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# SOUNDS OF EMERGENCE: THE PEDAGOGY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY CON-CEPTS AND STRATEGIES IN AN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

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This dissertation, SOUNDS OF EMERGENCE: THE PEDAGOGY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES IN AN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM, by BENJAMIN R. MOORE III, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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**SOUNDS OF EMERGENCE: THE PEDAGOGY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

**CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES IN AN EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM**

by

**BENJAMIN R. MOORE III**

Under the Direction of Gholnecsar Muhammad, PhD

*ABSTRACT*

The purpose of this research study was to examine language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies in a state-funded, early learning program. Within this context, the study focused on the pedagogy of early learning educators (ELEs) regarding phonological awareness (PhAw) and phonics as L&L concepts and the integration of performance arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as L&L strategies. In addition, ELEs' motivations to teach and students' engagement in L&L lessons were also of interest in this study. Regarding methodology, the study utilized content and thematic analyses within a qualitative design and four different data sources were collected: ELE interviews (primary), The Creative Curriculum – Literacy (Heroman & Jones, 2010) used by the early learning program, ELE lesson plans, and state early learning standards. Much of the research literature supports phonological awareness, phonics, and performance arts in L&L instruction. However, this study focused on the ELEs' experiences with and

impressions of L&L concepts and strategies along with their motivations to teach and their students' engagement with L&L content and strategies. The aim of this study was to find if there was a bridge between L&L theories and L&L practices; that is to say, were the notions of L&L theorists and researchers operationalized by L&L practitioners (i.e., ELEs)? From content and thematic analyses, seven themes were found, which included: the PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content; the power of using student names; confusing and unsurety regarding language and literacy concepts; the need for more phonics and/or PhAw training for teachers; performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies; multi-modal, comprehensive literacy experience; multi-causal catalyzation of teacher motivation. I found that while there is room for improvement regarding the participant ELEs' understanding and implementation of L&L concepts and strategies, they were in fact utilizing a substantial amount of theoretically proven L&L practices. In addition, the ELEs were highly motivated to teach L&L principles and their students were equally engaged in their L&L lessons. There were a few implications that resulted from the study. First, rich L&L training programs and resources should be encouraged and implemented, particularly in the areas of the PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. Second, richer pedagogical provisions in the form of resources should be offered to early learning educators regarding the PhAw, phonics, performing arts. The study concluded that a balance should be struck between two assumed dichotomous notions in relation to L&L: theory and practice as well as art and science. In addition, the value of fun and excitement in early learning pedagogy cannot have been overstated and must be fostered.

**INDEX WORDS: Phonological Awareness (Continuum), Phonics (Continuum), Performing Arts, Language and Literacy, Literacy Development, Early Learning, Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten**

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BENJAMIN R. MOORE III

A Dissertation

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in

Teaching and Learning w/ concentration in Language and Literacy

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in

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2021

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving family and friends. To my first teacher, my mother, Linda from whom I have learned some of my greatest lessons. To my three giants upon whose shoulders I stand: my father, Benjamin, from whom I get my name sake and my soul's reflection; and my two uncles, Henderson, from whom my spirit reflects and Lawrence from whom my intellect reflects. To my mentor and academic mother, Dr. Mary Zeigler, who helped to navigate my way back to education. To my best friends, Tawanda, Mario, and Robert whose support and encouragement were invaluable. And finally, to my guardian angel, my closest ancestor, and my forever favorite student, my daughter, Leilani, whose essence now resides on another plane of existence, giving me not only something to look forward to at my own transition, but also a reason to live life to the fullest as the best version of myself. Thank you all for all your love and support. This is not just my Ph.D. We earned it. It belongs to us all...

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

**A Word from a Scientist and Artist—The Author**

Learners undergo an epiphany when they realize that the sounds uttered around them coalesce into words imbued with the meaning of their experiences, and thus begins the beauty of understanding language—connecting meaning with sounds. The emergence of understanding how sounds articulate events, encounters, feelings, and thoughts—the linguistic epiphany, is a hallmark of language development and the bedrock of literacy itself. It is through the printed text whereby literacy becomes another dimension of experience. The reader is transported to other worlds or into other minds. Where there were once just language sounds and print, now, new experiences become manifested and expressed throughout space and time. Children's early development towards understanding language at this level is known as emergent literacy, which describes how their literary skills emerge from their day-to-day language experiences.

The onus is then upon educators to be good stewards committed to guiding learners through the terrain of language and literacy development. Educators must be like language scientists equipped with the understanding of linguistics (i.e., the science of language) theories related to language and literacy (L&L) development, such as the phonological awareness (PhAw) (i.e., phonological abilities related to the understanding and manipulation of speech sounds) and instructional strategies such as phonics (i.e., instruction of the correlations between letters and letter sounds—graphophonemic awareness (GphA)), and because the PhAw and phonics are central to L&L instruction, educators should incorporate these elements explicitly (Donat, 2006; Shaw & Hurst, 2012). Therefore, educators responsible for L&L development must continuously utilize and increase their cache of pedagogical knowledge to advance their teaching and learning practices. In tandem, educators must be like skilled pedagogical artists in the performance and

instruction of L&L development, incorporating the elements of the arts to stoke the fire of their own motivation and invoke the spirit of engagement in their students. Educators' intentions should be to balance the pragmatic elements of language science with the aesthetics related to both the arts and to language, in order to guide the L&L development of and co-create with the incredible pedagogical works of art that are their students. In other words, both pragmatism and beauty should be employed by educators to help their students fashion their own L&L development. As a result, educators should give their students the linguistic concepts that will allow them, as learners, to perform the art that is language.

