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The impact of song and movement on kindergarten sight word acquisition

Katy Martin
Rowan University

THE IMPACT OF SONG AND MOVEMENT ON KINDERGARTEN SIGHT WORD ACQUISITION

by

Katy Martin

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my husband Robert Martin and my beautiful daughter Lainey Rose. Your patience, support, and encouragement made it possible to push through the hardest of days to reach my goals. Your daily reminder to reach for the stars gave me the strength to shine brightly.

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Abstract

Katy Martin
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Dr. Susan Browne
Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this naturalistic, qualitative study was to document the impact that song and movement had on kindergarten sight word acquisition. To investigate this, 18 kindergarten students were taught 20 new sight words using songs and movement over the course of four weeks. Data was systematically collected and analyzed to determine the specific benefits that song and movement had on kindergartener's sight word learning in regard to automaticity, motivation, and engagement. The kindergarten students were administered a pre-and post-sight word assessment along with a pre-and post-song and movement motivation and engagement student survey. Throughout the study, a qualitative journal was kept to track student progress, notes, quotes, and behaviors. Based on the data collected, the use of song and movement had a positive impact on kindergartener's sight word acquisition. All 18 students increased their sight word knowledge and demonstrated a strong ability to read sight words with automaticity. The motivation and engagement of kindergarten students also increased while learning sight words using song and movement. The results also revealed that the use of song and movement had a positive impact and acted as a scaffold to support the acquisition of sight words of struggling learners in the class.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,
flight to the imagination, and life to everything."
-Plato

On the morning of my first day of teaching kindergarten, the air was crisp, damp and cool. The dew of the morning grass squeaked on the freshly polished wood floor as I stepped into my brightly colored kindergarten classroom. I had dreamed about this moment ever since I pretended to teach my cabbage patch dolls in my basement when I was five years old. My dream of being a teacher was soon to become reality. It was moments before I was about to meet my 24 kindergarten students and all I could hear was the still of the walls and the tick of the clock. In those few moments, the silence captured between the four walls of my classroom were the last moments of silence those walls would ever hear.

I had a vision of what teaching kindergarten was going to be like. I expected quiet little students to walk into the classroom ready and excited to learn. I pictured the students and I gathered on the rug, learning a letter of the week, and reading popular books like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears.* I expected students to walk into the classroom and know how to behave, raise their hand, and sit crisscross applesauce. What I quickly learned as those 24 students entered my kindergarten class on that very first day, was that my vision was nowhere close to reality. There are no moments of silence in a kindergarten classroom and most kindergarten students have never been exposed to the rules of how to behave in school. The kindergarten student wants to talk, explore, and move around, not raise their hand and sit crisscross applesauce. Once the rules and

routines were in place, I thought the need to move and talk would vanish. However, I became frustrated in waiting for this moment to happen because it never happened. The days of what I thought would be filled with reading popular books and learning the alphabet, were filled with redirection and constant reminders to keep a quiet mouth, raise a hand, and keep hands and feet still. Teaching the curriculum was being overshadowed by the need to teach procedures and routines.

On top of teaching routines and procedures, I struggled with how to reach my students academically with the accelerated kindergarten curriculum that was in place. The curriculum had very little focus on emergent literacy skills and was created with the expectations that kindergarten students would enter the school year with basic emergent literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, knowing the letters of the alphabet and able to identify their names. In my classroom, however, I had students who could not recognize their names, students who could read fluently, and students in between with ranging abilities. As a teacher and a teacher researcher, I became interested in how to meet the needs of all my students while providing opportunities to transfer their energy and inquisitive nature in a meaningful and productive way. I reflected on my own learning as a child and remembered the times in which learning was easy for me. Those times reflected teaching that engaged my whole being and incorporated different learning styles. I can still remember the ease at which memorizing the Constitution's Preamble was through the use of a song to a catchy tune and the use of kinesthetic-bodily movements to assist in learning prepositions. The use of different learning styles captured all parts of my brain and worked together to make learning easier.

Thoughtful reflection on my own learning intrigued me and I knew I needed to discover ways to engage my energetic learners in ways that used different learning styles. I began to incorporate songs with catchy rhythms and melodies and engaged my students in movement activities to optimize learning episodes. When I began to do this, the chaos that once lived inside my classroom turned into controlled chaos where children were taking charge of their own learning. It no longer bothered me that the four walls of my classroom never heard an ounce of silence again. The noise the walls now heard daily was the noise of singing and actively engaged students who were eager and excited to learn.

The idea of using music and movement to optimize learning became fascinating strategies for me. My students' response to these learning tools was a positive one and it motivated me to incorporate music and movement as much as possible in my teaching, especially in areas that were difficult for students. When planning my lessons, I reminded myself of a quote made by Confucius and my new teaching philosophy, "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand".

Story of the Question

The use of song and movement had a strong impact on student achievement and engagement and became an instructional tool that I used often. Teachers, administrators, and colleagues knew that if they walked by my classroom door, they would hear singing and witness students exploring the classroom as they were actively engaged in learning experiences. A song was made for every lesson and my students sang and hummed tunes as they navigated their way through the kindergarten curriculum. By the end of

each school year, I saw tremendous gains in my students' literacy skills and a love for learning.

Changes in the kindergarten curriculum were made when the district decided to implement a full day kindergarten program. The district adopted a new reading, writing, and phonics program with a push for a more rigorous curriculum. With the implementation of a full day program, administrators were calling for increased student achievement. High expectations were held for all students and students were required to meet various literacy benchmarks and exit kindergarten reading at Fountas and Pinnell's guided reading level D. Not only were students held to high expectations, but all kindergarten teachers were given their yearly Student Growth Objective, made by the administration. Teacher's SGO's indicated that 80% of their students had to recognize 80% of the kindergarten sight words by March of that given school year. This resulted in frantic teachers crazed over how students would meet this rigorous goal.

Understanding the importance of sight word reading during the early stages of reading, I began to place a strong focus on sight word instruction in my classroom. Students participated in daily sight word activities and had many opportunities to practice sight words across content areas. It had been my experience, however, that kindergarten students rely heavily on memorization when learning sight words and this rote skill needs practice and time to master. The new pressure of meeting a Student Growth Objective by March of that school year was making me nervous that the amount of time allotted to practice sight words was not enough. I began to reflect on my teaching and question how to optimize sight word learning for my kindergarten students.

I engaged my students in hands-on activities when teaching sight words such as sky writing, sand writing, and word building. Students participated in word hunts, write the room activities and sight word games. The constant practice with sight words was thought to be enough for my kindergarten students. However, when I began to collect data to document sight word growth, I began to notice that the constant practice was not enough for my students. Students struggled with identifying sight words automatically and transferring their knowledge of sight words to reading and writing activities. While playing a sight word game, I overheard one of my students struggle to identify a word. His partner responded by saying, "I will help! Listen!" The student proceeded to hum a song and told the boy that the song had the word *like* in it. The two students went on to play their game humming along to a catchy tune.

At that very moment in time, I could not believe that the teacher who was known to create songs for everything, did not think to use songs to optimize sight word instruction. I began to ask questions such as; How can I use songs to teach sight words? Do songs help students learn sight words? Can songs help to increase sight word automaticity? Can movement be used alongside songs to optimize learning?

The days that followed were filled with research and wondering how the use of song and movement would impact my students' sight word acquisition. With this, teacher research began and my question emerged: How does the use of song and movement impact kindergarteners' sight word recognition?

Purpose Statement

Emergent literacy consists of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Marie

Clay (1982) suggests that early literacy skills build on a developmental continuum over time beginning from birth to five years of age. Emergent literacy skills include the knowledge related to the alphabet, phonological awareness, symbolic representation, and oral language and are crucial skills necessary to ensure children become successful readers and writers (Rhode, 2015). As children enter kindergarten, emergent literacy skills can vary from child to child based on the literacy environments the children were exposed to before entering school (Beals, DeTemple & Dickenson, 1994; Mason, 1980, Mason & Dunning, 1986, Rowe, 1991). As time is spent ensuring all kindergarten students have the necessary emergent literacy skills necessary to begin the stages of formal reading instruction, outside pressures of the curriculum require kindergarteners to become emergent readers (Massetti & Bracken, 2010).

There are many features of the reading process, known as concepts of print, that emergent readers must understand before becoming skilled readers (Clay, 2013). Students must learn about letters, spaces, sentences, punctuation, the alphabet and how all these things help to convey meaning on a page (Clay, 2013). One of the concept of print skills necessary to become an emergent reader is the understanding of what a word is on a page (Clay, 2013). Students who do not learn to recognize words early in their reading development can encounter problems in reading skills and comprehension in later years (Clay, 1991; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Gough & Hillinger, 1980). Therefore, it is important for students to learn to identify words in the early stages of reading development.

According to Dolch (1948), 50%-75% of all text is comprised of 220 high frequency words, also known as sight words. Dolch sight words cannot be sounded out using

phoneme-grapheme relationships and must be recognized based on memorization or by sight (Dolch, 1948). Educators have the monumental task of assisting students in learning sight words to promote the skills needed to learn to read.

When learning to read, sight word identification is an important skill and is necessary to establish fluent, confident readers (McCormick and Zutell, 2011). McCormick and Zutell (2011) explain that sight word recognition is extremely important in the earliest stages of reading because students "do not yet have sufficient skills for reading words through use of word identification strategies" (p. 274). It is also stated that, "recognizing words by sight originates before identifying words through decoding" (McCormick and Zutell, 2011, p. 274). The National Reading Panel (2000) suggests that sight word recognition is the basis of fluency and should be one of the five essential elements included in programs at the primary level. When learning to read, children must learn to identify words quickly and effortlessly so that they can focus on the meaning of what they are reading (Stanovich, 1986).

In understanding the importance of sight word instruction in the early stages of reading development, kindergarten students should be provided with instructional opportunities that foster this necessary emergent reader skill. How to optimize sight word learning for kindergarten students is the very basis for this research study. Brain research suggests that the use of music and movement in early literacy learning can promote emergent literacy skills and increase engagement (Chandler & Tricot, 2015; Cooper, 2010; Davies, 2000). Children have a natural desire to move and be actively involved due to billions of active brain neurons hungry for stimulation (Palmer, 2001). According to Mahar et al. (2006), there is much evidence that daily classroom-based

physical activity increases on-task behavior. Inviting students to get out of their seats and experience the world through active engagement, educators can use music and movement opportunities that offer rich learning experiences (Palmer, 2001).

Paquette and Rieg (2008) state that "providing children with structured and open-ended musical activities, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, and sharing the joy of creativity with each other are all foundational bases for the growth and development of the early childhood learner" (p. 227). The idea of integrating music and movement into sight word instruction could not only increase sight word identification in young learners but be motivating tools that help to establish a positive learning environment where students "thrive emotionally, socially, and academically" (Paquette and Rieg, 2008, p. 227).

