

HONORS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

While the quality of the proposal is most important, strong proposals are typically 3-4 pages in length (single-spaced). Please maintain the proposal format.

Basic Information

Full Name: Caitlin Clark
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 College: College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services
 Major: Middle Childhood Education Natural Science and Language Arts
 Title of Project: The Relationship of Phonics and Whole Language
 Thematic Area (choose only one): Research
 Expected Project Start Date: N/A
 Expected Project End Date: N/A

Project Information

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

I will be researching two popular approaches to teaching literacy: the phonics approach and the whole language approach. In the education sector, there has been a 20-year debate over whether phonics is the best means of teaching students how to read, or if whole language is a more real-world device. I am interested in this topic not only because I have a never-ending interest in literacy and reading, but also because I want to make myself more prepared as a future educator. I owe it to my future students to have exemplary mastery of my content knowledge of language arts. It should be the constant effort of educators to better themselves through professional development, and this project will help me establish that ideal. Phonics and whole language, whether used individually or separately, are the building blocks of literacy and comprehension. Although I aim to teach middle childhood aged students, I need to be aware of the education in reading they should receive by that point. While phonics is typically only used for younger grades, I need to be aware if I should be using it in the middle school classroom. I also need to know when to introduce whole language into my lessons. In an age of standardized testing, it is helpful to know all of the tools and resources possible to help students succeed in learning and receive excellent test scores.

Throughout my research, I will read scholarly literature on how to be a good researcher, and how to develop and eventually answer my research question. I will also read scholarly literature on how to have a worldly and perspective view as a researcher. While I find reading journal articles and even newspaper articles interesting when pursuing research, peer reviewed articles are more reliable because they are more objective. I will develop my current inquiry question: **Are the phonics approach and whole language approach more effective when used together or separately when teaching pre-adolescence?** While my question is basic, I hope to develop it more thoroughly over the course of my research.

My main goal of this project is to answer my research question. I intend to learn about the goals of the phonics and whole language approach, and if they are more effective when used together or separately. When discovering if they are more effective separately or together, it may be helpful to look for multiple case studies or lists of comparative data for student achievement when using the approaches. I also intend to apply my knowledge of how to construct a well-written research paper when I finish collecting data and taking notes.

I will spend my time on this project in intervals. During fall semester, I will spend 5 hours a week reading literature, composing my research paper, meeting with my project advisor, and/or preparing to disseminate my project at the undergraduate research conference for a total of 80 hours over 16 weeks. I will also create a poster to present when I disseminate my research. This will be a sufficient amount of time to answer my inquiry question and create a well-written model of what I have learned.

Besides the professional goals of this project, I personally want to gain experience and confidence in researching. By doing this project, I can build upon my inquiry skills for future research projects.

Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:

2. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)

- Ability to frame and develop the research project question or problem.

By using resources and course experience from this year, I will be able to further develop my inquiry question for this project. I will read articles and literature on what qualities make up a stable research question, and what measures you can take to attempt to answer the question. In EDST 2003, which I took this semester, I learned that you would not always find a solidified answer for your research question. There will not always be an answer for research, but instead many alternative perspectives and outlooks. I will also use my project advisor as a second opinion to check if my inquiry question makes sense and is not too vague or too specific.

- Possess a well-developed awareness of literature in the field.

To develop a well-developed awareness of literature explaining phonics and whole language, I will look at a variety of literary mediums such as newspaper/journal articles, scholarly literature, videos, and books. By reading and viewing many types of information about my research topic, I will be able to notice trends and similarities in information that is repeated or different. I will be able to identify experts in the field and frequent or mastery authors, which will be helpful in citing my resources.

3. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories (include reference list, as appropriate)

A. This project relates to my future academic goals and professional goals. By doing this project I hope to gain more confidence in doing research and my ability to find reliable resources. While I have had practice in research in two of my classes in college (EDST 2003, and EDST 2001) I still feel as if I need to gain more confidence in doing research on a larger scale, while moving past the typical single research paper. I want to be able to have the confidence to apply my research to a more applicable medium, such as sharing my findings with fellow colleagues. Learning about phonics and whole language also applies to my professional goals as a future teacher. By doing this project, I will feel more prepared for teaching language arts because I will have a definite mastery of two topics. As a teacher, I will continually pursuing professional development in my concentrations, so doing this project is a mock experience of what I will be doing for the rest of my life.

B. The first resource I will be using to prepare to gain background knowledge for my project is the "How To Do Research" module provided by World Book Web. This resource is an interactive module that teaches students how to organize the research process, find and cite resources, and how to construct a professional research paper. The module also has a section for educators or instructors, which I would examine as well because I will eventually be teaching my students about the research process. I really find this resource effective because it is not simply a reading and is much more engaging.
 "How to Do Research." Learning & Leading with Technology Aug. 2009: 44. Computer Database. Web. 19 Nov. 2013.