In this study, I investigated the experiences and impressions of early learning educators (ELEs) with regards to the phonological awareness (PhAw), phonics, and performing arts, in a state-funded, university-managed, early learning program. By performing arts, I am specifically referring to music, dance, lyricism/rhyming, and theater/acting/imaginative play as strategies for teachers to convey L&L content within an emergent literacy (EL) context. Additionally, I sought to understand teachers' motivations to teach PhAw and phonics content as well as their impressions of students' engagement in these areas. To this end, I utilized qualitative data along with content and thematic analysis to support this study.

It is my hope that the knowledge derived from this study that I have conducted will help current and future educators in EL contexts solidify their understanding of the PhAw and phonics in order to better instruct their students and to maximize their own pedagogical potential as early learning educators. Additionally, I would also like for this study to become a springboard to help influence future policies allowing teachers to be most effective in their pedagogy. Whether through the use of an existing curriculum, curricula that will be developed in the future by third

parties, or curricular designs of their own, perhaps educators will better understand their teaching. As a result, the masterpieces of the educators' efforts will be both the linguistic purpose and beauty imbued within their students, perhaps through a greater understanding of language that leads to a greater understanding of self.

**Definitions**

In this section, I provide definitions of terms that appear throughout this study. The three terms are phonological awareness, graphophonemic awareness, and emergent literacy. The aim is to provide clear understanding and mitigate ambiguity regarding the meaning of these terms and to provide a clear reference point for the readers to refer to as they encounter these terms throughout the study.

*Phonological Awareness (PhAw)*

A central goal of literacy instruction is to elicit students' developing high degrees of phonological awareness (PhAw), which was defined in this study as the ability to understand and manipulate all units of speech sounds from individual words to individual language sounds. One of the central issues related to research and instruction of phonological elements is the inconsistency of the use of terms (Pufpaff, 2009). Research supports the idea that there exists a continuum of abilities related to an individual's understanding and use of language sounds (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Heroman & Jones, 2010). In some research, PhAw has been used as an overarching term to describe a whole spectrum of awareness for detecting and manipulating language sounds (Hansen et al., 2014; Hawken et al., 2005; Pufpaff, 2009); consequently, some researchers describe PhAw as a continuum (Chard & Dickson, 1999; Pullen & Justice, 2003). Other literature describes this continuum directly using the term phonological sensitivity (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Pufpaff, 2009). I have chosen not to use the term 'phonological sensitivity' because

it is a conceptual approximation of 'phonological awareness'. Delving deeper, at the most discrete point of the PhAw continuum is phonemic awareness, which is a special subset of PhAw as it relates specifically to the ability to recognize and manipulate individual phonemes (language/letter sounds) (Pufpaff, 2009). Giving an example, when a student can hear the words 'cat' and 'bat' and recognize that they rhyme, or count the three syllables when they hear the word 'tomorrow', they are in general enacting their PhAw. When a student can isolate the /s/ at the beginning, or the /p/ at the end of the word when they hear 'stop,' they are also in general enacting their PhAw, but more specifically, their phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness contributes to a reader's accuracy because it impacts phonemic decoding, which is the ability to use the knowledge of the relationship between visual language symbols and language sounds (i.e., utilizing the relationship between graphemes (visual language symbols/letters) and phonemes (language/letter sounds), respectively) (Phillips & Torgesen, 2006). This leads to the next term, Graphophonemic awareness.

### Graphophonemic Awareness (GphA)

The knowledge or awareness of language sounds with their correlated letters is graphophonemic awareness (GphA) (Hansen et al., 2014), which is also known as the alphabetic principle (Asselin, 1999; Flippo, 2012; Pressley et al., 2002; Shaw & Hurst, 2012). A student is enacting their GphA when they can hear the word 'cat' and know that the /k/ sound relates to the letter 'c' or see the word 'cat' and know that the letter 'c' makes the /k/ sound. For this concept, Ehri (2005) used the term graphophonemic relations, which is the bond between the visual elements of graphemes and the audial elements of the phonemes being represented. In essence, GphA is a more contemporary version of the terms phonemic decoding and the alphabetic principle, which appear in much of the older literature on this subject. In addition, GphA is a term that is more in

alignment with current linguistics metalanguage, which is a central element to my academic foundation. The term phonics is a pedagogical construct that refers to any instruction that supports graphophonemic awareness/phonemic decoding/alphabetic principle by building the skills that aid learners in bridging the patterns between graphemes with phonemes (Tompkins, 2005). Therefore, phonics is the pedagogical approach employed by educators to develop their students' GphA and explicit phonics instruction in early learning has been supported by many studies (Denham & Lobeck, 2010; Juel, 2006; Juel et al., 2003; Tompkins, 2005).