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The problem this study addresses is how to optimize sight word instruction in a classroom that contains students with varying literacy skills and abilities. Sight word acquisition is difficult for kindergarten students because sight words do not follow the rules of letter-sound relationships taught at the kindergarten level. Therefore, I aim to answer how the use of song and movement impacts kindergarteners' sight word acquisition. Specifically, I aim to document how the use of song and movement impacts sight word recognition and automaticity as well as how the use of song and movement impacts motivation and engagement while learning sight words. To investigate this question, data was systematically collected and analyzed to determine the specific benefits of using song and movement to teach sight words.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two presents a review of the literature in the various areas of using song and movement in early literacy learning. This includes literature which studies the use of song and movement to increase student achievement in emergent literacy skills as well as research that connects using song and music for learning to brain research. Chapter three describes the methodology, design, and context of the study. Chapter three also includes the procedures of the study and how data was collected and analyzed. Chapter four presents an analysis of the data collected and specific findings of the study. Chapter five presents conclusions of the study, implications for further teaching, and suggestions for further research on how the use of song and movement impact kindergarteners' sight word acquisition.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Chapter two presents a review of the literature in the various areas of using song and movement in early literacy learning. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the literature that supports the use of song and movement as an effective learning strategy for young learners. The review is organized into seven sections. The first section discusses the theoretical perspectives that inform this study. The second section discusses emergent literacy and defines the literacy skills that young learners acquire during the early stages of literacy learning. The third section connects music and learning with brain research and describes the research that supports the use of song to optimize learning. The fourth section describes the use of movement in early literacy learning and the research that supports the use of kinesthetic-bodily movement to increase early literacy achievement. The fifth section discusses the empirical studies that support the relationship between the use of song and movement and sight word acquisition in kindergarten students through the use of multisensory teaching. The sixth section discusses the positive relationship between the performative and literacy learning. The seventh chapter discusses the impact that music and movement have on student engagement. The chapter ends with a summary of the literature and the ways that this study may contribute to the field of education with regard to how incorporating song and movement into sight word instruction can positively impact kindergarten students.

Theoretical Perspectives

Gardner (1983) created the theory of multiple intelligences which explains how students possess various kinds of minds and learn in diverse ways. His theory discusses a way of viewing the whole child and expands the traditional notion of verbal-intelligence and mathematical-intelligence to also include musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences (Gardener, 1983). Gardner (1983) explains that people are born with different types of "intelligences" and suggests that people learn best through a combination of intelligences. Of these intelligences include musical-rhythmic intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Those who possess musical intelligence have a strong ability to think in patterns, rhythms, and sounds and are good at remembering melodies and songs (Gardner, 1983). Those who possess bodily-kinesthetic intelligence have strong body movement, hand-eye coordination and tend to remember by doing, rather than hearing or seeing (Gardner, 1983). Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences provides a framework for using song and movement in the classroom to engage students at their varying intelligences to optimize learning.

Guthrie's (1997) theory of motivational engagement suggests that students learn best when they are engaged and motivated. Young children enjoy singing and are developmentally inclined to move around while exploring the world around them. Guthrie's (1997) theory of motivational engagement provides a framework and supports using song and movement in the classroom. Creating a catchy tune while allowing students to move around while teaching sight words would engage learners and provide a motivational tool to help remember how to spell a word.

Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism (1987) also provides a framework for using song and movement in early learning. Social constructivism describes how children learn best through observing others, interacting with others and by doing (Vygotsky, 1987). Tracey and Morrow (2006) explain that a key concept in social constructivism is the *zone of proximal development,* which refers to the ideal level of task difficulty to optimize learning as well as the idea of *scaffolding,* which refers to the assistance provided by adults during instruction. Providing literacy rich experiences that incorporate the use of song and movement can be an ideal scaffold that reaches early learners within their zone of proximal development.

Emergent Literacy

The ability to read is a monumental task that is imperative for success in school and life. Children start their journey of reading early in life and learn about the function of reading well before they can pick up a book and decode a text (Rhode, 2015). Early skills in reading are known as *emergent literacy* and include skills that are acquired on a developmental continuum and views learning literacy as a process (Rhode, 2015). The idea of emergent literacy was introduced by Marie Clay (1982) and suggests that early skills build over time beginning from birth to five years of age. Children's natural environments can support or impede the development of emergent literacy skills and impact attitudes towards reading (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The development of children's emergent literacy skills depends on their access to rich literacy experiences and environments early on in life (Rhode, 2015). Children's experiences with rich literacy episodes and environments help to build the literacy knowledge and skills needed before children are formally taught to read (Rhode, 2015). The components of emergent literacy

include the skills that children develop prior to conventional reading and are discussed below.

Language development. Oral language development refers to a child's familiarity with language and vocabulary (Rhode, 2015). Oral language development is a critical aspect of literacy learning and is strongly linked to a student's literacy success (Lane & Wright, 2007). In a longitudinal study, Roth et al. (2002), studied 39 children to clarify the relationship between oral language and early reading development. Roth et al. (2002) concluded that the variables associated with oral language development gave students advantages in gaining early literacy skills throughout the years. The longitudinal study provided evidence that oral language was a predicative measure of "beginning reading for both word-reading and text comprehension" (Roth et al., 2002, p. 270). To promote oral language development, Lane and Wright (2007) explain that the most effective way is to engage children in read alouds. Reading aloud to children promotes emergent literacy skills such as oral language, phonological awareness, comprehension, and word recognition (Lane & Wright, 2007).

Phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to detect, identify, and manipulate the sound structure of language (Rhode, 2015). Phonological awareness involves skills such as rhyme recognition, syllable identification, onset and rime identification, as well as awareness about words and sentences. Ehri et al.'s (2001) qualitative meta-analysis evaluating the effects of phonemic awareness instruction on learning to read found that phonemic awareness instruction made a significant contribution on reading acquisition and is one of the strongest predictors of later reading success. Adams (1998) also found the importance of phonological awareness instruction

in young learners and states that phonological awareness has a very "predicative power" to identifying students who may struggle with learning to read (p. 2). Adams (1998) advocates for explicit phonics instruction in early childhood education and concludes that learning to read comes from the ability of a child to relate the marks on a page to their own internalized language.

Print awareness. Print awareness refers to the awareness of how written language is constructed and used (Rhode, 2015). Print awareness includes knowledge about written letters and their corresponding phonemes as well as concepts about print. Concepts about print refers to the knowledge base about print including the concept that written print carries a message and knowing the difference between letters and words (Rhode, 2015). Foulin (2005) explains how the understanding of text systems and symbols is a critical factor in becoming a fluent reader and, in fact, is also a strong predictor of later reading success. Share et al.'s (1984) study demonstrates that of different variables such as vocabulary and home socio-economic status, letter-name knowledge was the best predictor of kindergartener's reading achievement. Print awareness and letter naming skills, as explained by Foulin (2005) also has a strong connection to students spelling and word recognition, which contributes to reading achievement over the years.

A vital component of emergent literacy is the recognition that the environment and social and cultural interactions play an important role in student's literacy development (Rhode, 2015). Emergent literacy is acquired within the context of culture, community, and social interactions with others and it is imperative that children are provided with ample opportunities to interact with literacy episodes that support rich

experiences such as story book reading, singing, and oral story telling (Rhode, 2015). The seminal work of Hart and Risley (1995) demonstrates the effects of environment on emergent literacy skills. In a longitudinal study, Hart and Risley (1995) studied 42 families from different socio-economic classes and found that the language development and learning of children of well-educated families was drastically higher than those of families on welfare. Hart and Risley (1995) concluded their study with the notion that from the age of one-to-three, there is a window of opportunity, however, that educational intervention efforts in disadvantaged children can help boost performance in emergent literacy.

Music and Learning

Music is a constant force that enriches our lives and increases our knowledge of the world around us (Cooper, 2010). The idea of using music to enhance learning and reading has been researched and studied for some time now (Biggs, Homan, Dedrick, & Rasinski, 2008; Fisher, 2001; Harp, 1988). Recent research connects music and learning with brain research and explores how the use of music increases children's brain activity. Shelly Cooper (2000) explains that the modern technology of intrauterine photography and brain imaging of infants shows evidence that songs can "light up the brain" (p. 27). Robinson (2006) explains that "the newborn has a super active brain and is primed to learn" (p. 55). Cooper's (2010) research explains that the foundational structures of reading and singing provide young children with successful pathways to increase language skills, memory, and promote emerging literacy. Cooper (2010) encourages educators to build upon children's primed brain to "enhance children's learning and

enjoyment by engaging students in a variety of songs and stories within their daily activities" (p. 27).

Mary Ann Davies (2000) offers additional brain research that explains when the two hemispheres in the brain work together, optimal learning takes place. Children are naturally drawn to the rhythm and beat of music. Davies (2000) explains that rhythm captures attention and stimulates interest. When this happens, emotions are stimulated, attention is focused, motivation is heightened and the two hemispheres of the brain begin to work together. Davies (2000) explains that music alters brain waves, "making the brain more receptive to learning" (p. 148). Music helps to gain attention, interest, and meaning which are crucial elements in shaping the strong neural connections that "enable us to retrieve and recall information later" (Davies, 2000, p. 150).

Many studies have shown the positive impact that incorporating music into classroom instruction can have on students' learning (Anvari, Trainor, Woodside, and Levy, 2002; Ehri, Nunes, Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Shanahan, 2001; Fisher, 2001; Gromko, 2005; Register, 2004). Fisher (2001) examined the use of music in early literacy learning with eighty Spanish students in kindergarten and first grade. The study included two teachers that incorporated the use of music in their classrooms and two teachers that did not. Over the course of two years, Fisher (2001) observed the effects that music had on student achievement when used during morning opening, working with words, and listening stations. The literacy data obtained at the end of two years suggested that music had a positive impact on oral language and reading scores of the students who were exposed to singing in the classroom. When incorporating music

while working with words, the teachers involved in the study observed positive gains from their students than those in the classrooms that did not incorporate music.

When discussing early literacy learning, phonemic awareness plays a significant role in emergent literacy and is one of the best predictors in determining how well a student will learn to read (Ehri, Nunes, Willows, Schuster, Yaghoub-Zadeh, & Shanahan, 2001). Gromko (2005) conducted a study that determined whether the use of music and song played a role in the development of young children's phonemic awareness. Gromko (2005) studied four kindergarten classrooms that were taught using advanced music methods and one kindergarten class that served as a control group. It was concluded that the kindergarten students who received four months of music instruction showed significantly greater gains in phonemic awareness than those who did not receive music instruction. In addition, Anvari, Trainor, Woodside, and Levy (2002) found significant correlations between music, phonological awareness and reading development of four and five-year-old children. Susan Hallam (2010) suggests that the role of music in facilitating language skills contributes to the development of these reading skills.

Register (2004) also studied the effects of music on the emergent literacy of young children. The purpose of her study was to examine the effects of a music therapy program designed to teach reading skills versus an educational children's television show. Register (2004) studied 86 kindergarten students in Northwest Florida. The subjects were assigned to one of four treatment conditions, one of which was a music-only treatment group. Growth in literacy skills were measured from a pre- and post-test using the DIBELS and three subtests of the Test of Early Reading Ability. Register's (2004) research shows that there are parallel skills in music and reading that include

phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sight identification, orthographic awareness, and fluency. The findings of Register's (2004) study show a significant gain in emergent literacy skills of the music only treatment group than those of the other treatment groups.

The incorporation of music in early literacy learning has shown great gains in emergent literacy achievement over the years. The literature also shows that music can impact school readiness and socioemotional skills. Shulamit Ritblatt, Sascha Longstretch, Audrey Hokoda, Bobbi-Nicole Cannon, and Joanna Weston (2013) conducted a study to examine the effects of a school-readiness music program on preschool children's socioemotional readiness to transition into kindergarten. The language, learning, and self-help skills of one hundred and two preschool children were studied over the course of two semesters. The researchers found that a music-based program was successful in promoting positive socioemotional skills that strengthened the skills needed for children to be successful and ready to learn (Ritblatt, et al., 2013).

