Kamii (2000), the whole language classroom was taught phonics through journal writing and other writing demonstrations that presented opportunities to teach spelling and letter-sound relationships. The students in the whole language class reached higher levels of spelling, using both consonants and vowels, than the students who received explicit phonics instruction in the form of segmenting and blending, worksheets and flashcards to practice words and rules. In addition to scoring higher on measures of spelling at the end of the year, the students in the whole language group demonstrated less regression than the phonics instruction group. Fifteen students who were taught explicit, isolated phonics lost ground during the year, whereas only two students in the whole language group regressed, exemplifying that students who learn and use the skills in meaningful contexts retain these skills more easily (Manning & Kamii, 2000).

Writing Communities

In writing-friendly classrooms, writing is made a priority in the curriculum and in the daily schedule (Graves, 1995; Graves, 1996). While the amount and type of instruction in early childhood classrooms vary (Puranik, Al Otaiba, Sidler, & Greulich, 2013), Gentry (2005) found that the most effective kindergarten writing classroom participated in writing for 45 minutes a day, including minilessons, scaffolded, and independent writing. Classrooms that promote writing can be loud and moving as students work independently and with others to create messages (Bouas, Thompson, & Farlow, 1997). Feedback is available from the teacher and peers for students as they discover written language through recording their messages.

Print-rich environments are critical for all literacy events, especially writing. Dowhower and Beagle (1998) found that the holistic classrooms of teachers who honor the literacy of their students have a plethora of writing tools available and space for children's writing to be posted and seen. In these classrooms writers are set up for success as they enter into their independent literacy work. In addition, writing tools should be present in all centers where they can be used for meaningful purposes, rather than limiting writing to the writing center (Gerde, Bingham, & Wasik, 2012). Paper and pencil placed in the dramatic play or grocery store center can be used to write scripts or shopping lists, which involve students in relevant opportunities for writing.

Bradley (2001) found that what teachers emphasize in their writing instruction greatly influence how their students' view good writing and the important aspects of the writing process, whether that be process, conventions, or appearance. Teachers are responsible for creating classrooms and instruction that demonstrate the values of writing. In environments nurturing writing, children become mentors for each other, offering suggestions and knowledge to their peers (Tolentino, 2013). In addition, with their peers as the second teacher in the classroom, Tolentino (2013) asserts that a writing-friendly environment becomes the third teacher for writers as they use the resources and print to collaborate with each other to create meaningful texts. Students develop the skills to become peer reviewers and build the academic language to dialogue about literacy.

Writing classrooms exhibiting these characteristics are the context within which embedded phonics will be examined. Classrooms that welcome student writing in any form and for meaningful purposes create the writing culture ideal for exploring phonics patterns without the need for isolated, explicit instruction. The availability of writing tools and the presence of writing time in the daily schedule are essential, but not sufficient to build early writing

(Diamond, Gerde, & Powell, 2008). Purposeful scaffolding of children's writing is needed to promote the literacy skills needed to become writers.

The acceptability of invented spelling varies among classrooms. In classrooms that value the meaning over the convention, students have the freedom to write words using the spelling and strategies they know without fear of being considered "incorrect." The student uses the skills he or she has available to them to independently make approximations of the words (Gentry, 2005). Support is given to them throughout the year to build their nonalphabetic writing toward use of letters and letter-sound relationships.

Invented Spelling. Teachers are encouraged to accept and encourage all forms of writing, as it develops from scribbles to letter forms to letters aligning with conventional spelling (Gerde, Bingham, & Wasik, 2012). These early stages of writing show meaningful interaction with literacy and engage students in the act of writing without limiting them to conventionality. Charles Read (1971) first legitimized invented spelling as a systematic use of rules to record words. Though it does not follow the same rules as conventional spelling, it demonstrates an understanding of conveying a message through representing words on paper. Students typically begin with one or two letters that represent the salient or initial sounds in words and build to initial and final sounds, until eventually representing vowel and medial sounds (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnson, 2008). While the trajectory tends to be consistent for most writers, students often move in and out of stages for various tasks, showing stronger skills for name writing than other tasks such as sentence or story writing (Levin, Both-De Vries, Aram, & Bus, 2005).

According to Clark (1988) first graders who were encouraged to use invented spelling rather than traditional spelling scored higher on measures of reading. In another study of

kindergarten writers, Ouellette and Senechal (2008) found that the children who were encouraged to use invented spelling and received appropriate feedback showed higher levels of phonological and orthographic awareness, along with higher word reading. The benefits of invented spelling span from increasing students' flexibility with writing to increasing word reading to providing assessment data for teachers. Invented spelling also highlights the grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge that students know. As an assessment tool, invented spelling pinpoints the next steps for emergent writers.