**PhAw and Phonics as Continua.** Similar to PhAw, phonics can also be viewed as a continuum of skills, where the PhAw continuum houses the foundational skills necessary to develop the skills along the phonics continuum. I have created a visual to illustrate the continua from PhAw to phonics (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1: The Continua from PhAw to Phonics*
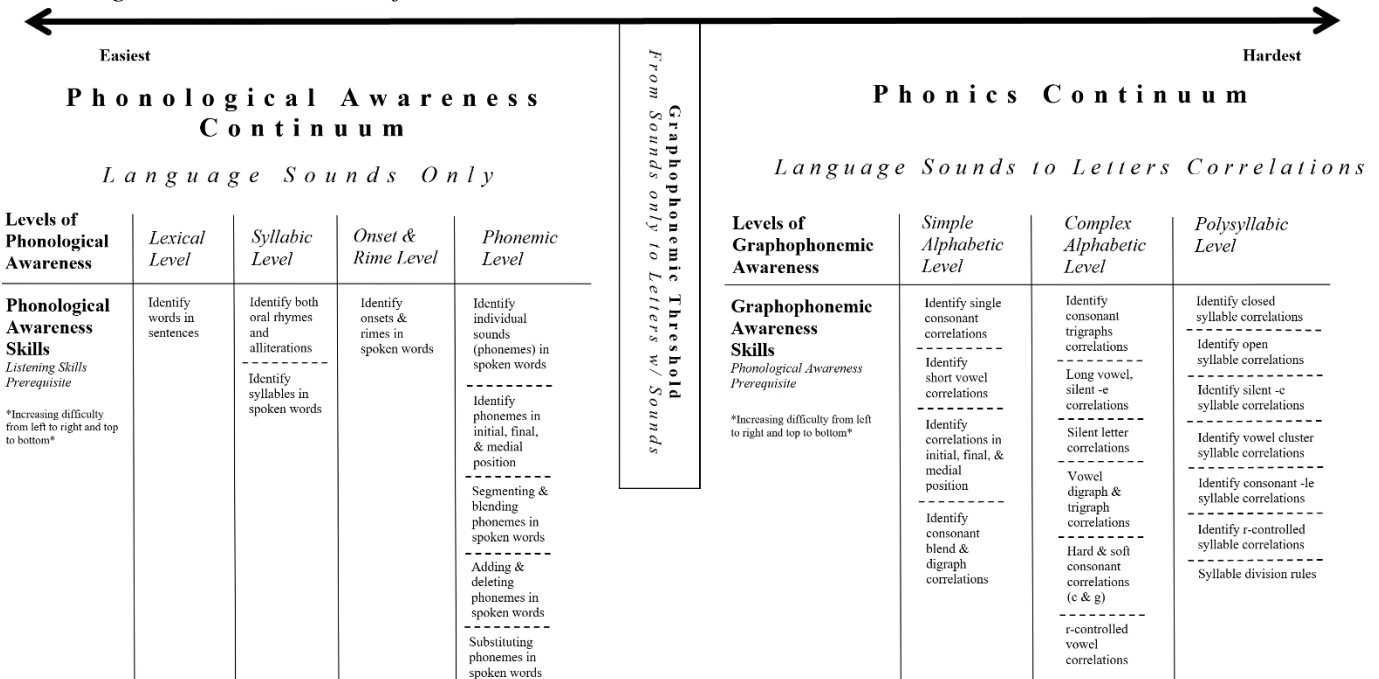
In Figure 1 above, both PhAw and phonics are continua that develop particular sets of skills related to language sounds only and language sounds with their sets of letter correlations, respectively. Illustrated in the figure are the levels of awareness of each continuum, the skills associated with each continuum, and transition from one continuum to the other, the shifting difficulties within and between each continuum, and the prerequisite skills of each continuum. The levels of awareness in the PhAw continuum relates to the isolation of sounds into smaller and smaller units. Therefore, lexical/word awareness is identifying words within sentences, while the more discrete and difficult phonemic awareness includes identifying individual sounds within words. Difficulty within the PhAw continuum is determined by the increase in isolation of groups of language sound units into individual language sound units. For example, the word 'bat,' on the syllabic level, has one syllable (i.e., <u>ba</u>t), and on the phonemic level, three phonemes (i.e., /<u>b</u> <u>ă</u> <u>t</u>/). As such, the typical early learner will grasp the concept of the single syllable (i.e., <u>ba</u>t) more easily than the concept of the three individual sounds (i.e., /<u>b</u> <u>ă</u> <u>t</u>/).

However, levels of GphA within the phonics continuum relate to the complexity level of sounds that are correlated with letters. For example, the simple alphabetic level includes correlations between single consonant sounds and letters (e.g., the letter 'a' can say /ă/ as in the word 'b<u>a</u>t'), while the complex alphabetic level includes vowel digraph correlations (e.g., two vowel letters making a single sound like the letters 'ai' can say /ā/ as in the word 'b<u>ai</u>t'). Instruction along the PhAw and phonics continua are essential elements of both literacy pedagogy and students' competency regarding literacy because they develop students' PhAw and GphA. Literacy development hinges on a student's ability to understand the various elements of how sound and visual elements operate in language.

*Emergent Literacy*

Children's early language development is called emergent literacy (EL). This includes knowledge and abilities regarding the alphabet and various other language symbols, PhAw, phonemic awareness, and other general communication elements (Rodhe, 2015). EL develops from birth through approximately 5 years and is recognized in research to be a vital part of what should be the language arts focus in preschool (Rodhe, 2015). EL is key to children acquiring the elements necessary to develop a strong sense of conventional literacy (e.g., reading and writing) (Saracho & Spodek, 2002).

Taken together, these three terms are among the terminological foundation for the research on early learning, language and literacy (L&L) pedagogy. The first two terms (PhAw and GphA) represent essential elements that are components of the third term (EL), all of which lead to literacy acquisition. While I touched on all three terms here, they are further expounded upon in sections to come. Next, I have detailed the teaching context to elucidate more about the learning environment, so that the reader has a full picture of EL practices at the center of the study.

**Teaching Context**

The emergent literacy teaching context within this study incorporates an early childhood program that includes Preschool (3-4 years old) and Pre-K (4-5 years old). Programs like this can be categorized by both students' access to the programs and programs' funding sources. Regarding program access, there are targeted Pre-K programs, which are offered only to children with specific risk factors (e.g., challenges due to socioeconomic status); Pre-K programs offered to families who pay tuition to attend, that are not targeted to specific groups; and universal Pre-K programs, which, similar to K-12, are funded by individual states with the goal of preparing children for kindergarten (Dotterer et al., 2013). The specific learning environment of this study was

a university-managed, early learning childcare development program that included preschool and universal Pre-K. This childcare development program will be further elaborated upon in a later chapter.

**Research Problem**

The need for this study was situated within two problems in early learning programs. The first problem was related to language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies. There are various approaches to teaching language arts in early learning environments. Two major approaches are phonics-based and whole language. These approaches may not be operationalized in practice due to various factors, from lack of understanding concepts and strategies that have been researched and/or theorized to be important or effective, to the lack of teaching the concepts or implementing the strategies, in general. An early learning pedagogy of language sounds not grounded in proven research or sound theories of L&L development can lead to ineffective learning. In addition, performing arts has been studied as strategies to teach L&L content (Birch, 2000; Bryant et al., 1989; Hansen et al., 2014; Mages, 2008), and therefore a program that incorporates performing arts as L&L strategies uses research-based approaches. However, more robust research is needed to add to the field in early learning L&L contexts, specifically with regards to PhAw and phonics instruction integrated with performing arts.