Movement and Learning

Like music, movement is another force that enriches our lives and helps us to learn about the world around us. When discussing the effects that movement has on early learning, the research suggests that movement can positively affect children's learning. Chandler and Tricot (2015) wrote about the brain connections between brain and body and discusses how learning processes and body movements are "inextricably bound" (p. 365). Their research demonstrates the positive correlation between part-body movements, such as subtle gestures, on cognition and learning as well as whole-body movements, such as physical activity or exercise, on cognition and learning (Chandler &

Tricot, 2015). When subtle gestures are used to complete cognitive tasks, visual and motor processors in the brain activate alongside the semantic codes in the brain (Chandler &Tricot, 2015). When students use gestures in response to information, as well as see and hear the information, memory cues can help to activate working memory. Additionally, when students engage in whole-body movements, such as exercise, Chandler and Tricot (2015) explain that physical activity causes physiological changes that increase blood supply that supports memory and cognitive learning.

Mavilidi, Okely, Chandler, and Pass (2015) conducted an empirical study that investigated the learning benefits of gestures and exercise on preschool Australian children learning a new language. The students were asked to learn fourteen new Italian words over a four-week timeline and were presented these words using gestures and exercise. Mavilidi et al. (2015) found positive learning benefits by engaging in physical exercise and gestures. The findings supported using physical exercise integrated into learning tasks as well as the positive effect of gesturing in the acquisition of Italian words.

Toumpaniari, Loyens, Mavilidi, and Paas (2008) addressed the positive effects of gesturing and physical exercise on preschool-aged children in their study. Toumpaniari et al. (2015) investigated the combined effects of both physical exercise and gesturing on learning a list of animals alongside a control group over a four-week period of time. The findings show that combining gesturing and physical body movement was a powerful learning tool and concluded with the idea that there is a considerable benefit to employing part-or whole-body approached to learning in the earliest years of life (Toumpaniari et al., 2015).

Evidence supports the use of movement, including gestures and exercise, as a means to enhance learning experiences and create opportunities for optimal learning. The evidence accrued from research conducted over the past few years suggests that exercise and gestures do have a positive impact of students' memory, mental processing skills, and cognition (Tomporowski, Davis, Miller, Naglieri, 2008). Not only does movement impact students cognitive skills, Cathie Summerford (2009) dedicated a whole book to the ways in which movement increased learning and states three critical findings: "Movement anchors learning through the body. Movement energizes and integrates the body and brain for optimal learning. Movement makes learning fun" (p. 7).

Multisensory Learning

Heidi Butkus is a California Reading Specialist and has dedicated the past several years to researching the impact that song and movement has on children's learning of sight words. From the positive results from her research, Butkus (2017) created and published a curriculum that centers learning sight words around the notion that singing and movement increases sight word acquisition. Butkus's (2017) research demonstrates a relationship between using song and movement during instruction to multisensory education. Multisensory teaching is the engagement of the whole body and five senses (Butkus, 2017). Butkus' (2017) research shows that in order to get the best learning outcomes, children need to simultaneously use as many of their senses as they can. To activate multiple pathways in the brain, children should learn by doing, saying, seeing, and hearing all at the same time (Butkus, 2017).

Walton (2014) conducted a study to determine the impact that the combination of singing and movement had on pre-reading skills and word reading with kindergarten

students. Walton (2014) randomly assigned kindergarten classrooms to a song group that used choral singing and movement to teach phonological skills, letter-sounds, and word reading or to a control group where students received their regular language and literacy programs for equal amount of time. Findings from this study showed that the students in the songs and movement group had significant increased letter-sounds, medial phoneme identity and word reading compared to those in the control group. Walton (2014) stated that "strong evidence was found to support the claim that learning to read can be enhanced by using songs and movement to teach children to read" (p. 68). Walton (2014) suggests that using music and movement to teach literacy skills might facilitate long-term memory processes that assist children in the task of learning to read.

Joshi, Dahlgren, and Boulware-Gooden (2002) also presented a study that examined the efficiency of a multi-sensory teaching approach to improve reading skills of first grade students. Their study included a control group that used a basal reader and a treatment group that used the Orton-Gillingham-based Alphabetic Phonics Method, a multisensory approach to reading instruction. The findings of the study showed great gains in the treatment groups phonological awareness, decoding, and reading comprehension while the control group only increased their reading comprehension skills (Joshi et al., 2002).

Phillips and Feng (2012) also conducted research to determine the effects of sight word reading using flashcards and multisensory approaches with kindergarten students. Their research was presented at the Annual Conference of Georgia Educational Research Association in Savannah, Georgia. Phillips and Feng (2012) studied the effects on students' sight word acquisition of ten Dolch sight words. When taught five of the

words, the flashcard method was used and the participants discussed the word as well as used it in a sentence. Students repeated this process until all participants read the words correctly. When introduced to the other five Dolch sight words, students engaged in a multisensory approach that included visual, kinesthetic-tactile movements, and auditory and mnemonic skills. Students were asked to skywrite, spell, draw, and write while using textured surfaces. At the conclusion of the study, Phillips and Feng (2012) found that the multisensory approach to sight word recognition was very successful and found significant gains in favor of the approach.

The task of reading can be a very monumental task for young learners, especially at an age where children have a natural desire to move and explore the world. The research shows the positive impact music and movement can have on learning. The idea of multisensory teaching gives educators a way to draw on children's natural desires and have children see, say, hear, and act out concepts in a fun and engaging way. This approach to learning optimizes achievement for our youngest learners.

The Performative

Lawrence Sipe's (2008) seminal work on young children's responses to picture books provides a lens in which educators can best understand how children use different modalities when learning in the classroom. In his study of first and second grade students, Sipe (2008) developed five types of responses that demonstrated literacy understanding in young learners. Of these five response types, Sipe (2008) describes "performative" responses as one style of responding that shows that children are "manipulating the story for their own creative purposes" (p.183). Adomat (2010) describes performative responses as using different modalities, such as, gesture, mime,

vocal intonation, characterization, and dramatization. Sipe (2008) explains that performative responses allow children to use their imagination to express and create meaning in modalities that suit their leaning styles. Using different modalities through performative responses, Adomat (2010) explains, "helps children to forge textual, personal, and social meanings" to deepen understanding during learning episodes (p. 208).

Adomat (2010) conducted a qualitative study that explored how young readers build literacy understanding through performative responses. Adomat (2010) focused on the performative responses of one second grade struggling reader and studied how the student built literacy understanding through them. Adomat (2010) concluded that performative responses helped the struggling reader immerse herself in the story world to deepen understanding of the literacy skills being taught. Adomat (2010) found that performative responses encouraged her student to draw upon social interactions and created a forum where her student was able to actively contribute to the construction of meaning. Adomat (2010) concludes her study by encouraging teachers to "build on the dramatic propensities that some children in their classes exhibit by creating opportunities for dramatic interactions with texts" (p. 219).

Sipe (2008) and Adomat's (2010) qualitative studies open a dialogue about how performative responses create a new and imaginative world for understanding stories and how our youngest learners engage in meaning making. Although there is a need for further studies, Sipe (2008) and Admoat's (2010) studies "shed light on how children learn through modalities that enhance and go beyond discussion" (p. 211). Therefore, the

use of performative responses such as mime, gesture, movement, vocal intonations, and dramatizations, as discussed in these studies, can enhance and optimize literacy learning.

Engagement

The research shows a positive correlation between music and movement to young children's learning, specifically in regard to emergent literacy achievement. When delving deep into the literature, an underlying theme of student engagement emerges throughout studies that discuss how the use of music impacts emergent literacy. Many studies discuss the positive gain in student achievement when music and movement are incorporated into instruction, but the studies also find that with the incorporation of music and movement, student engagement increases as well (Fisher, 2001; Register, 2004; Ritblatt et al. 2003). Music and movement are powerful tools that can be used to enhance literacy development and engagement to build strong foundational skills. Harp (1988) describes how music and reading go together and suggests that singing draws on children's natural understanding and engages children in fulfilling experiences.

> Music and reading go together because singing is a celebration of language. Children's language naturally has rhythm and melody. Children bring this natural "music" language with them to the task of learning to read, and so using singing to teach reading draws on this natural understanding. (Harp, 1988, p. 454).

While studying the impact that music had on emergent literacy skills, Fisher (2001) concluded positive gains in the literacy achievement of eighty Spanish kindergarten students. Fisher (2001) discusses the positive gains his students made but one of the most significant findings from his study was the increase in student engagement and motivation to learn. Of the four classrooms studied, Fisher (2001)

stated, “the two classes in which music was used consistently had a low buzz of student talk, general excitement about school on the part of the students, and students were often observed humming along as they worked” (p. 47).

Register’s (2004) study also shows a correlation between music and learning to student engagement. When studying the effects of a music therapy program, Register (2004) found an increase in literacy skills of the students involved in the music-only treatment group than those who were not. Register suggests, however, that one of the most valuable findings was the increase in student engagement. When analyzing teacher feedback, an analysis of a poststudy questionnaire indicated that music increased students’ on-task behavior and that “the children thoroughly enjoyed the music and eagerness to participate increased” (p. 24).

When studying the effects that music had on school readiness skills of preschoolers, Ritblatt et al. (2013) found that a music-based program increased the students’ enthusiasm and engagement in learning new skills and stated that “encouraging music helps one’s ability to function and learn” (p. 259). These findings are important when discussing how to optimize learning for emergent readers because children who get off to a good start in kindergarten “tend to maintain that advantage as they progress through school” (Ritblatt et al., 2003, p. 258).

When incorporating movement into instruction, Robinson (2002) explains that movement and music are joyful for children and therefore can be effective tools to teach children. Summerford’s (2009) research discusses how movement can optimize learning because movement makes learning fun and entices students to participate in activities. Movement grabs the attention of students who may be in class physically but not

mentally and also energizes students by encouraging them to be actively involved in the learning process (Summerford, 2009). Summerford (2009) explains that "if students are not interested in their learning, they shut down and turn off learning" (p. 8). Therefore, movement can be a motivational tool to capture attention and increase learning.

Conclusion

Overall, the current review of literature evaluated how song and movement positively impacts emergent literacy skills and optimizes engagement and learning for young learners. The use of music and movement increases student engagement and motivation and provides literacy episodes that appeal to different learning styles and intelligences. The combination of music and movement activates pathways in the brain to increase memory and strengthen literacy skills.

The goal of this study is to discover the benefits of using song and movement in the kindergarten classroom to assist in the acquisition of sight words. Heidi Butkus (2017) explains that when boosting memory power, 70%-100% of what students hear, see, say, and do is retained. By obtaining the information found in this literature review, it is hoped that educators will gain a better understanding of methods to further increase sight word acquisition and understand how multisensory teaching and the infusion of song and movement can positively impact kindergarten students.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The focus of this study is to understand how the use of music and movement impact kindergarten sight word acquisition. Chapter three describes this study as a naturalistic qualitative study and discusses the methodology, design, and context of the study.

Context

Community. Greenville Elementary School is located in New Jersey and is one of eleven schools in a South Jersey School District. Greenville Township is located in Somers County and is a leader for achievement in local government, education, and recreation. Greenville Township is 21.283 square miles and is the largest municipality located in Somers County. Greenville Township is located only eight miles from Philadelphia and twenty miles from Wilmington, Delaware.