Assessment of Students' Phonics through Writing

In order to provide instruction focused on students' specific needs, teachers must have a way of assessing students for those needs. Many assessments have been developed and discussed that provide teachers with in-context evidence of students' phonics knowledge and needs. Students' grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge manifests itself in the students' writing and spelling. Assessing phonics skills through spelling gives insight into the next steps for instructing students.

As Vygotsky first described, students learn best from instruction slightly above their independent level (1978). Teachers must be aware of students' current level in order to provide instruction for the next level. One way of assessing students' current level is by observing their invented spelling and matching the students' performance with the stages of spelling development. Though these stages vary slightly between researchers and theorists, the main framework of five developmental level remains fairly consistent. Gentry (1982) outlines five stages that have been influential to writing research and instruction. Some researchers have questioned the existence of stages because the stages are not qualitatively different in nature with abrupt transitions between stages and instead suggest spelling development moves through

strategies (Varnhagen, 1995; Varnhagen, McCallum & Burstow, 1997; Gentry, 2000). While students do not always move from one stage to the next fluidly, the concept of the stages can be helpful for teachers to determine what students know and what they need to know next. By understanding the stages students generally fall within, teachers can cater instruction and support to the exact needs of the student. Gentry (2000) suggests appropriate placement of students in these stages assists teachers in forming realistic expectations of next steps for instruction.

In the precommunicative stage, writers often represent words using some letter forms, number symbols, and a combination of capital and lowercase characters, but without letter-sound correspondence, and show some beginning understanding of directionality (Gentry 1982). In the semiphonetic stage, writers begin representing words using a few letters that correspond to salient sounds in the word and use the letter name strategy to represent sounds using the matching letter name. Phonetic stage writers represent all sounds in words, mostly using letter-sound correspondence with some pattern knowledge. In the transitional stage, writers show understanding of morphological strategies in spelling and use rules of English orthography, such as a vowel in each syllable, r-controlled vowel patterns, and various long vowel patterns. The final stage, the conventional stage, includes knowledge of and use of English rules, including silent consonants, doubling patterns, and Latinate forms (Gentry, 1982).

Other spelling stages are outlined by Frith (1980), Ehri (1986, 1992), and Bear and Templeton (1998), which make various changes to Gentry's model. Specifically, the model presented by Bear and Templeton (1998) includes similar stages to the first three stages of Gentry's model, but then differs to include within word pattern, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy as the final three stages. The models of stage development have been used to create assessments and instructional recommendations for spellers.

Spelling assessments, such as the Developmental Spelling Analysis (Ganske, 1999), the Developmental Spelling Test (Tangel & Blachman, 1992), and the Spelling Sensitivity Score (Masterson & Apel, 2010), clearly outline the patterns students exhibit in their spelling by placing students within a stage or other classification that gives teachers specific information about a students' spelling skills. These assessments are designed to inform teachers' selection of developmentally appropriate instruction and activities for students (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnson, 2008). In addition, an assessment known as the Dictation Task has students write a dictated sentence and the assessment is scored by determining the number and location of graphemes that accurately represent phonemes in the sentence (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996). Again, this format allows teachers to analyze specific letter-sound relationships students understand and can use, while also identifying which skills should come next for instruction.

Dahl et al. (2003) used the Spelling Strategy Conference to find that students' spelling strategies differ based on their stage, providing teachers with more information about their students' skills. Students in the letter name stage relied mostly on the strategy termed, Focusing on Sounds, while students in the within word pattern and syllable juncture stages used a variety of strategies to approach spelling unknown words. Teachers who can assess their students' spelling stage and the subsequent spelling strategies can better prepare for instruction that focuses on the needs of the students.

Although spelling assessments cannot provide teachers with the entire view of their students and may need to be more contextualized than a traditional spelling test, observing students' spelling can give teachers vital information about students' grapheme-phoneme knowledge and strategies. Additional methods of assessing a student's current level of spelling development are to examine unaided written work, observe the student writing, and asking about

the strategies the student uses to write unknown words (Westwood, 2005). Similarly, Fresch (2001) recommends the use of journal writing as a source for assessment data that informs teachers of students' abilities and needs. Journal writing is an authentic activity that allows for personal selection of topic and vocabulary, giving teachers a view into students' operational knowledge of spelling. Through published assessments or daily activities, such as journal writing and morning message, teachers receive valuable data that informs grouping of students and the selection of activities, scaffolds, and instruction.