The second problem was related to the need for more understanding regarding teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning environments. Although, teacher motivation and student engagement effecting the learning environment can be said to be self-evident, research has been conducted to examine the many variables that influence teacher motivation (Han & Yin, 2016). However, more research is need to address both teacher motivation and student

engagement in early learning L&L contexts. While, researchers have investigated the use of performing arts in the early learning environment as strategies to teach content such as language arts, investigations were still needed to determine the various ways that performing arts can influence on early learning teacher motivation and student engagement.

In the following sections, I present the problems in more detail organized in two parts: 1) Lack of utilization (taught little or not taught at all) and optimization (not taught most effectively) of PhAw and phonics instruction in early learning programs, where performing arts is a key component to be utilized for optimal effectiveness, and 2) Necessity of research regarding motivation and engagement in early learning PhAw and Phonics lessons. Thereafter, I state the purpose, and then the significance of the study, which details the various theoretical perspectives guiding the study, before concluding the entirety of the chapter.

### Problem #1: Phonics and/or PhAw not being Utilized or Optimized in some Early Learning Programs

As with all human endeavor, there are various levels of quality when products are created, or services are rendered. Education is no exception. There are without a doubt, phenomenally successful teaching environments, as well as those where there is low student achievement. However, one of the problems investigated by this study comes from research suggesting that, in some early learning language and literacy (L&L) environments, the phonics and/or PhAw may not be adequately taught or practiced at all. In part, substantial variability exists regarding procedural fidelity and instructional quality in some early learning programs (Beecher et al., 2017; Early et al., 2005; Greenwood et al., 2013; Justice et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2008). In other words, not only are there some early learning teachers that do not follow proven L&L strategies or utilize effective content (Stanovich, 2000), there are also other teachers who simply provide low quality instruction, in general (Greenwood et al., 2013). For example, Greenwood et al.

(2013) conducted a multisite study of early learning programs. The study noted several results across the programs: low quality of instructional support provided by teachers at the classroom level, using the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Class)* as the metric; low use of curriculum by some teachers, using the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Class)* as the metric; low teacher literacy focus and student literacy engagement, using the *Classroom CIRCLE: Code for Interactive Recording of Children's Learning Environments* as the metric; and low curriculum quality used by some programs, using *The Preschool Curriculum Checklist (PCC)* as the metric.

Regarding strategies, some teachers may not be using evidence-based strategies that research has proven accelerates language development. Some of these evidence-based strategies include recapping and expanding children's responses, asking open-ended questions, or scaffolding vocabulary (Justice et al., 2008). More specifically regarding content, research indicates that while most instruction targets alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness (PhAw) can receive inadequate or no attention by some teachers (Justice et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2008) despite numerous studies that support the importance of PhAw to emergent literacy and later reading competency. As such, the lack of using proven teaching strategies, not utilizing effective content, nor providing quality instruction all together can certainly impact student achievement negatively because of the direct correlations between literacy development through PhAw and phonics instruction. Better reading outcomes are directly related to greater emphasis on PhAw (Hawken et al., 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rodhe, 2015). In the past, letter identification and subsequent knowledge of phonics were viewed as developmentally inappropriate for Pre-K students (Dickinson, 2002; Hawken et al., 2005; International Reading Association & The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). Currently however, expectation for early

learners' knowledge bases has increased to early learners needing to know at least 10 letters to associate with language sounds (Hawken et al., 2005). With the progress of early literacy pedagogy, educators have to contend with the confusion of instructional strategies along with a renewed focus on PhAw and phonics outcomes on student language and literacy (L&L) development.

In addition to the body of research pointing to inadequate levels of phonics and PhAw instruction practiced in Pre-K classrooms, there had been little research on explicit emergent literacy instruction (Connor, 2006), and there remains sizable support among researchers who state that systematic phonics instruction is necessary for literacy development (Ehri & Flugman, 2018; Hanford, 2018; Skibbe et al., 2016). Despite the so-called reading wars between whole-language (i.e., context/meaning-based reading strategies) and phonics (analytic/decoding-based reading strategies), researchers have supported blending these two L&L approaches (Carbo, 1996; Kolstad & Bardwell, 1997). Therefore, a balanced literacy approach is supported by current research which involves explicit instruction in phonics and PhAw, as well as a focus on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Shaw & Hurst, 2012).

Correspondingly, some early learning educators still have limited awareness and knowledge of emergent literacy development (Rodhe, 2015). This means that while some teachers have a grasp of emergent literacy, others have limited understandings of the key components that contribute to early language development. Further, some teachers may not know how to promote PhAw in the classroom, and consequently, may not have the necessary knowledge to provide students with high quality literacy development experiences (Rodhe, 2015). Subsequently, even when some teachers without a strong knowledge of language sounds are provided curriculum resources to teach students language sounds, they may have to rely too heavily on just those

resources (Powell et al., 2008). While these resources give early learning educators with limited understanding of language sounds a prescription with which to teach language sounds, it can also severally limit their creativity and motivation to teach PhAw or phonics content. A knowledgeable educator who has been taught the nuances of PhAw and phonics could take these resources and add creative elements outside of the prescriptions, while the novice educator could feel boxed into possibly unexciting pedagogical practices. A lack of L&L knowledge is why some beginning teachers have less confidence in their ability to teach certain areas of literacy such as spelling, grammar, and phonics (Seastrunk, 2018). Additionally, this lack of knowledge could be due in part to some pre-service teachers being undereducated with regard to L&L principles because some undergraduate or graduate training programs are insufficient in adequately training teachers in certain L&L principles, such as phonemic awareness (Moats, 1994). According to education journalist Emily Hanford (2018), some teachers and administrators are unaware of the research that inform reading acquisition, and as a result, training programs for pre-service teachers often fail to prepare teachers with adequate L&L knowledge and instructional skills. Limited understanding of emergent literacy coupled with insufficient resources is the reason that there may be a disconnect between early L&L theory and subsequent in-class practice.