According to the 2010 Census, Greenville Township has a population of 48,500 residents with an average household income of $79,017. The racial makeup of the town's population is predominately white. As taken by the 2010 Census, 42,588 residents are Caucasian, 2,825 are African American, 1,086 are Asian, 1,774 are Hispanic or Latino, 52 are Native American and 1,249 are other races.

The median age of residents living in Greenville Township is 40.6 years of age. 26.7 % of the population are under the age of 18. 16.5 % of the population is between 20 and 35 years of age, 22% of the population is between 35 and 50 years of age, 21.2 % of

the population is between 50 and 65 years of age and the remainder of the population is 65 years of age or older.

The average family size is 3.23 with the majority of households containing families. 77% of households contain families with 34% containing children under the age of 18. 16 % of the households are single family households with children living either with the mother or father of the household.

School. Greenville Elementary School is home to the district's preschool and kindergarten students. Greenville Elementary School houses 152 pre-school children and 400 kindergarten students for a total of 552 students. 46% of the student population are female and 55% of the student population are male. The racial make-up of the school is 78.8% Caucasian, 6.7% African American, 5.3% Asian, 5.1% Hispanic, and 4.2% other. 100% of students primarily speak English in their home. Of the 552 students, 37% of the students are considered students with disabilities, 22% are considered economically disadvantaged, and 2% are English Language Learners.

Greenville Elementary School includes several programs that provide the youngest learners of the district opportunities to discover the joy of learning. Greenville Elementary School includes a pre-school disabled program as well as a kindergarten program. Preschool children in need of special services attend Greenville Elementary School's half day preschool program four days a week. During their school day, students engage in speech therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. Full day preschool programming is also offered to children with autism. Greenville Elementary School's kindergarten program is a full day program that implements curriculum aligned with the New Jersey Learning Standards. Instruction is provided through whole-group and small-

group differentiated instruction by the classroom teacher and reading specialists. Special education services are available as needed and included an in-class support model known as a collaborative model.

Classroom. Room 7 is a full day kindergarten classroom consisting of eighteen kindergarten students. The classroom contains one regular education teacher whom is present the entire school day. The school reading specialist and the reading specialist's assistant are present for forty minutes a day to support in reading and/or writing instruction. The collaborative teacher also provides support through a push-in model for a half hour, twice a week.

Students. The class consists of eleven boys and eight girls. The age range of the students varied at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. Four of the students were five years of age and turned six years of age throughout the month of September. One of the students was four years of age at the start of the school year and turned five years of age on October 3, 2017. The remainder of the class started the school year at five years of age. One hundred percent of the students are of the Caucasian race and one hundred percent of the students speak English as their primary language. Sixteen of the students live in a single-family household with both parents and two students live between homes with divorced parents. None of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The students entered kindergarten ranging in academic abilities. On average the students were able to recognize thirty-nine out of fifty-two upper and lowercase letters, produce nine out of twenty-six letter sounds, and identify three out of twenty-seven sight words. Six students were not able to produce any letter sounds and two students were able to produce all twenty-six letter sounds. Six students were not able to identify any

sight words and two students were able to identify all twenty-seven sight words. Out of a score of twenty possible points on the school's phonemic awareness benchmark test, the average score was an eleven with two students scoring zero and two students scoring twenty points. A DRA-2 was also administered to all eighteen students. Ten students are reading at a Level 1, five students are reading at a Level 2, one student is reading at a Level 3 and two students are reading at a Level 6. Four students hold an IEP for speech and language therapy and are pulled twice a week for a half hour to strengthen articulation errors.

Based on the beginning of the year benchmark data, four students qualified for basic skills instruction and are receiving small group instruction and intervention for twenty minutes a day by either the reading specialist or collaborative teacher. Joey, Lily, Isabella, and Peter have never been to preschool before and entered kindergarten with very little literacy knowledge. All four students scored a 0 on their phonemic awareness, letter/sound recognition and sight word recognition benchmark assessments. Joey and Isabella love school and are very enthusiastic about learning. They both work hard every day and never let the struggle of learning stop them from trying. Peter and Lily, however, frustrate very easily and give up often when faced with a task that is difficult for them. Peter is very shy, fights his mom to get on the bus in the morning, and often expresses his dislike for school.

Table 1

Focus Group Beginning of the Year Data

Student Name	Age	Attended Preschool?	Letter/Sound Knowledge	Phonemic Awareness Knowledge	Sight Word Knowledge
Joey	4	No	0 out of 26	0 out of 20	0 out of 27
Lily	5	No	0 out of 26	0 out of 20	0 out of 27
Peter	5	No	0 out of 26	0 out of 20	0 out of 27
Isabella	4	No	0 out of 26	0 out of 20	0 out of 27

Overall, the students are enthusiastic about learning and being in school. The makeup of the class is boy heavy, all of whom are very energetic. The majority of the boys in the class have low executive functioning skills which results in impulsiveness and inattentiveness. Multiple opportunities are provided throughout the day to move around to release their jitters.

Research Design and Methodology

The framework for this study is built upon the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research is used by teacher researchers when trying to solve problems in the natural setting of their own classrooms (Shangoury & Power, 2012). When conducting research using the framework of qualitative research, teacher researchers observe students closely, analyze their needs, and adjust their curriculum to fit the needs of all students (Shangoury & Power, 2012). This type of research allows teachers to question and reflect on their own teaching practices and conduct research from natural questions that "emerge from the day to day practice and from discrepancies between what is intended and what occurs (Cochran & Lytle, 2009, p. 42).

Shangoury and Power (2012) state that "it's a natural part of being human to look at the world around us and wonder" (p. 19). Teachers often observe their students and wonder about the best way to meet the needs of all their students. At its best, this act of wondering leads to teacher research in hopes to improve instruction and optimize learning. By collecting and analyzing data, teachers strengthen their teaching practices and "become a more complete teacher" by creating the "best possible learning environment for students" (Shangoury & Power, 2012, p. 3). The primary purpose for teacher research is to understand learning from students' perspectives and improve teaching practice in specific and concrete ways (Shangoury & Power, 2012). With this being said, Shangoury and Power (2012) state, "teacher research is a natural extension of good teaching" (p. 3).

Understanding that teacher research and inquiry is valuable in good teaching, the qualitative research paradigm is best suited for the framework of this study.

Procedure of the Study

Following the framework of qualitative research, this study follows the natural progression of teacher research and analyzes the impact that song and movement has on kindergartener's sight word acquisition. At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, kindergarten students entered my classroom ranging from ages four to five years of age with varying literacy knowledge and abilities. Questions arose regarding my instructional decisions when it was observed that my students were very active and the need to move often was impacting learning. I began to wonder and reflect on my teaching and instructional episodes and noticed behaviors, such as the struggle to recognize sight words and a lack of motivation to learn and practice sight words

throughout the school day. These observations in the classroom lead to questions about how to optimize sight word instruction for my energetic learners. These questions then lead me to wonder how the use of music and movement would impact kindergarteners sight word acquisition and if engagement and motivation would increase. A research plan was conducted, and a qualitative inquiry study began in my classroom.

At the start of my study, each student was assessed using a pre-sight word assessment. The sight word assessment contained twenty Dolch sight words. Each student was tested individually to determine a baseline for sight word knowledge. Students were shown each word for one second to assess sight word automaticity as well as recognition. Students were also asked to complete a student survey that indicated their feelings about the incorporation of music and movement in learning and if they felt that music and movement assisted in their learning, engagement, and memorization at school.

Over the course of four weeks, students were introduced to twenty total words: like, to, my, is, me, she, he, they, and, are, one, you, the, have, was, for, of, or, we, be. Five words were introduced per week. When introducing a word, students saw the word, learned a movement for the word, as well as learned a song for the word. For example, when teaching the word, *he*, students were shown the word on the white board, shown the gesture of placing their finger above their lip to represent a mustache, and taught a song to the tune of "Mary had a Little Lamb"*:*

h-e spells the small word he,

small word he,

small word he,

h-e spells the small word he,

Yes, *h-e* means a boy.

Various songs and movements were used from Heidi's Songs (2004) to introduce sight words. The Heidi's Songs DVD collection was developed by Heidi Butkus, a kindergarten teacher from California. Butkus (2017) developed a sight word curriculum that allows students to use multiple modalities to optimize sight word instruction. Butkus' (2017) DVD collection teaches students sight words using songs and movements to a catchy rhythm or tune and provides an opportunity for students to say it, hear it, see it and do it all at the same time. Teacher created songs and movements were also used for words that were not included in the Heidi's Songs (2004) curriculum. The songs and movements were used throughout the day when sight words were encountered during reader and writer's workshop.

During the last week of the study, the students were assessed using the post sight word assessment and student survey. These assessments helped to draw conclusions about how the use of song and movement impacted sight word automaticity and recognition as well as motivation and engagement.

Data Sources

Shangoury and Power (2012) explain that as teacher researchers, we are faced with the fulfilling task of harvesting the data that surrounds us in our classrooms and connecting it to practices that are already part of our teaching lives. For this study, a variety of qualitative inquiry strategies were used to collect data in a systematic way. Using multiple data sources and strategies allowed for a careful and effective analysis of how the use of song and movement impacted kindergartener's sight word acquisition.

To begin, at the start of the study, a sight word pre-assessment was given to all eighteen kindergarten students. The assessment was composed of 20 Dolch sight words that are part of the *Wilson Fundations* phonics program. The sight words were typed onto flashcards in bold print. Each student was called back to the teacher's desk and flashed each one of the twenty cards for one second. A check mark was placed next to each of the words if the student read the word correctly and left blank if the student did not read the word correctly. Incorrect student responses were noted for data analysis. At the conclusion of the study, the same sight word assessment was given to assess student's ability to recognize all twenty sight words.

A student motivation and engagement survey was also administered at the beginning of the study. The student survey was used to gain information about the students' attitudes towards singing and movement in the classroom. The survey was administered to five students at a time at a small group reading table. Students were read each one of seven statements and asked to color a happy face, okay face, or sad face to indicate how they felt in response to each statement. The questions asked were:

1. Songs help me remember things at school.
2. Movement helps me remember things at school.
3. Singing is not helpful when I learn.
4. Movement is not helpful when I learn.
5. I sing the songs I learn at school.
6. I use movements to remember what my teacher taught me.
7. I like to sing and move at school.

The information obtained from this survey was used to give the researcher background information regarding the student's attitudes towards song and movement. At the conclusion of the study, the same student survey was administered to all eighteen of the students to collect data on the changes in attitudes towards song and movement from the start to the finish of the study.

As a third source of data collection, a teacher research journal was kept on a daily basis. The teacher research journal assisted in collecting detailed notes on observations, student behaviors, student talk, and student quotes that helped to answer the research question, *how does the use of song and movement impact kindergartener's sight word acquisition?* Shangoury and Power (2012) explain that taking notes is one of the main tools in a teacher researcher's repertoire and the ability to look back on written notes and elaborate on them can assist in translating experiences into larger meanings that may lead to break through findings. Observations and notes were kept throughout the day on legal pads and post-it notes. At the end of each school day, the observations and notes were carefully analyzed and a reflection on what was taught, how the students reacted, and the student outcomes was written in narrative form in a teacher research journal.