Instructional Methods

Two common writing instructional methods that exemplify the possibility of phonics in whole language classrooms are interactive writing and scaffolded writing. The two techniques involve teachers supporting students as they begin to write and record messages using concepts of print and letter-sound knowledge. To analyze the validity of using writing as a way to teach phonics in whole language events using the three main principles, these two instructional strategies will be discussed and then examined in relation to their capability of meeting students' needs, connecting to meaningful text, and moving from whole to part.

Writing workshop is an additional instructional model for early writers that can include embedded phonics, however, in the early grades, kindergarten and first grade, writing workshop tends to look similar to both the interactive and scaffolded writing with a few additions. In writing workshop teachers conduct minilessons on specific writing topics, such as conventionality, composition, formatting, etc (Fountas, 1999, chapter in Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Students then embark on independent or interactive writing to record their messages. The various phases of writing are also characteristic of writing workshop. Students participate in writing, conferencing, revising, editing, publishing, and sharing of their work, making writing a

meaningful, authentic purpose (Calkins & Mermelstein, 2003). This model is widely used and presents students with many opportunities to discover and practice phonics skills, but many of these instruction opportunities take the form of interactive or scaffolded writing, so this analysis will more closely examine these two instructional methods.

Interactive Writing. Interactive writing encourages development of phonics principals as the teachers and students share the pen to partake in writing of a message (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006). Craig (2006) found students who received interactive writing instruction to have stronger use of phonemes and intrasyllabic units, and syllables to decode words during writing. Similarly, by the end of Kindergarten, students who had participated in interactive writing throughout the year represented three times more phonemes in writing compared to the beginning of the year (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996). In addition to grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge, interactive writing builds phonemic awareness, high-frequency word writing, and concepts about print (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996; Craig, 2006).

Beginning with reading of a text, interactive writing often builds from a meaningful text to a supported and shared writing of a message (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996). The teacher and students then “share the pen” to record a message constructed by the group. Initially, the group collaborates to write the words on one collective product. The teacher utilizes opportunities for instruction of specific letter-sound relationships and conventional spelling to assist the students with the writing. The exchanges that occur during the shared writing encourage students to participate because they know that with the teacher’s support they will be successful (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). In later interactive writing events, each student in the group individually writes the group message, practicing problem solving of words as the teacher

continues to provide instruction and assistance to all students. In some interactive writing models, the writing event is followed by a study of words using a word from the group's message as the exemplar word for a pattern (Craig, 2006). In addition, Williams and Pilonieta (2012) used interactive writing with English language learners in kindergarten and first grade. They recommend that interactive writing be followed by journal writing or independent writing periods in order to provide students with immediate opportunities to practice the skills they learn during interactive writing.

This model begins in the context of purposeful text that students interact with before, during, and after reading. They then engage in writing a meaningful message in response to the text. Instruction of grapheme-phoneme correspondence is provided by the teacher as it becomes relevant and useful for the students. Students participate in active problem solving of spelling as they record their message. This model has shown to develop both students' word reading and spelling of unknown words (Craig, 2006). Interactive writing focuses on concepts about print, letter formation, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, spelling of unknown words, literacy-related vocabulary, and composition strategies (Brotherton & Williams, 2002). It concentrates specifically on technicalities of writing each word to record the message. Unlike some models such as writing workshop, interactive writing allows for immediate feedback and teacher involvement and decision making in the writing. While this may not always be the intent of writing instruction, interactive writing can be used when an analytical, bottom-up process of writing is desired (Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010).

Scaffolded Writing. Using the notion of zone of proximal development as discussed by Vygotsky (1978), scaffolded writing is a technique to support emergent writers with the recording of their messages into words. Scaffolding refers to assisting learners as they work in