Lastly, there is a need for more research investigating performing arts integration related to specific pedagogical strategies within PhAw and phonics lessons. Researchers are still trying to determine the most effective ways to teach PhAw and phonics (Burgess et al., 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000). There is significant room to modify and improve early learning L&L instruction (e.g., increasing the depth of language arts content, integrating entertainment-based delivery strategies). Identifying the most effective L&L instruction for early learning has great po-

tential regarding academic achievement for all children (Connor, 2006). With the lack of align-ment with traditional approaches and current research, some experts believe that students have an even larger capacity to learn a greater breadth and depth of content (Powell et al., 2008) and pos-sibly through a greater variety of teaching strategies. Theoretically, a more in-depth incorpora-tion of performing arts in early learning programs has the potential to optimize the approach to supporting EL development through teaching L&L concepts, particularly, the PhAw and phon-ics. In support of that theory and the suggestion for more research in this area, there are direct connections between the auditory faculties that contribute to both learning music and learning language (Hansen et al., 2014). Dance as an element of a preschool program could incorporate modes of language expression (Lorenzo-Lasa et al., 2007). Lyricism/rhyme have strong connec-tions to literacy development (Kenney, 2005). Finally, there is a relationship between theater/act-ing and literacy development (Morrow & Schickedanz, 2006). Therefore, more research is need to examine how these performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, theater) impacts L&L peda-gogy (e.g., instruction along the PhAw and phonics continua) in early learning contexts, and as a consequence, EL development.

***Problem #2: Need for More Research Regarding Teacher Motivation and Student Engagement in Early Learning Language and Literacy Pedagogy***

Research is needed to identify the motivational factors for teachers that lead them to in-duce students' engagement in early learning language and literacy (L&L) content, specifically, PhAw and phonics lessons. Techniques that advance children's development of PhAw skills must be exciting and engaging to peak students' interests, which leads to optimal learning (Bow-man et al., 2001; Culatta et al., 2013; National Reading Panel, 2000). Any instructional approach

to the PhAw and phonics should appeal to both students and educators alike. More robust research is need that has focuses directly on instructional elements that foster teachers' motivations or students' engagement regarding the teaching and learning of PhAw, particularly in early learning settings (Bowman et al., 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000) because the desire to learn elements of literacy is considered a main accomplishment for preschool education (The Editors of Salem Press, 2014). In my own experience, levels of teacher motivation (i.e., the desire to interact with students and teach content) and student engagement (i.e., levels of interaction with teachers and content), affect the quality of instruction and the retention of the content. Furthermore, engagement creates a positive association with literacy and success as an active component to positive learning; a key factor in engagement is the creation of entertaining and joyous experiences (Culatta et al., 2013).

Teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning programs can be heavily influenced by the levels of performing arts being utilized in L&L instruction. Performing arts, specifically, music, dance, lyricism/rhyming, and theater/acting can be strong strategies for supporting various developmental skills that contribute to cognitive, physical, and emotional growth and they can also support educational content, such as music and language arts pedagogy (Brown et al., 2010; Cardany, 2013; Culatta et al., 2013; Hansen et al., 2014; Tombak, 2014). Therefore, performing arts integration has tremendous potential regarding motivation and engagement in early learning L&L instruction.

The integration of the arts can be seen beyond just an object of learning, but rather, as a mechanism thereof, by integrating performing arts as a standard practice (Brown et al., 2010). A full integration of performing arts in an early learning program could utilize music, movement,

and visual arts as primary tools for school readiness (Brown et al., 2010). Early learning and primary school teachers could use nursery rhymes to teach L&L concepts such as graphemic knowledge, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness (Cardany, 2013) or musical activities to naturally foster phonological awareness through the use of songs, chants, and movement (Hansen et al., 2014). A classroom that uses music gives students many opportunities to experience and experiment with sound, and integrating song lyrics rich with rhyme, rhythm, and other language elements can greatly enhance literacy skills by drawing attention to various language qualities (Hansen et al., 2014). Also supporting this point, the use of drama (i.e., theater) is an effective teaching strategy because of the engaging nature of the process where children do, think, feel, and implement (Tombak, 2014). Preschool education programs that use drama in pedagogical strategies provide students with opportunities to use language as a tool for communication through rhythm, tempo, accent activities, and other skills, which are all developed in drama (Tombak, 2014). Performing arts integration into English language arts classrooms is necessary because language intersects other art forms, impacts identity through cultural messages, and can help and develop critical consciousness through original artistic texts, visual arts, movement, dramatics, and music (Duggan, 2019).

This research study was formed in response to the problems of underutilization of PhAw and phonics instruction in early learning programs and a dearth of research on teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning PhAw and phonics lessons. Both of these issues were also considered in relation to being integrated with performing arts. I conducted this study to examine ELEs' experiences with and impressions of L&L concept and strategies, specifically, PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. More specifically, this study was conducted to get a sense of if PhAw, phonics, and performing arts are being used in the most beneficial ways to support

the emergent literacy development of early learning students. Additionally, I sought to better understand the ELEs' experiences with and impressions of their motivation to teach skills along the PhAw and phonics continua, as well as students' engagement in lessons designed to develop PhAw and GphA skills. As the importance of the PhAw and phonics have been researched extensively, this study sought to provide a richer understanding for teachers regarding the PhAw and phonics as L&L content and the integration of performing arts as L&L strategies, along with a richer understanding of teachers' motivation and students' engagement in L&L lessons.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study was to examine the early learning language and literacy (L&L) practices, specifically instruction along the phonological awareness (PhAw) continuum (i.e., activities designed to develop students' phonological awareness) and phonics continuum (i.e., activities designed to develop students' graphophonemic awareness) in relation to the use of performing arts as strategies for delivering the content in a state-funded, early-learning program. Within this context, I focused on the pedagogy utilized by the educators within PhAw and phonics instruction. Special attention was placed on the integration of performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism/rhyme, and theater/acting), with regards to the educators' pedagogies. In addition, the teachers' motivation and students' engagement were of interest in this study through the voices of my teacher participants. Therefore, in this study I also investigated teachers' levels of motivation to teach PhAw and phonics as well as students' levels of engagement in PhAw and phonics lessons. I examined the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies, particularly the phonological awareness, phonics, and performing arts in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