Data Analysis

That data collected during this study was used to draw conclusions on the impact that songs and movement had on kindergartener's sight word acquisition. Shangoury and Power (2012) explain that when analyzing data, patterns begin to emerge and teacher researchers can make connections and concentrations to help draw precise conclusions about their study. Data from the pre- and post-sight word assessment was collected and analyzed using a graph. Graphing the data provided a concise and pictorial summary of

the sight word growth of each kindergarten student over the four-week period. Based on the data collected, conclusions were drawn on how the use of song and movement impacted automatic word recognition.

Data from the pre-and -post student survey was collected, scored, and graphed to analyze changes in attitudes towards using song and movement in the classroom. A score of one was given to every sad face, a score of two was given to every okay face, and a score of three was given to every happy face. A total score was provided for each student survey. The lower the score, the lower the student's attitude towards singing and moving in the classroom. A visual representation was made using a graph to chart positive or negative changes in attitudes towards using song and movement as an instructional tool in learning sight words and careful analysis was made based off the patterns that were established.

Finally, a teacher research journal was inductively analyzed to find trends in teaching episodes, student behaviors, student talk, and student achievement when learning sight words through the use of song and movement. Shangoury and Power (2012) suggest coding as an effective way to organize and understand the trends that emerge in narrative forms of data collection. When analyzing entries made in the teacher research journal, trends in motivation, engagement, and automaticity began to arise. Codes for motivation, engagement, and automaticity were established and written on the margins of the teacher research journal entries. These codes helped to organize, analyze, and triangulate the data to best understand how the use of song and movement impacted kindergarten sight word acquisition in the areas of motivation, engagement, and automaticity.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

Shangoury and Power (2012) state, "remembering the joy of discovery is one of the hidden gifts of teacher research, a chance to delight in (and be inspired by) patterns as they emerge" (p. 135). During the course of this four-week study, data was collected from a variety of sources as I worked through the question: how does the use of song and movement impact kindergarteners' sight word acquisition? Data was collected using sources that involved a pre-and post-sight word assessment, pre-and post-motivation and engagement survey, as well as a qualitative teacher journal. Careful analysis of the data collected gave me an opportunity to delight in the categories that emerged. The categories that emerged were triangulated across data sources to ensure the categories that emerged were true, valid, and certain (Guion, 2002). Guion (2002) explains that "validity in qualitative research, relates to whether the findings of your study are true and certain. True in the sense of your findings accurately reflecting the real situation. Certain in the sense of your findings being backed by evidence" (p. 1).

Chapter four discusses the findings of my study in a narrative report with the use of graphs and charts for a logical analysis. A look across all data sources suggest findings that emerged in three distinct categories of impact while using song and movement to teach sight words in a kindergarten classroom. The three categories that emerged were; 1. Increase in sight word identification and automaticity, 2. Increase in motivation and engagement while learning sight words, and 3. Song and movement as a scaffold for struggling learners.

Revisiting the Study

Eighteen kindergarten students were invited to participate in this teacher inquiry study investigating how the use of song and movement impacts kindergarteners' sight word acquisition. All eighteen students, along with their parents, consented to participate. Students were given a pre-sight word assessment and a pre-motivation and engagement student survey to establish a baseline for sight word knowledge and to establish an understanding of students' attitudes towards using song and movement in the classroom as an instructional tool. Over the course of four weeks, students were taught twenty sight words using songs and movements. The songs and movements were used throughout the day during reader's and writer's workshop to help identify words as well as write words. A teacher research journal was also kept on a daily basis. The teacher research journal assisted in collecting detailed notes on observations, student behaviors, student talk, and student quotes that helped to answer the research question. At the end of the study, a post-sight word assessment and post-motivation and engagement student survey were administered once more. Analysis of the data collected lead to findings that emerged into the three categories that are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Increase in Sight Word Identification and Automaticity

The first category that emerged from the collected data was an increase in sight word identification and automaticity among all the kindergarten students who participated in the study. A pre-sight word assessment was given to each student to establish a baseline for sight word identification. Students were shown a flashcard with each sight word written in bold ink for one second. After one second, the card was taken away and a new sight word card was shown. Students' ability to identify the word within

one second was indicated using a check mark on the data collection form. The results from the pre-sight word assessment indicated that two students were able to identify all twenty sight words and the remainder of the class able to identify zero to three sight words before the start of the study. Over the course of four weeks, twenty sight words were taught to the students using songs and movements as instructional tools. At the conclusion of the study, a post-sight word assessment was administered to determine if the use of song and movement assisted in increasing sight word knowledge. The following two graphs depict student gains in sight word identification over the course of this study.

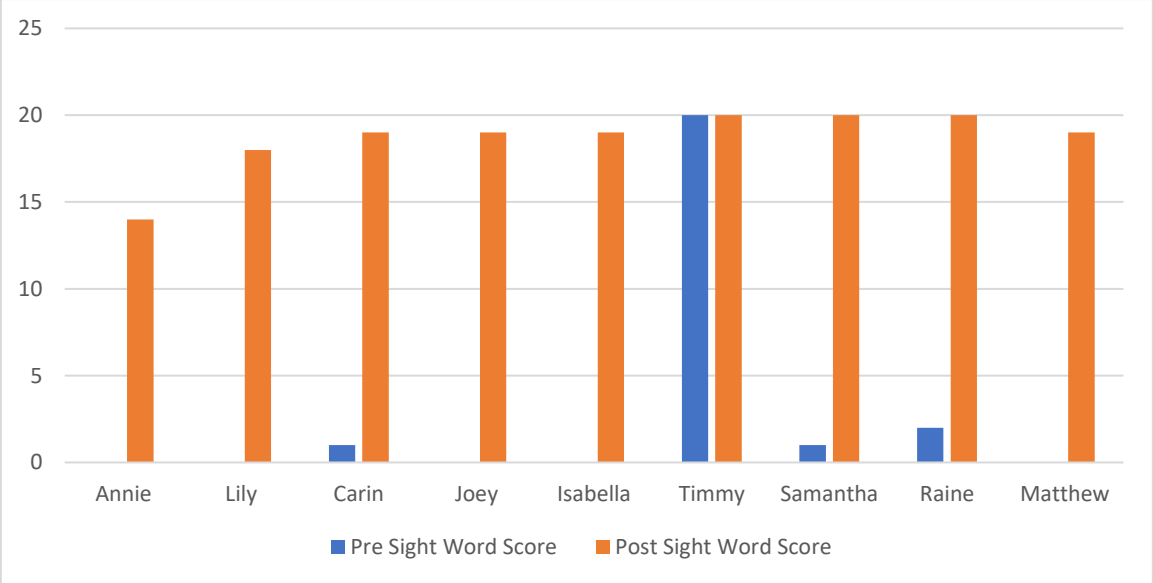

Figure 1. Student Pre-and Post-Sight Word Assessment Results for Students 1-9

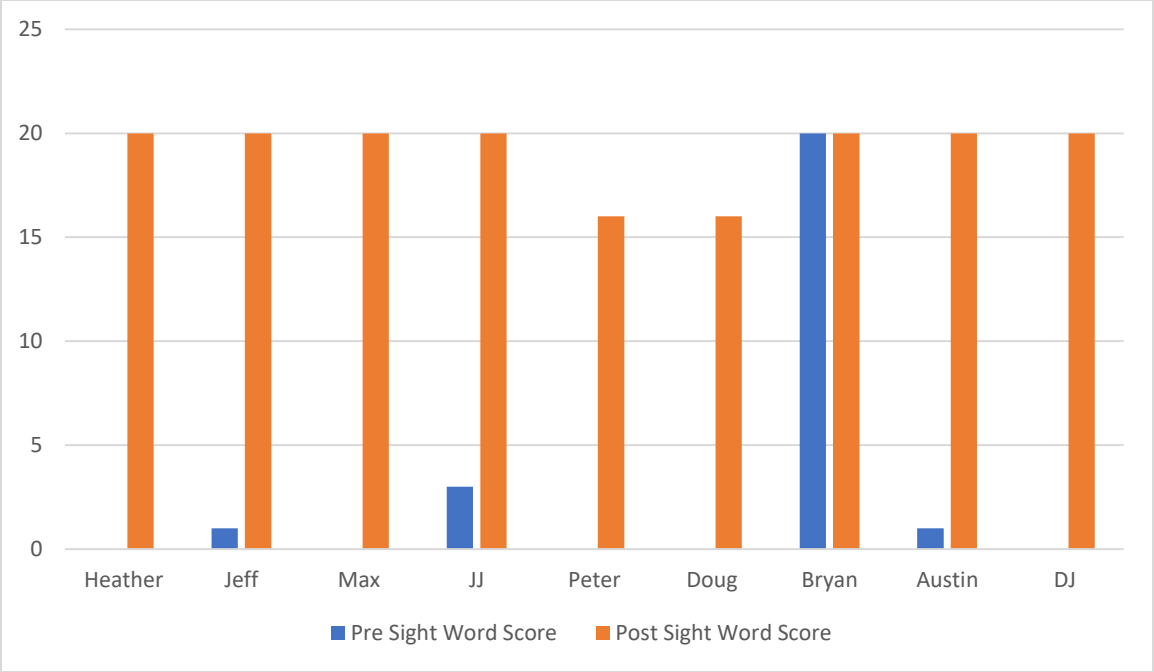

Figure 2. Student Pre-and Post-Sight Word Assessment Results for Students 10-18

The results from the post-sight word assessment indicate that all students showed significant gains in sight word identification at the conclusion of the study. A total of ten students identified 100% of the words taught during a four-week time period within one second, demonstrating automaticity while reading sight words. The eight remaining students demonstrated an ability to read 80% or more of the words taught within one second. The growth between the pre-and post-assessments show an increase in all students' sight word identification and automaticity.

Along with the pre-and post-assessments, gains in sight word identification and automaticity were documented in my teacher journal from collected observations, student quotes and student behaviors. Various entries discussed students' ability to read words with ease during reader's workshop and small group reading activities. Students were observed identifying words quickly in leveled readers and telling their friends that they

found their sight words (journal entry October 27, 2017; journal entry November 1, 2017; journal entry November 13, 2017). In one journal entry, I wrote, "During guided reading today, Max sat down at the table and immediately began looking for all the sight words he knew. He pointed and read the words quickly while making sure his friends knew he was finding them. Max pointed to the word *like* and said, "Hey! It is the word *like.* And hey! Here is the word *to.* I can find them fast*."* I sat back and watched Max read the words. When Austin pointed to the word *is* and asked Max what word it was, Max quickly replied with the correct answer while singing the sight word song and providing the movement for the word *is."* (journal entry November 14, 2017). During this time spent with Max at the guided reading table, I was able to witness his ability to transfer what he knew about sight words in isolation to an understanding of identifying sight words in context, all which are signs of being secure in identifying sight words. When looking at Max's pre-sight word assessment, Max was unable to identify any sight words at the beginning of the study. With this in mind, Max's ability to read sight words from a leveled text quickly and with ease, indicates a positive impact in regard to using songs and movement as tools to support sight word identification.

In another instance, my teacher journal documents a time during writer's workshop when sight word identification and automaticity proved to be a strength of many of my students. During this particular mini-lesson, I introduced the use of a word wall as a tool used by writers to assist in writing sight words. Each student was handed a word wall and we played a game of *I Spy.* I instructed the students to find the words as quickly as possible and point to it as soon as I told them what word I spied. In my teacher journal I wrote, "Today, while playing *I Spy* using our word walls, I was

completely blown away by how fast the students were able to identify the words on the word wall. The students were able to find the words within seconds of me telling them the word. I was even more impressed when the students began to sing the sight word songs and provide the movement as soon as I said a word. After each word was said, a quiet hum of singing was heard from the students as they sang the songs and gestured as they found the word" (journal entry November 16, 2017). It was also noted that while playing for a few minutes, Annie shouted out, "Hey, Mrs. Martin. This is easy! Can you give us a hard one?" (journal entry November 16, 2017). Annie's suggestion that this activity was too easy and the observation of the students' ability to find their sight words while singing sight words songs and moving suggests that the students automaticity in sight word identification increased since the start of the study.