their zone of proximal development from their current independent levels toward their levels of assisted performance. Teachers can provide this support to students as they write using the instructional strategy, scaffolded writing. In scaffolded writing students have the freedom to write messages of their choosing, whether from a prompt, in response to a text, or to describe a drawing (Gentry, 2005). Students say their message to the teacher, who repeats it to clarify. In the initial stages of scaffolded writing, teachers provide a greater level of support. Teachers model “private speech,” the vocalization of the processes being undertaken, as they repeat the sentence and use a highlighter to draw lines for each word as they slowly identify the words (Bodrova & Regional, 1998). The highlighter lines act as materialization, making tangible the concept, of the word units. As phonemic awareness and letter-sound relationships develop, the teacher and student work together to write lines that approximate the length of the word (Gentry, 2005). For example, longer words, such as “elephant,” would be given a longer line than shorter words, such as “dog.” Students then use the lines to guide their writing of the words, in any form they know, scribbling, a letter, or letters. Students repeat the words as private speech to line the words up with the lines. While the teacher does not explicitly instruct grapheme-phoneme correspondence, she makes suggestions of strategies to use, such as sounding out or using an alphabet chart, and may direct the student to other words or resources they may want to use (Bodrova & Regional, 1998). Gradually, this strategy becomes more independent for the students as teachers hand over the highlighter and students write the word lines for themselves, until eventually, the student no longer needs to draw the lines to write the words of the message.

In one study by Bodrova and Regional (1998), a class of kindergartners received scaffolded writing instruction throughout the year. Results at the end of the year showed all students had moved from using only scribbles and pictures toward more phonetic spelling, with

almost all students in the semiphonetic and phonetic stages. In addition, by the end of the year, students were independently drawing the materialization lines and participating in private speech on their own, demonstrating that less scaffolding was required.

Appropriateness of the Methods for Embedded Phonics Instruction

Interactive and scaffolded writing provide frameworks within which teachers instruct students on the writing process. To determine the use of these instructional methods for embedded phonics instruction, they will be examined from the perspective of the three principles previously discussed, meeting students' needs, connected to text, and moving from whole to part. Do these methods provide for the context and format of phonics instruction that is necessary and effective in whole language classrooms?

Meeting Students' Needs

Writing instruction using interactive writing and scaffolded writing enables teachers to plan for instruction and feedback that meets students' needs in the moment (Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010). By having student-determined messages, the teacher cannot necessarily plan ahead for the exact words and instruction that will be relevant. Although this requires teachers to be equipped with knowledge of where students are and what their next step needs are, it provides the perfect opportunity to provide instruction at the exact zone of proximal development for students.

In interactive writing rather than following a strict sequence, teachers make choices allowing them to prioritize the most important and common grapheme-phoneme correspondences. Instruction evolves as teachers assess students' current understanding and their future needs (Roth & Guinee, 2011). The phonics skills needed to write the words that students are interested in writing because they are present in their messages become the content of

instruction. Teachers use these opportunities to teach patterns, such as the silent e pattern, when they arise as specific immediate needs during interactive writing (Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010). Similarly, meeting students' needs may often take the form of selecting students for tasks that will challenge them but that they can be successful at (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996). For example, students' strength of writing their names can be utilized to have students write the letters in their name to contribute to the writing. Interactive writing meets the students' needs as the teacher directs the process of writing the words. The teacher has the opportunity to identify students' strengths and needs as she chooses students to write each word (Jones, Reutzel, & Fargo, 2010).

“Sharing the pen” is a powerful component of interactive writing that provides teachers with in the moment assessment of the students' skills and allows for instruction and engagement (Williams & Pilonieta, 2012). As students participate in the shared writing, the teacher provides the level of support that each child needs to be successful. This can take the form of suggesting a strategy a student might know in order to write the letter or word she has been asked to write or drawing her attention to a resource that might be helpful. In interactive writing teachers have the power to make these instructional decisions based on their individual students.

During writing events teachers use their understanding of literacy development and their observations of students to tailor the instruction to the students' strengths and weaknesses (Craig, 2006). Ongoing assessment is a critical piece of embedded phonics as it informs teachers of their students' needs.

Unlike interactive writing scaffolded writing provides more support for word writing than spelling, focusing more on phonological awareness of separating individual words without much instruction on the letter-sound level. Because students have the opportunity to represent the

words on the blank using this skills they possess, grapheme-phoneme correspondence is not a major focus of instruction (Bodrova & Regional, 1998; Gentry, 2005). While the teacher meets the students' needs by providing the level of scaffolding the individual students need, these scaffolds do not connect with explicit phonics instruction. The materialization of writing the lines for each word is helpful for assisting writers in representing all of the words, but does not move students toward strong grapheme-phoneme correspondence as they write the words. Some recommendations for extending scaffolded writing to meet students' phonics needs are the use of letter boxes, finger spelling, or stretching out the sounds (Gentry, 2005). These techniques remain consistent with the materialization of abstract concepts, present in scaffolded writing; however, they are not characteristic of the true scaffolded writing method.