2. What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation, as well as student engagement, particularly regarding L&L concepts and strategies, in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

By "experiences with L&L," I am referring to teachers' actions and activities with regards to L&L and by "impression of L&L," I am referring to teachers' beliefs, thoughts, and feeling with regards to L&L. That is to say, experiences reflect actions and impressions reflect beliefs. I make this distinction because experiences and impression are not mutually exclusive and each can have a very profound effect on the other, positively, negatively, or not at all.

### *Significance*

This study has the potential to be important for informing the development of future curricula because it is important to know how early learning educators are conceptualizing and approaching language and literacy (L&L) pedagogy, and particularly PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. This study's findings could lead to future studies that could give early learning educators a deeper understanding about instruction along the PhAw and phonics continua, which can be used to design lessons that deeply integrate PhAw and phonics with performing arts. Within an early learning context, I believe it could be important for emergent literacy educators to better understand performing arts in their classrooms, which could spur further research that could eventually inform early learning educators' general decisions about delivery strategies that best support the retention of emergent literacy content. To be clear, this is not to relegate performing arts to just delivery mechanisms because performing arts have much wider applications and intrinsic value. This simply to say that one of the applications and value propositions of performing arts is as a conduit of pedagogical content. Moreover, this study could be a catalyst for develop-

ing more effective emergent literacy programs and interventions, which incorporate deeper integration of more sophisticated L&L literacy content (i.e., linguistics-based principles, such as morphology or pragmatics), in tandem with the most impactful performing arts-based delivery strategies. In addition, the lack of research on teachers' motivation to teach across the PhAw and phonics continua, as well as students' engagement in PhAw and phonics lessons need to be addressed (National Reading Panel, 2000). Knowing the factors that contribute to teacher motivation and student engagement in PhAw and phonics lessons can better inform early learning curriculum designers about the most effective ways to create dynamic emergent literacy lessons for both teachers and students, which leads to more effective classrooms with greater levels of achievement. On the largest scale, this study could lead to inquiries that influence educational policy makers to provide more education, resources, and freedom for educators to provide deeper and richer PhAw and phonics instruction, as well as provide empirical support for educational sites to contract supplemental educators in specialized fields who have more experience with unique and effective approaches to L&L instruction.

**Theoretical Perspective on Empirical Research— Eclectic Pluralism**

Before offering the theories used to inform this study, I will first offer my views on empirical research. I believe inquiry, or at least the means to the ends, needs to have an effective, multifaceted, and balanced approach (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). This line of reasoning lends itself towards an epistemological pluralism and universalist thought, where the former embraces the notion that knowledge can be attended from various sources, in various ways (Trickett, 1996; Turkle & Papert, 1991). The latter embraces the notion that basic truths exists; however, some truths are contextually related to particular human experiences (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). Along the journey to crafting my understanding of empirical research, the innate

synergism of my perspective directed me towards an emerging world view, a rising paradigm—

Dialectics. The dialectical position generates results in a comprehensive, integrative manner

(Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Dialectics is in essence an extension of Pragmatism; however, Dia-

lectics seeks to very intently integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches (Decuir-Gunby &

Schutz, 2017). The emerging refinement of the classic pragmatist perspective through a mixed-

methods lens is dialectical pragmatism (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, from my posi-

tion, not only do I have an inherent dialectical outlook, but in addition, I tend to operate eclecti-

cally, in that, I take the best and most effective elements of a variety of doctrines, methods, or

styles.

Herein, I believe there are some absolutes or _T_ruths that are objective and integral, and

whose integrity and soundness are unconditioned as they relate to human existence. However, I

do not solely believe nor operate in absolutes. As such, I believe, in tandem, that there are some

subjective and conditional _t_ruths that are contextual and reliant on human existence and fostered

through human consciousness. Therefore, I believe in Truth (i.e., big T's and little t's), the inte-

gration between both absolute and contingent aspects of knowledge and reality. With regards to

research, I find myself in the "radical middle…[as a result of]…principled pluralism" (Rasinski

& Padak, 2004, p. 91) because of my belief that there is merit in both ends of the qualitative and

quantitative research spectrum. My eclectic approach seeks to utilize the best of both worlds

through a synergistically mixed methodology perspective. While this was not a mixed-methods

study, I orient myself towards mixed-method approaches to research.

Consequently, reshaping the existing terminology regarding my paradigm / inquiry

worldview, both ontologically and epistemologically, and with regards to my paradigmatic re-

search stance, I am positioned within what I call Eclectic Pluralism. *Pluralism* relates to my embracing and desire to understand the multiplicity that permeates reality, while *eclectic* relates to my desire to integrate the best elements of the multiplicity into a synergistic whole to garner the greatest degree of effectiveness. Therefore, I generally integrate the opposing, yet not contradictory viewpoints about existence and knowledge, particularly with regards to Idealism, Realism, and Pragmatism. In addition, I see a wealth of benefits in all methodological schools of thought, and in turn, methods to be utilized, as I seek the best of all worlds in my pursuit of, valid, reliable, trustworthy, and rigorous research outcomes. An eclectic conceptual stance is not novel in the context of literacy research. In fact, this stance has been adopted by many literacy researchers whose perspective seeks balance between the extremes that exist in literacy pedagogy (Cramer, 2004). My epistemological stance draws from a perspective within literacy research called Balanced Literacy.