The data collected across sources indicates an increase in sight word identification during this study. Student behaviors and student talk provide information as to how the use of song and movement impacted students' sight word identification. Students were observed identifying words quickly as well as discussing the ease at which identifying sight words became. All these findings suggest that the use of song and movement can have a positive impact on the sight word acquisition of kindergarten students.

Increase in Motivation and Engagement While Learning Sight Words

As the data collected was inductively analyzed, a second category emerged across data sources. Students demonstrated a significant increase in motivation and engagement while learning sight words through the use of song and movement. At the start of the study, students were given a motivation and engagement student survey that helped to establish a baseline for students' attitudes towards using songs and movement in the

classroom. The students responded to statements by coloring in a happy face, okay face, or sad face to statements about their like or dislike for using songs and movement in the classroom and whether or not songs and movement help them remember skills taught at school. The surveys were scored by assigning each sad face a score of zero, each okay face a score of two, and each happy face a score of three. The lowest score a student could receive was a score of seven indicating a poor attitude towards using song and movement in the classroom. The most possible points that could have been received was a score of twenty-one points, indicating a very positive attitude towards using song and movement in the classroom and an awareness that songs and movement help them to remember things at school.

The scores from the student survey given at the beginning of the study were spread out and ranged from seven to twenty-one. The majority of the students, however, fell somewhere in the middle with an uncertainty about how they felt about the use of song and movement in the class and whether or not songs and movement helped them remember skills taught at school. Table 2 provides a sampling of student responses.

Table 2

Student Responses to Statements on the Pre-Student Survey

Student Name	Songs help me remember things at school.	Movement helps me remember things at school.	I sing the songs I learn at school.	I use movements to remember what my teacher taught me.	I like to sing and move at school
Annie	😐	😐	😐	😐	😐
Lily	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹
Carin	😐	😐	😐	😐	😐
Samantha	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Timmy	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹
Bryan	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹

The sampling of student responses from Table 2 show the range of attitudes towards using song and movement in the classroom at the start of the study. When looking at these responses, Timmy and Bryan's responses depict a very poor attitude towards singing and moving during the school day. When participating in the survey, both students were very adamant about coloring the sad faces for each of the questions and even vocalized their dislike for singing and dancing. Bryan looked at me at the end of the survey and said, "I hate moving and dancing! Singing is for girls!" (journal entry October 24, 2017). Timmy also stated, "I never sing and dance. I like to just sit there and watch. I hate it" (journal entry October 24, 2017). The responses from both boys was of no shock to me because I have observed their dislike for singing and dancing many times during the school year. However, it was my hope that they soon would become motivated and engaged and grow to enjoy the use of song and movement when

learning. In my teacher journal I wrote, "Many students indicated a dislike or uncertainty for singing and dancing at school. These answers surprise me; however, I am very excited to see if attitudes change. I am hoping that students establish a joy for singing and moving and discover how song and movement can benefit their learning" (journal entry October 24, 2017).

As the study came to an end, the same survey was given to the students to document changes in attitudes. The results from the survey indicate a positive increase in students' attitudes towards using song and movement to learn sight words. The majority of the class scored the highest score possible on the survey, indicating a positive attitude towards the use of song and movement to learn sight words. Figure 3 and 4 reflect the scores of both the pre- and post-student survey for all eighteen kindergarten students, demonstrating a positive increase in attitude.

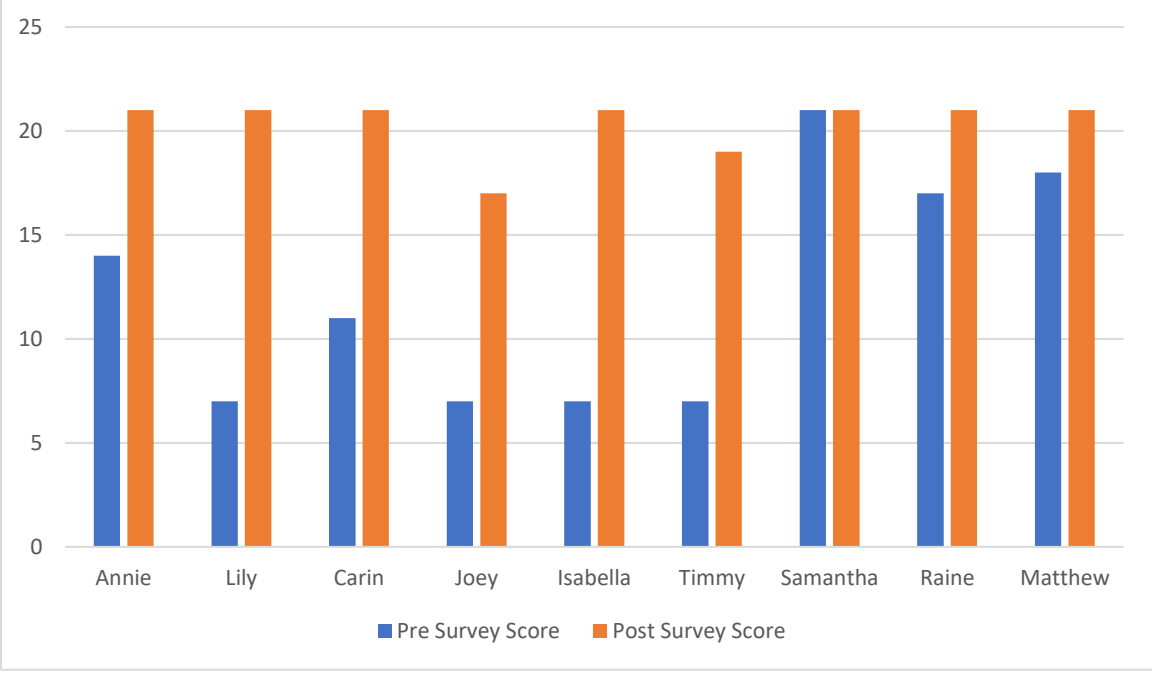

Figure 3. Pre-and Post-Student Motivation Survey Results for Students 1-9

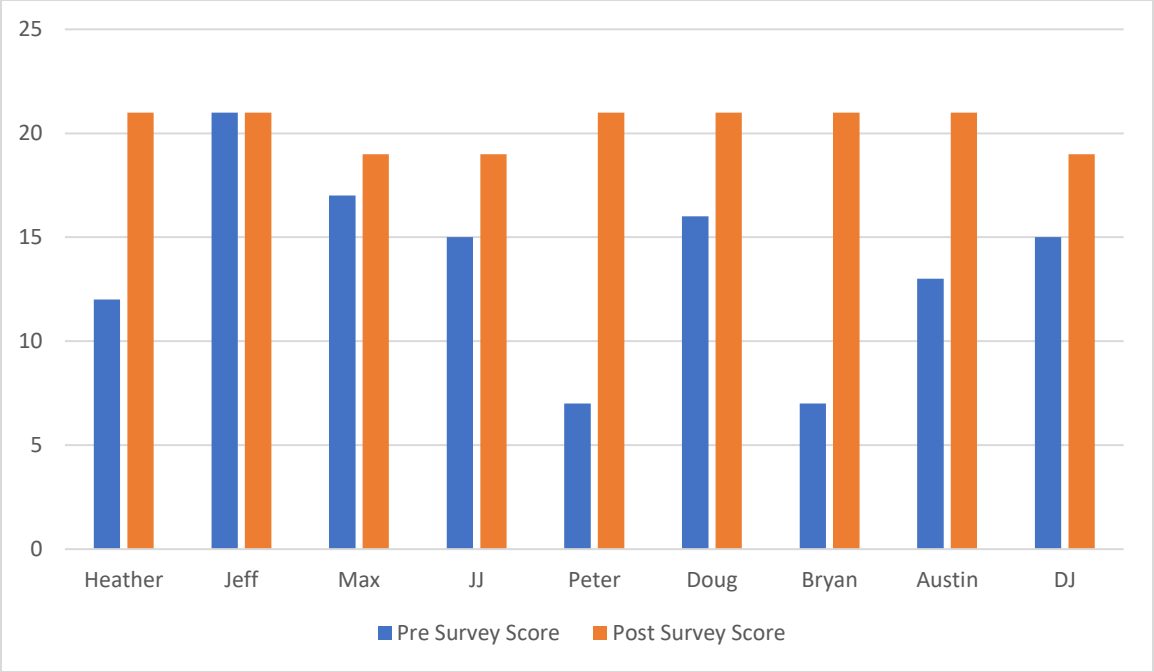

Figure 4. Pre-and Post-Student Motivation Survey Results for Students 10-18

The student survey was not the only data source that showed a positive increase in attitude, motivation, and engagement. When analyzing my teacher journal, observations, and student talk, motivation and engagement became a prominent category as the data was coded. Throughout the four weeks of the study, it was noted and recorded in many journal entries that students were highly engaged during sight word instruction and were motivated by the songs and movements during learning experiences. This is especially true when zooming in specifically on Bryan and Timmy, the two students with the lowest score on the student survey.

During the introduction of the words *to, like,* and *my,* I introduced the words by showing the words with magnetic letters. I read the word and sang the song for each word while providing the movement that correlated with the words. During this time, it was observed that my students were all engaged and smiling while singing and moving to

catchy rhythms and tunes (journal entry October 25, 2017). After singing the song for *like* and crossing our arms across our chest, Bryan said, "singing songs for words is so much fun! Can we do another one?" (journal entry October 25, 2017). The very next day, another observation was made about Bryan. During guided reading, the word *to* was in the book we were reading. Bryan saw the word *to* and began to sing the song. In my teacher journal, I wrote, "Bryan often gives me a hard time about completing work and strongly dislikes reading during small groups. I was very happy to observe him singing and pointing out the words in his book. When Bryan found the word *to* in his guided reading book and sang the song, he then went on to find the word *to* on every page in the book and sang the song and showed us the number two on his fingers every time he saw it. Bryan was smiling and engaged the whole time." (journal entry October 26, 2017).

In another instance, I observed a positive increase in Timmy's motivation and engagement during instruction. After noticing many students struggle to write the word *the* during writer's workshop, I called them all to the rug to teach them the word using a song and gesture. Before showing the students, Timmy, who has very little motivation for learning, turned to his friend and said, "I cannot wait to hear how this song goes!" In my teacher journal, I wrote, "I was absolutely floored by Timmy's comment. It has been very difficult to motivate him and engage him in any type of learning activity. When we sang the song for the word *the*, he was smiling, laughing, and engaged the whole time. It may be possible that using song and movement can be a motivational tool to engage Timmy during instruction" (journal entry November 2, 2017).

When looking at Bryan and Timmy's pre-student survey, it can be concluded that both students had a very poor attitude towards singing and moving at school. However,

their post student survey shows a tremendous leap towards an enjoyment for singing and moving while learning sight words. Their student behaviors and student talk also suggest an increase in motivation and engagement when the use of song and movement is used during sight word instruction.