Connected to Text

The writing during each event depends on the students' interests and thoughts, making it a uniquely original and meaningful text. In both instructional strategies, the writing can be built following a book reading or from other authentic tasks, such as writing a letter to a parent or community member, which create a context for relevant phonics instruction. Opportunities for students to construct their own messages create a motivating literacy environment for students to share their ideas through writing. These events that are engaging and motivating for students are the ideal context for embedded phonics instruction because students want the skills to record their messages. Teachers can use these opportunities within the context of meaningful writing to empower students with the skills to write their messages.

After the text is written, students often read back their writing, encouraging them to make the critical connection that what they wrote is meaningful, important, and can be conveyed

through letters on a page (Gerde, Bingham, & Wasik, 2012). This also comes in the way of sharing the writing with the class or other authentic audience.

In addition, interactive writing messages are often decided upon and constructed by larger groups of students, making it a meaningful, collaborative experience. Students are learning from the composition ideas of others, as well as the phonics skills of others. Unlike isolated phonics programs, these writing events are purposeful, even for young, early writers. The phonics skills instruction provided during interactive writing is transferable to the students' independent writing in the future because they learned the skills in the same context that they will be using them again. Throughout writing the message is repeated and reread as the group records each letter and word of the message on the paper, reminding the students of the meaningful message throughout the writing process (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000).

In scaffolded writing specifically, writers maintain the end goal of writing a cohesive text through private speech, reading the sentence to keep track of the words they are writing (Gentry, 2005; Bodrova & Regional, 1998). This reiteration of the message means the students remember why they are writing and keep them focused on the task. Eventually students require less of the teacher's scaffolding and can transfer the writing skills to independent writing, which is often not the case for isolated phonics instruction (Manning & Kamii, 2000).

Whole to Part

Starting with a meaningful message aims at maintaining the message as a whole without losing the authenticity. Both instructional strategies move from the message to the sentences to each word to individual letters. Although the model outlined by Moustafa and Maldonado-Colon (1999) of whole to part originally moved from a sentence in a text to word study of individual words from the sentence, utilizing sentences written by the students, as in the interactive and

scaffolded writing methods, further enhances the instruction and engages the students. Routman and Butler (1998) argue that by beginning with authentic literacy events throughout the day, such as morning message writing and journal entries, the purposes and uses of language are explored. From these experiences the whole can begin to be broken down into smaller parts. Sentences from the text can be taken apart, discussed, and then put back together in the context. The same procedure applies to words and letters as students are ready for the various levels of print awareness and phonics understanding.

Similar to the argument for interactive and scaffolded writing remaining connected to a text, participants in these writing events keep the whole message front and center during the process, repeating and rereading the sentences in order to maintain the meaning. Specifically, private speech is used in scaffolded writing to reiterate the message until each word is written and the message makes sense.

In Craig (2006) the interactive writing model used in the study followed the writing activity with word study using a word from the students' message to discuss relevant patterns and phonics skills. While this does stray from a strictly writing task, the relevance of the word remains high for students because they are specifically considering a word they wanted to write.

Scaffolded writing considers this whole to part principle specifically. After deciding on a message, the teacher and student move from the message to a single sentence. They analyze this sentence, listening for individual words, and eventually when the students are ready, they listen for the length of the words in order to draw lines that align with the words they will write. From this point the student moves toward more independent writing of symbols or letters to represent the words, not necessarily attending to phonics depending on the students' level. While this method does maintain the whole while considering the parts, explicit instruction on grapheme-

phoneme correspondence is not provided as students use whatever strategies they have to write the words on the lines.

Analysis

Both methods, interactive writing and scaffolded writing, present some advantages for embedded phonics instruction in writing tasks. Interactive writing attends specifically to phonics skills meeting students' needs as the teacher provides explicit instruction on patterns and convention as students write letters or words they have the skills to write. The task remains connected to text as it builds from a meaningful message created by the students. The teachers assists the students in moving from the whole, the message, to its parts, from sentences to words to letters. Importantly, it ends by reminding all participants of the meaningful whole as the text is reread.

Scaffolded writing, on the other hand, attends more closely to phonological awareness than explicit phonics instruction. While it does meet students' needs by providing the exact level of support students need in transferring their message to writing, the teacher may suggest strategies the student could use to write each word, but does not provide explicit instruction of the grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Similar to interactive writing, scaffolded writing maintains the connection to text as students use private speech to maintain the meaningful message. The teacher supports the students in moving from the whole message to the smaller parts, sentences to words, as lines are drawn for each word. Again, however, scaffolded writing only brings the student to the word level but does not provide specific, explicit letter instruction, making it more focused on phonological awareness of words than letter-sound relationships.