### *Theoretical Perspective on Literacy Pedagogy—Balanced Literacy*

Having first appeared as a budding pedagogical concept in California in 1996 (Asselin, 1999), researchers and practitioners have since described balanced literacy in multiple ways: a combination of whole language, (i.e., meaning/content focus) and skills-based, (i.e., phonic methods) instruction (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Cramer, 2004; Frey et al., 2005; Pressley et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 2002; Shaw & Hurst, 2012; Tompkins, 2010); an understanding that reading and writing develop mutually and should be emphasized in tandem (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Shaw & Hurst, 2012; Tompkins, 2010); and as a way to provide different levels of teacher support and child control (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Cramer, 2004; Frey et al., 2005; Shaw & Hurst, 2012). The field of literacy research has seemed to conclude that whole

language, phonics, skills-based, literature-based, comprehension-oriented, and word-based concepts are all important and need to be taught in language arts classrooms (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). These definitions orient balanced literacy as a philosophical stance that envisions reading and writing achievement as developing through a pedagogy that is supported in a variety of environments and a wealth of approaches that combine both student-centered activities and teacher-directed instruction (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Frey et al., 2005; Shaw & Hurst, 2012). Balanced literacy promotes the integration of the vital aspects of literacy instruction through explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, expressiveness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Shaw & Hurst, 2012).

Therefore, the very essence of "balanced literacy is eclectic" (Cramer, 2004, p. 40) as it utilizes instructional components from various systems, sources, and styles (Cramer, 2004). Some educators are becoming more comprehensive in their approaches to literacy and reporting themselves as being "extremely eclectic in their literacy instruction" (Pressley et al., 2002, p. 2). It is no surprise then that eclectic approaches to literacy instruction have been effective in producing positive results in the reading and writing development of students (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). In this way, balanced literacy is a highly dynamic model because of the vast degree of flexibility between non-discrete, intersecting elements that overlap, giving the educator many opportunities to use their professional knowledge (Shaw & Hurst, 2012).

I am fully aware of all the essential elements that aggregate to form the foundation of literacy. Thus, I typically subscribe to a balanced literacy approach to literacy pedagogy because of its eclectic, comprehensive nature. However, in this research study, I focused, mostly, but not completely, on the skills-based orientation, specifically, skills elicited through instruction across the PhAw and phonics continua because research concludes that these components are highly

impactful on reading development (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Flippo, 2012; Goswami, 2000; Pressley et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 2002; Saracho & Spodek, 2002). Yet, they can be difficult for students to acquire (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). This focus spawned from my background in linguistics and subsequent interest in the PhAw and phonics continua. Nevertheless, I did not completely ignore elements such as comprehension or vocabulary as they did appear in some of the analysis. Because of the strong positive connection between the PhAw and phonics continua and reading development, agreement on the importance of elements of these components are universal, in that they are some of the most important predictors of a child's reading and spelling development (Flippo, 2012; Goswami, 2000). These elements of development are constantly emerging during a child's acquisition of language. In fact, these elements are vital contributors to a child's emergent literacy development phase.

### *Theoretical Perspective on Language Acquisition—Emergent Literacy*

The concept of EL was developed by Marie Clay (Clay, 1990; Rodhe, 2015). The knowledge and abilities regarding language sounds, symbolic representation, and communication are the anchors of emergent literacy (EL) and development in these areas builds over the span of birth to 5 years old (Rodhe, 2015). The multidimensional nature of EL (Connor, 2006) exists along developmental continuum where children begin to acquire language early in life, rather than literacy acquisition being an all-or-none phenomenon initiated at the onset of schooling (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). EL skills, knowledge, and attitudes are regarded as developmental precursors to conventional forms of literacy (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), and not only does EL knowledge about reading and writing precede conventional literacy acquisition, but EL is best represented as a sociocultural process influenced by the social and cultural contexts of chil-

dren's environment (Justice & Pullen, 2003). The critical importance of context cannot be overstated in that it is essential in ensuring children gain the preliminary skills and awareness necessary to be successful in literacy through a combination of developmentally appropriate practice and rich literary environments (Rodhe, 2015). "The understanding a child is gaining about books, how they work, and how print carries messages, is probably a kind of window through which a child gains access to the reading process" (Clay, 1990). EL includes a variety of skills along the PhAw and phonics continua, knowledge of both graphemes (i.e., letters) and phonemes (i.e., letter sounds), understanding of reading mechanics (e.g., reading from left to right), name writing, basic reading comprehension, and motivation to read (Neumann et al., 2017). EL is evident when children interact with paper, pencils, books or when they scribble, draw, dictate, compose, listen to stories, pretend read, tell stories, and are exposed to print (Morrow, 1990).

In this study, EL was the theoretical foundation for language acquisition, which reflects how learners develop language. A common theme among the research cited above is the notion that early learners possess innate skills and awareness that are the instruments for their individual developing literacy, which moves them toward a conventional literacy. These skills and awareness seem to be cognitively-based and are, on some level, interdependent in connection with a literacy rich environment. In other words, research is clear on the skills and knowledge that contribute to reading and writing and they are based on cognitive and environmental factors as they relate to literacy. As such, EL was at the center of this study as it brought to bear the interconnectedness of the various elements within early learning and wove a design that addressed various aspects that are pivotal to this study's central purpose– language and literacy concepts and strategies, particularly regarding language sounds in early learning programs.