Over the course of four weeks, it was observed numerous times that students would hum and sing their sight words songs throughout the day, even without prompting (journal entry October 27, 2017; journal entry October 30, 2017; journal entry November 1, 2017; journal entry November 6, 2017). Students wanted to sing their songs and a constant hum of catchy tunes filled the classroom. In one journal entry I wrote, "Today during our phonics block, the students played a game called *Whack a Word*. The students sit with a mat that has letters and with a foam hammer they spell sight words that pop up on the computer screen. When the first word popped up, JJ shouted out, "Mrs. Martin, can we sing the songs while we spell the words?" Of course, I told them yes and the whole class burst into singing. I was so happy to see hear this because they were having so much fun. Every student was spelling their words while singing with smiles on their faces." (journal entry November 7, 2017). Later on, during the same day, Samantha began singing the song for the word *to* as she was packing up to go home. The entire class started to join in on the signing and dance around the room while providing the gesture. When the song was over, the students started on another song. It became 15 minutes of packing up and singing sight word songs. In my teacher journal, I wrote, "all the students were enjoying themselves while they were singing, moving, and dancing. It was so much fun to watch their enjoyment and the best part is, the students were learning

how to spell their sight words through song without even noticing!" (journal entry 7, 2017).

Not only were the students observed humming and singing sight word songs throughout the day, but the students wanted to use song and movement for words that were not on our sight word list. Twice, it was noted that my students encountered a word they could not read. After multiple tries of trying to sound out a word, Heather yelled out, "Let's make a song for it!" (journal entry October 25, 2017). Raine suggested something similar while reading with a buddy when she said, "okay, I am not sure what this word is but let's ask Mrs. Martin and then we can make a song for it to help us remember" (journal entry November 15, 2017). Students began to use songs and movements as strategies to assist with words that were not on our sight word list and became motivated to create their own songs and gestures. Their engagement and excitement to do so was a discovery that I delighted in.

The findings demonstrate a positive increase in attitude towards learning sight words and an increase in motivation and engagement. The use of song and movement created a learning environment that was fun and fostered the development of sight word acquisition.

Song and Movement as a Scaffold to Support Struggling Learners

When analyzing the data collected during this study, increased sight word identification, engagement, and motivation emerged from all students who participated in the study. As a whole, the class grew significantly in these areas. Although all students increased their sight word identification, it did not come as easy to some as it did for others. When inductively looking over my data, an unexpected category emerged that

supported the idea that songs and movement acted as scaffolds to help support the struggling readers and writers in my class. Throughout this study, four struggling readers began to use song and movement to help identify, read, and write their sight words and gained an understanding that these scaffolds can make learning easier for them. At the start of this study, these four students entered my classroom with zero emergent literacy skills. Table 1 in Chapter 3 provides the emergent literacy knowledge of these four students at the beginning of the school year. Peter, Isabella, Joey, and Lily struggle to obtain the literacy skills taught at school and are pulled twice a week for small group intervention. Learning is difficult for these four students and their attitudes towards learning are poor due to the frustration they encounter. The following narrative case studies will showcase the data collected that help support the idea that song and movement can act as scaffolds for struggling readers learning sight words.

Joey

At the beginning of the study, Joey could not read any sight words and scored the lowest score on his student survey, indicating a very negative attitude towards using song and movement for learning at school. As the use of song and movement to learn sight words was implemented, Joey started to welcome the idea of singing and moving, especially when he realized song and movements make learning easier for him. Table 3 shows Joey's pre-and-post assessment and survey results.

Table 3

Pre-and- Post Assessment and Survey Results for Joey

Joey		
	Pre	Post
Sight Word Assessment	0	19
Student Survey	7 (poor attitude towards using song and movement)	17 (positive attitude towards using song and movement)

When given the post sight word assessment, Joey struggled with the word that was most recently taught. When shown the word *of,* Joey looked at me and asked me to give him the gesture so he can guess. Once given, Joey was able to identify the word. Credit was not given because Joey was unable to read the word with automaticity, however, Joey demonstrated how the use of a gesture can help jog his memory" (journal entry November 20, 2017). Joey's increase in sight word identification from the pre-to the post-test increased by 95% and although one word was missed, the use of gesture acted as a scaffold to assist in reading the word.

Throughout the study, other observations were made that suggested Joey used song and movement as scaffolds. During an independent reading conference, Joey read his level AA book to me and told me about the pictures of the book. When I noticed he was doing a great job telling a story, I asked about the possibility of choosing a level A book for his book bin. He responded by telling me that the books in the level A bin were hard because he did not know any of the words. I explained to him that he has learned many new sight words and the possibility of him being able to read those books now were very high. He and I went to the level A book bin together and found the book *My*

Big Pig. When looking at the words, Joey kept asking me if the words in the book were on the word wall. When I replied yes, Joey looked at the word and began singing the song. When he got stuck on the word *my* on page 6, I gave the gesture for *my* and he immediately said "my". In my teacher journal, I wrote, "Joey looked so happy and confident as he read his level A book today. He identified all of the sight words in his book by signing the songs to the words. At times, he was even caught moving and dancing to the tunes he was singing and providing the gesture for the sight words. Joey asked if he could go get more books from the A bin. Of course, I said Yes!" (journal entry November 13, 2017).

Using songs and movement became scaffolds Joey relied on and he began to grow an awareness that they helped to make reading and writing easier. During writer's workshop one day, Joey was struggling to write a three-page story. His conference with me focused on touching and telling his story across pages. When he planned his story, he began to write but got stuck on the word *the*. Joey turned to me and asked me if *the* was a sight word and on the word wall. When I told him that the class did not learn this word yet, Joey asked me if there was a song for it and said, "because songs are really helping me write my words." He then pointed to the word *to* on his page and said, "see like this. This is the word *to* and I wrote it by singing the song." He then went on to sing the song (journal entry October 30, 2017).

At the conclusion of the study, Joey colored in a smiley face on the student survey in response to both statements that suggested songs and movement help Joey remember things at school. When these statements were read to him, it was recorded that Joey said, Óh, you bet they do!" (journal entry November 20, 2017). Throughout the study, Joey's

motivation and confidence increased in response to using song and movement to learn sight words, suggesting the use of song and movement to be supportive scaffolds to sight word learning for Joey.

Isabella

Like Joey, Isabella entered this study with zero sight word knowledge and a very poor attitude about using song and movement for learning. Isabella struggled to remember the letters in her name and so sight word identification was predicted to be a struggle for her entering this study. Isabella, however, grew tremendously by the time the study concluded. Table 4 shows Isabella's pre-and-post sight word and survey results.

Table 4

Pre-and- Post Assessment and Survey Results for Isabella

Isabella		
	Pre	Post
Sight Word Assessment	0	19
Student Survey	7 (poor attitude towards using song and movement)	21 (positive attitude towards using song and movement)

It was observed that sight word identification did not come as easy to Isabella as it did for the rest of the class. However, Isabella learned the majority of the words taught and was able to read them with automaticity during the post-assessment. Isabella was often observed humming and signing her sight word songs as a strategy and scaffold to identify, read, and write words throughout the study. One day, during independent

reading, Isabella came to a word she did not know in her book. I noticed Isabella getting out of her seat and approaching the class word wall. When I asked her what she was doing, Isabella explained that she was looking to see if the word in her book was the word on the word wall. She pointed to the word on the word wall and began singing the song. She then pointed to the word in her book and sang the same song. She gave me a thumb up and said, "Yup! It is the same word." Isabella then went back to her seat and continued reading (journal entry, November 2, 2017).

Later that week, during writer's workshop, Isabella was trying to find the word *the* on the word wall to write it in her story. It was observed that she was singing the song and looking at all the words trying to find it on the word wall. She touched each word on her word wall with her pencil and sang the song for the word *the*. When the letters did not match up to the letters she was singing about, she moved on to the next word. When she found the word, she said really loud, "I found it! This is the word *the!"* She then wrote down the word singing the song as she wrote it and provided the movements that were taught along with the word *the* (journal entry November 22, 2017).

Isabella started to show signs of confidence in identifying sight words and applying her sight word knowledge to her reading and writing throughout this study. When filling out her response to the statement, songs help me remember things at school, Isabella colored in the happy face and stated, "I always sing the songs. They help me when I get stuck" (journal entry November 20, 2017). Isabella's growth can be contributed to the success she had with using song and movement as a scaffold in identifying sight words.

Peter

Like Isabella and Joey, Peter entered the study with zero sight word knowledge and with a very unmotivated attitude. Peter is very aware that learning is hard for him and often compares himself to the other students. Copying his neighbor's paper is the first strategy Peter uses to complete a task that is difficult for him. At the start of the study, Peter indicated a dislike for singing and moving during school and thought that singing and moving could never help him learn things at school. However, the results from his post-sight word assessment and survey indicate an increase in attitude and shows achievement in the area of sight word identification. Table 5 shows his results.

Table 5

Pre-and- Post Assessment and Survey Results for Peter

Peter		
	Pre	Post
Sight Word Assessment	0	16
Student Survey	7 (poor attitude towards using song and movement)	21 (positive attitude towards using song and movement)

Not only did Peter make significant gains in sight word identification and attitudes towards using song and movement, but throughout the study, Peter began to understand that the use of these strategies can support his reading. Many instances demonstrated this understanding as Peter's confidence as a reader and motivation to read began to increase. During guided reading one day, Peter approached the table and looked very angry. When asked what the matter was, Peter said he hated reading because

"reading words is hard." I asked Peter to sit down and I told him that the words in the book we were reading were sight words that he might know. Trying to engage him, I reviewed the words that were going to be in the book. One of the words was the word *like*. When I showed him the word, I asked him what the word was and he said, "I don't know." I then began to sing the song and he became bright eyed and smiled and said, "like!" I then asked him to find the word *like* on every page. Peter found the words and sang the song every time to help him find the word on the page. Peter's attitude quickly changed as he began to identify the word *like* on the page. When it was time to read the book, he read the book almost perfectly. When he came to the word *like* one time, he read *look.* When asked him to look at the word again, Peter sang the song and then said, "Oops. Like!" In my teacher journal, I wrote, "I was most impressed by Peter today. Peter approached the guided reading table angry and with no motivation to read. However, when Peter realized that songs could help him remember the words he was reading, Peter became engaged and wanted to participate even more. Peter had a huge smile on his face and left the table wanting to read more!" (journal entry, November 16, 2017).

Peter's exit survey indicated that he liked to sing at school and that songs helped him remember things at school. During Peter's parent teacher conference, I recorded that his mom stated, "I have never seen Peter want to read at home as much as he does now. Every time we read at night, Peter points out his sight words and sings the songs and shows me the gesture that goes along with the word" (journal entry November 25, 2017). The increase in sight word identification is incredible, however, the change in Peter's attitude is one of the most positive outcomes this study brought to Peter. The use of song

and movement as a scaffold to assist Peter in sight word learning not only increased his sight word knowledge but also instilled a joy for learning. Peter's own understanding that the use of song and movement could be used as strategies to support his reading is a significant finding.

Lily

Lily's performance is another example of how song and movement acted as a scaffold and impacted sight word acquisition amongst struggling learners. Lily began the study as the other three students did with zero sight word knowledge, poor attitude, and no motivation. Lily often refused to participate in classroom discussions and would always say, "I don't know" when asked a question. Table 6 shows Lily's results from the pre- and post- sight word assessment and student survey.