Instructional Implications

Professional Development

As discussed writing can be an optimal environment for embedded phonics instruction that meets students' needs using meaningful text and moving from the whole to smaller parts. The advantages writing presents are only accessible if teachers are trained and prepared for assessing students' needs and knowing how to meet them through embedded phonics. The studies demonstrating the effectiveness of phonics within writing events utilized trained teachers or tutors who had the knowledge base to construct lessons based on the skills and needs of their students (Craig, 2006). Utilizing methods such as interactive writing or scaffolded writing rely on teacher knowledge, so teachers must be trained in the skills of assessment and matching instruction to their assessment data. Many instructional programs that provide a specific sequence of skills are used in schools and districts, but we must consider the value that teacher knowledge can and should bring to instruction that meets students' needs (Craig, 2006). Carreker, Malataesha, and Boulware-Gooden (2010) found that teachers with more literacy-related content knowledge were better able to assess students' needs and provide appropriate instruction, specifically for phonics and spelling. In addition, they found that the number of professional development hours teachers attended related to identifying students' needs and chose appropriate activities was related to the teachers' abilities on these responsibilities. Not only is teacher knowledge important, but it can be effectively accomplished through professional development training.

Similarly, Tolentino (2013) found that students' perception of writing is formed by the teacher's dispositions and practices for writing. As previously discussed, the classroom environment impacts the writing development of the students, so teachers who value early

writing and its advantages to future literacy will create classrooms full of writing opportunities and resources.

Implementation

This capstone demonstrates the potential for interactive and scaffolded writing events to involve the explicit phonics instruction that is recommended from the National Reading Panel (2000) while maintaining the meaningful context of writing. Teachers and schools should consider using these methods as alternatives to the strict sequenced programs that have been popular. Providing a writing-friendly environment in which students can explore writing independently and in collaboration with others will create the foundation for simultaneous meaning-making and phonics development.

As previously discussed, scaffolded writing alone does not attend to explicit instruction of phonics skills, however, used in conjunction with interactive writing or other modes of materialization—letter boxes, finger spelling, stretching out the words—can provide the grapheme-phoneme correspondence instruction that students need to develop as writers (Gentry, 2005). Providing scaffolded writing and interactive writing to students can ensure opportunities for phonological awareness needed for writing and the specific letter-sound instruction.

Interactive writing and scaffolded writing both focus on the technicalities of writing, without as much consideration for the larger writing process, as writing workshop, for example. Because of these differences in approaches, schools and teachers must be aware of how the type of instruction matches their intentions for writing. Teachers with the professional knowledge recommended above use their assessment data to select the instructional methods with the most potential for their students. Some writers, such as Dyson (2008), call for less of a focus on the basics of writing as often seen in curriculum and more authentic social interactions with writing.

With the meaningful social practices of writing remaining in classrooms, the focus of instruction can and should shift between the bottom-up analysis of the letter-sound level, as presented by the interactive and scaffolded writing methods, and the top-down use of writing workshop to build messages through revising, publishing, and sharing. This capstone looked specifically at the uses of interactive and scaffolded methods of writing instruction because they provide the most explicit context for embedded phonics instruction that builds from what students already know to teach what they need to know in the future, without isolating the skills through worksheets in drills. However, true whole language classrooms should also include many opportunities for students to independently write using drawings, symbols, and other modes in order to fully embrace the meaningful purposes of writing beyond spelling and conventions.

Conclusion

Not only is embedded phonics instruction possible within whole language classrooms, it is ideal during writing events that exemplify the meaningful context indicative of the whole language approach to literacy. Though scaffolded writing does not present as strong a context for phonics instruction as interactive writing, both instructional methods provide for systematic support of early writers. The implications of this analysis are important for teachers and trainers of teachers. For the benefits of this instruction to be experienced, teachers must be equipped to assess students' needs and meet them through individualized instruction during writing tasks. However, more information is needed on the transfer of these instructional methods to emergent writing classrooms with various skills and understanding. Before the benefits of embedded phonics within these meaningful writing contexts can be fully realized, the field needs to further understand the specific instructional characteristics of these methods and how they directly

interact with students' understanding. Few research studies have fully explored the use of these methods long-term and with various populations of students.

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