C. The second resource I will be using is the course I am currently taking in Fall Semester 2013 entitled "Save Our Schools!" For the final project of this class, we are constructing a 15-page research paper and hosting a symposium for two Ohio senators and one representative. My professor, Sarah Stitzlein, has been instructing us on how to create objective views on educational issues when reading newspaper articles and even professional literature. This skill has been vital to my personal research experience in the course because I am learning about the Common Core. There is an overwhelming amount of misconceptions, lies, and opinions about Common Core so being able to look at resources objectively has been key. I have also strengthened my ability to look at arguments from both sides during this course. I will continue to use these skills in my research project, and hopefully build upon them as well.

4. Initiative, Independence, and/or Creativity

I will be working alone on this project, and therefore take complete responsibility for its completion and quality. I am self-initiating this project because I want to have more than just a research experience. I want to make myself grow independently as a learner. Some skills that make me reliable as a lone researcher are that I am extremely organized in every aspect of my life and I am passionate and driven about educational topics. This project is unique because it focuses on a very specific topic of literacy, and two intricate yet popular modes of learning. I will be doing an abundance of self-

reflection during this project; along with professional reflection to display the unique emotions I develop while working as a lone researcher. Since I will be working alone, a challenge I will face is to respect and see the data and literature I view in a worldly and objective manner. Through the help of research-orientated texts, I will be able to achieve this goal and present myself as a confident and ready student at the Undergraduate Research Conference. My inquiry question is unique because it is specific, but not overly specific. Instead of wanting to generally research literacy strategies, I have narrowed my inquiry to two specific methods, especially when used in teaching pre-adolescence. I will be designing and implementing my research alone, as well. This project was self-initiated because I designed my inquiry question by using inspiration from the OhioReads program at Winton Hills Academy, in which I currently participate.

5. Reflection

During my research, I plan to reflect on my learning through a blog. My blog will have three sections; one for what I learn during the research process, one for applications in teaching, and one for what I reflect on after I disseminate my project. During the research process I will ask myself the following questions:

- How does this information pertain to your inquiry question?
- Is this resource valuable and reliable?
- Are you finding any surprising results or alterations to previous assumptions about the material?
- Are your opinions on phonics or whole language changing?
- How can you better your inquiry question or note taking during this process?
- Are you being time effective and efficient?

I will also ask myself the following questions about teaching applications:

- How will this information better my lesson planning and mastery as a teacher?
- How can I share this information with other teachers to enhance their learning?
- Why is this topic important to me as a teacher?

After I disseminate my project I plan to answer the following questions on my blog:

- Was your presentation at the conference effective and engaging?
- Did visitors think your project was interesting or relevant?
- What are some concerns or interests visitors expressed about your research?
- Was a poster the best medium for the conference or could you have displayed your research in a different way?
- Would you take your research to the conference again?

After creating my blog entries, I will also create a video montage as a self-interview, where I review the emotional, mental, and intellectual effects researching and dissemination had on me. I will review the high and low points of my research journey, and offer how I will better my research process for my next project. I will also reflect on how well chosen my advisor was for this project and if I enjoyed researching alone. Finally, I will review my favorite resources and include how viewers can find out more about phonics and whole language learning.

6. Dissemination

I plan to disseminate my project by presenting my poster and paper at the Undergraduate Research Conference. I will sign up to have a booth at the conference where I hope to attract people interested in education or literacy. Ideally, I would like visitors of the conference who visit my area to not only be from the education field, but a variety of fields. The more diverse my audience, the better because I will be able to see what people with other interests, besides education, think of phonics and whole language. With this diverse audience in mind, I will have to attract them to my poster by displaying the relevance to their fields. For instance, I could relate phonics and whole language to business and marketing because of the resources created for teachers to use when making lessons for these topics. I can appeal to English Literature majors because they can discuss whole language in a variety of mediums. I can also relate my research to Speech Pathology majors because phonics incorporates language and how sounds are pronounced. While I do want fellow education majors to come to my booth to provoke interesting conversation and to hopefully give them resourceful information on reading techniques, I also want to show people of other majors why literacy and education is important and relevant to them. I will approach my visitors with a very conversational tone in order to see what they know about phonics and whole language, along with what they want to know. It may be beneficial for me to write the answers to these questions down for later reflection about what people outside of the education sector are interested in. My overall hope for the Undergraduate Research Conference will be to provide a holistic and realistic representation of why phonics and whole language matter to my colleagues.

7. Project Advisor (list the person's name, title, and contact information)

Nancy Barngrover will be my Project Advisor. She is the OhioReads Coordinator at Winton Hills Academy located in the Winton Hills housing project. Her school phone number is (513) 363-6364 and her email is nbarngrover@aol.com. Nancy is a valuable advisor for this project because she has immense knowledge of phonics based learning and actively does research on phonics while planning the curriculum for the OhioReads program. She is knowledgeable about literacy and is highly interested in the subject. I work cooperatively with Nancy as a tutor at Winton Hills, and she has known me for two years. Nancy has helped me previously with a project involving education reform, and I believe she would be ecstatic to be my project advisor.

8. Budget (if applicable)

The budget for my research project will only include printing the poster that I create for the undergraduate research conference. Full color posters are \$15.00/ft. so I will estimate \$60.00 for my budget. I will provide myself with this \$60.00 through the loans I receive through the University. I will not be paying myself for the research because I will be working alone.