Table 6

Pre-and- Post Assessment and Survey Results for Lily

Lily		
	Pre	Post
Sight Word Assessment	0	18
Student Survey	7 (poor attitude towards using song and movement)	21 (positive attitude towards using song and movement)

When looking at Lily's results, it can be concluded that song and movement impacted Lily's sight word acquisition tremendously. Not only did song and movement increase her sight word identification and automaticity, song and movement impacted her confidence in a significant way. It was always a struggle for Lily to stand in front of the

class during morning meeting and complete the routines as the child of the day. Lily always wanted to try but would always look to me for support in identifying numbers for the calendar and sight words for our sentence of the day. When it was Lily's turn, I always differentiated to ensure Lily felt successful. On Lily's day to be child of the day, Lily was in charge of the pointer for our shared reading experience. Lily was pointing to the words in a sentence and reading what she was able to. When it was time to read the word *was,* she paused and looked at me to give her the answer. In response to the pause, the class began to sing the *was* song. As the class got to the part of the song that said the word, Lily yelled out the word. When Lily realized that the class would help her by singing the song, Lily paused at the unknown words. For the word *like,* Lily looked at the word and started to sing the song herself and then screamed and smiled, *Like*! When it was time to read *he,* Lily looked at the class for help and one boy said, "like this!" and he placed his finger above his lip to gesture a mustache. Lily immediately responded and yelled out the word, *he!*

In another observation, when reviewing our sight words as a class at the carpet, Lily raised her hand and wanted to come to the board to read the words to the class all by herself. This took me by quite a surprise because Lily never wants to perform in front of the class. Lily stood up with confidence and tried to read the words to the class. When she came to words she did not know, she asked the class to help her sing the songs. Lily then sang along with the class while providing the gestures with a great big smile on her face. In my teacher journal, I wrote, "It was amazing to see Lily volunteer to read her sight words today. She has grown tremendously in her motivation and confidence and I

attribute it all to the idea that song and movement give Lily the support needed to be successful in her sight word reading (journal entry November 22, 2017).

As the study came to an end, I administered the student survey to Lily. Lily responded to the student survey with all smiley faces. When the survey was over she turned to me and asked me if we were done learning songs and movement for sight words. When I told her that all of our words from now on would have songs and movement for them, she responded by saying, "that makes me so happy. They help me a lot!" The scaffolds that song and movement provided for Lily not only increased her sight word identification but helped to foster a confident and happy learner.

The moments captured during these case studies seem to encompass many of the positive impacts that song and movement can have on struggling learners. The positive results from their sight word assessment and the growth in motivation and confidence for learning suggest that the use of songs and movement as scaffolds to learn sight words can have a significant impact on the sight word acquisition and learning of struggling kindergarten students.

Summary of Data Analysis

Shangoury and Power (2012) state that data analysis is "finding patterns with your data, viewing each bit of information as part of a larger puzzle you must put together" p. 136). An analysis of the various data sources points to the hidden gift of discovery as the puzzle pieces began to fit together and three prominent categories emerged. I found that students made significant growth in the areas of word identification and automaticity as well as motivation and engagement with the use of song and movement while learning sight words in my kindergarten classroom. Students increased their sight word

knowledge and were able to read words with automaticity. Student motivation and engagement increased as students enjoyed singing and moving to sight word songs. Students sang and hummed throughout the day and were excited to learn new words and make songs for unknown words. The discovery of the use of song and movement as scaffolds to help struggling students learn sight words was a discovery that I delighted in. The use of song and movement became positive learning strategies that increased sight word identification and helped my struggling students flourish in the classroom. Overall, the use of song and movement had a positive impact and supported my kindergarten students in their sight word acquisition.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications

Conclusions

After analyzing the data collected from my research, my findings emerged in the three main categories of increased sight word identification and automaticity, increased motivation and engagement while learning sight words, and songs and movement as scaffolds to support struggling learners. My kindergarten students demonstrated growth in these three categories with results that show a significant increase in sight word identification, motivation, and engagement. After triangulating and analyzing the data and after reading much of the literature pertaining to the use of song and movement in early literacy learning, I conclude that the use of song and movement has a positive impact on kindergarteners' sight word acquisition and fosters a fun and engaging way to develop sight word skills.

In regards to using song and movement to promote early literacy skills, the findings from my data sources all support the positive impact that song and movement can have on sight word acquisition. Chandler and Tricot (2015) explain that when students use gestures in response to information, as well as see and hear the information, memory cues can help to activate working memory. Chandler and Tricot (2015) along with Butkus (2015) discuss how the best learning outcomes come from activating multiple pathways in the brain. To activate multiple pathways in the brain, children should learn by doing, saying, seeing, and hearing all at the same time and participate in multisensory learning experiences (Butkus, 2017). In past studies, the relationships of using song and movement to increase word recognition were positive. Walton's (2014)

study suggested that using music and movement to teach literacy skills helps facilitate long-term memory processes that assist children in the task of learning to read. Phillips and Feng's (2012) study also found that the use of song and movement can assist in sight word identification. When students experience learning through a combination of learning styles and intelligences, the best learning outcomes are witnessed (Gardner, 1983). This current study relates to the literature in the fact that the analysis of the data collected shows a positive impact on sight word identification when songs and movements are used to meet students at their varying intelligences to optimize learning.

The findings from multiple data sources also support an increase in motivation and engagement while learning sight words when song and movement is incorporated into literacy instruction. Davies (2000) explains that rhythm captures attention and stimulates interest and suggests that when this happens, students' attention is focused, motivation is heightened, and the brain is more receptive to learning. The category of motivation and engagement that emerged in this study is similar to the underlying themes of motivation and engagement that emerged in past studies (Fisher, 2001; Register, 2004; Ritblatt et al., 2003). Like Fisher (2001), my students showed an excitement about learning and students were often observed humming as they worked. Over the course of the study, students seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves as they sang and moved and as Register (2004) found, students were eager and willing to participate in sight word instruction. Ritblatt et al. (2013) suggested that music increased students' enthusiasm and engagement in emergent literacy which is beneficial when discussing how to optimize learning. Guthrie's (1997) theory of motivational engagement suggests that students learn best when they are engaged and motivated. Students who are engaged and

motivated gain advantages in their learning and progress through school (Ritblatt et al, 2013). Therefore, when looking across all data sources, this current study relates to the literature in the fact that the analysis of the data collected shows a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement when songs and movements are used for sight word instruction. Songs and movement make learning fun and help to optimize learning.

When considering the various emergent literacy skills children enter kindergarten with and understanding the importance these skills have on student learning, it can be understood why some students struggle to meet the demands of a kindergarten curriculum. Specifically, it can be difficult for students with low emergent literacy skills to master sight word identification skills. This can be problematic because sight word identification is an important skill and is necessary to establish fluent, confident readers (McCormick & Zutell, 2011). With this in mind, Vygotsky's (1987) theory of social constructivism provides a framework for educators to meet students in their zone of proximal development and scaffold instruction to ensure all students are successful. The findings of this study suggest that the use of song and movement can act as scaffolds to assist struggling learners in their sight word acquisition. As students used song and movement as a scaffold to read and write sight words, students grew an understanding and awareness that strategies can support their learning. This kind of awareness is important to establish proficient and confident readers who monitor their own thinking and strategies. Therefore, the findings of this study support the use of song and movement as scaffolds for struggling learners and have a positive impact on student achievement.

Furthermore, Lawrence Sipe's (2008) idea that performative responses to literacy learning allows students to use their imagination to express and create meaning in modalities that suit their learning styles, supports the overall findings of this study. When engaged in literacy instruction, children learn best through different modalities. Therefore, the use of song and movement has a positive impact on kindergarteners' sight word acquisition and increases sight word identification, automaticity, and engagement while providing scaffolds to ensure all students are successful in their sight word learning.

Limitations

The one limitation of this study was the time allotted to conduct research. Data collection, analysis, and reporting was completed within a five-week period. Within the five-week period, days off from school due to school professional developments and holiday breaks limited the time for data collection. Therefore, the conclusions drawn were based on the events that were documented within a small window of time. Due to the brief time frame for data collection, five sight words were taught over the span of four weeks. A longer time frame would have allowed sight words to be spread out over the course of several weeks allowing students to practice the songs and movements for sight words for a few days before being introduced to another sight word. A focus on less words per week may have been beneficial to students regarding the establishment of stronger identification of words.

Implications

As a teacher researcher, I delighted in and acknowledged an unexpected discovery that emerged during this study. The idea that song and movement can act as scaffolds to

support struggling learners in their sight word acquisition brought to the surface new questions for further research. Providing struggling learners with scaffolds that support their sight word acquisition is important when fostering successful and confident readers. If song and movement can be used as scaffolds, sight word learning may become easier for students and assist in obtaining the necessary skills needed to ensure reading success in the future. To understand specifically how the use of song and movement as scaffolds can impact kindergarteners' in their sight word acquisition, research should be considered using audiotapes of small group conversations and individual exit interviews. The transcripts from these data sources can then be analyzed for emerging themes as to how the use of song and movement as scaffolds for struggling learners can impact sight word acquisition.

The data collected from this study also demonstrates student's use of song and movement as tools to help read and write words. Further research into how the use of song and movement to learn sight words can impact reading and writing would provide beneficial information for kindergarten teachers. Future research on how drawing on multimodalities in supporting early literacy development is also recommended. Drawing on multimodalities to increase sight word acquisition for young learners offered positive results. In understanding this impact, further research should be conducted to document the impact on early literacy learning. Such findings would have great implications for early childhood educators.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) state that teacher research "guides new understandings and improvements in practice at the local site, as well as more broadly" (p. 95). As part of teacher research, sharing the findings of one's research can help to

improve school achievement. The conclusions drawn from this study can provide the kindergarten teachers at the study site with an understanding of how the use of song and movement can have a positive impact on kindergarteners' sight word acquisition and promote a positive learning environment that optimizes learning. It is hoped that the findings from this study encourages educators to build upon children's natural love for music and movement by engaging students in the use of song and movement during sight word acquisition throughout the day. When doing so, educators can "use music and movement as a way to recognize the whole child" (Palmer, 2001).

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Appendix A

Timeline for Sight Word Instruction

Week	Sight Word	Song	Movement
Week 1	like	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	to	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	my	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	is	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	me	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
Week 2	she	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	he	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	they	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	and	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	are	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
Week 3	one	Teacher Created	Teacher Created
	you	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	the	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	have	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
	was	Scholastic *25 Super Sight Word Songs*	Teacher Created
Week 4	for	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	of	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 1*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	or	Teacher Created	Teacher Created
	we	Heidi's Songs *Sing and Spell Volume 2*	Heidi's Songs DVD Movement
	be	Teacher Created	Teacher Created

Appendix B

Pre-and Post-Sight Word Assessment

Student: _____

A check mark indicates the student said the word correctly.

Sight Word	Pre-Test Date:_____	Post Test Date:_____
the		
and		
is		
she		
me		
they		
one		
are		
his		
was		
he		
from		
have		
my		
or		
to		
we		
be		
you		
for		

Appendix C

Student Pre-and Post-Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

	YES	MAYBE	NO
Songs help me remember things at school.	☺	😐	☹
Movement helps me remember things at school.	☺	😐	☹
Singing is not helpful when I learn.	☺	😐	☹
Movement is not helpful when I learn.	☺	😐	☹
I sing the songs I learn at school.	☺	😐	☹
I use movements to remember what my teacher taught me.	☺	😐	☹
I like to sing and move at school.	☺	😐	☹