**Conclusion**

I believe teaching is an art as much as it is a science. Thusly, I see pedagogy as a symphony of nuance, sequenced in scientific steps, and to some degree, poetically expressed, in a rhythm of performed actions for the purpose of enlightening the minds of learners. It is pressed upon teachers to render a clear picture to guide the minds of their students into framing the learned content into a level of understanding that leads to achievement. I believe that the journey to academic achievement, on a variety of levels, begins with literacy proficiency, particularly, but not limited to print literacy, coupled with a deep understanding of language itself. The cornerstone for both literacy proficiency and deep language understanding is phonological awareness. While not all languages have a system of visual symbols (i.e., alphabetic or ideographic symbols), the vast majority of languages have a system of language sounds (i.e., verbally oriented communication system). Moreover, the plethora of languages that do have a system of visual symbols created said system based on the language's system of sounds. Therefore, to teach language is to engage in a sound exchange of modalities, where sound takes primacy.

In this study, I examined the experiences and impressions of teachers regarding L&L concepts and strategies, specifically language sounds related the concepts of the phonological awareness (PhAw) and phonics as instructional content. I also examined teachers experiences with and impressions of performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as strategies to convey the L&L content along with their experiences with and impressions of motivation to teach this content and students' levels of engagement in the L&L lessons. I addressed the problems associated with instruction along the PhAw and phonics continua in early learning settings and the need for more research regarding teacher motivation to teach PhAw and phonics skills, as well as student engagement in PhAw and phonics lessons. This study has the potential to be

the catalyst to the development of highly effective language and literacy pedagogy through the development of more effective interventions, strategies, and programs.

The foundation of this inquiry was anchored in Eclectic Pluralism, Balanced Literacy, and Emergent Literacy. Eclectic Pluralism oversaw my overarching perspective on empirical research as it sought to synergize the best elements of various research approaches of this study. Balanced literacy guided my view of literacy pedagogy as the balance across the vast aspects of L&L instruction. Emergent literacy (EL) provided the theoretical foundation of language acquisition describing how young children develop their language awareness and skills over time along a developmental trajectory, which is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Rather, EL is a journey that starts at the inception of life and continues until conventional literacy is achieved. In the next chapter, I go deeper into the literature regarding the instruction of language sounds, specifically, PhAw and phonics, in consort with the literature on performing arts. There, I have shown what research has surmised regarding PhAw, phonics, and performing arts in early learning environments.

**2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This review of literature focuses on phonological awareness (PhAw), phonemic awareness, phonics (i.e., graphophonemic awareness (GphA) instruction) and performing arts, particularly music, dance, lyricism, and theater that advance literacy for students in early learning programs. I conducted a thorough search to identify studies that were language-focused, specifically regarding PhAw. The overarching goal of this study was to determine the experiences with and impressions of early learning educators regarding language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies, specifically PhAw and GphA through instruction across the PhAw and phonics continua, as well as the integration of performing arts into PhAw and phonics instruction. I also sought to understand teacher motivation and student engagement regarding PhAw and phonics lessons.

My passions for both language and pedagogy drove my interests in this study. I believe that both passions could be motivating factors for all educators to use innovative teaching strategies, such as performing arts in their PhAw and phonics instruction, which could lead to more effective forms of early literacy instruction. In addition, I believe my research has the potential to advance the areas of early learning L&L instruction because this could better inform early learning educators about how PhAw and phonics instruction work in their classrooms across several factors, particularly with regards to content and delivery strategies. My research also has the potential to inform the areas of linguistics and performing arts in early learning, L&L education because it could influence the use of linguistics-based pedagogy, as well as lead to interventions that employ deeper levels of performing arts integration.

This literature review covers PhAw, phonemic awareness, phonics, and performing arts in early learning, L&L education. I believe it was important to address a wide variety of aspects

regarding PhAw, phonics, and performing arts in early learning settings because a clear picture of how PhAw and phonics has been theorized and operationalized in other classrooms is key to having the clearest lens for my research. The review is in two sections: 1) PhAw and phonics in literacy research and 2) performing arts in literacy research.

Regarding PhAw and phonics research, I began the first section of the review by citing literature to provide a general understanding of PhAw and phonics instruction. I started with providing a general understanding of PhAw and phonics because both PhAw and phonics were very prevalent in research regarding how they were addressed within instruction; I then went into greater detail to provide a deeper understanding into the importance of both PhAw and phonics. I then discussed the phonics versus whole language debate (i.e., the Reading Wars). I found that there is a great deal of confusion within the field regarding whole language to which I attempted to bring clarity. I then discuss the fulcrum of the contention between the two camps of the Reading Wars—balanced literacy. I then provided my own beliefs through a linguistic lens regarding phonics instruction and whole language instruction, as well as my pedagogical prescriptions from a balanced, comprehensive linguistics approach. I then went on to examine teachers' impressions of phonics because the ways in which teachers view phonics will influence if and how they use phonics in their classroom. Subsequently, I reviewed research on effective classroom practices for early literacy instruction in general with an emphasis on supporting PhAw and phonics instruction. I wanted to understand how PhAw and phonics have been applied in early learning education settings, in a larger context, to inform how I would view PhAw and phonics instruction in my own research environment, considering all the pedagogical factors that I would encounter in the data. In the second section of the review, I examined the arts in language and literacy pedagogy. I looked at the arts in general then break down the arts into the four elements

of the study: music, dance, lyricism, and theater. Each of the arts has supportive literature that showed their importance to literacy research.

This literature review covered the many facets of research pertaining to PhAw, phonics, and performing arts that are being examined in this study. The aim of this review was to lend support to the purpose of this study, which is to examine several key factors of PhAw, phonics, and performing arts experienced by teachers in early learning programs. The integration of PhAw and phonics instruction with performing arts, and understanding the bridge between theory and practice in these areas are of particular interest in this study. Now that I have laid the foundation of this review, in the next section, I have detailed the methodology behind this review of literature.

**Methodology of Review**

Before presenting the review of literature, I first present the methodology of review, which details how I found the literature in my study. My general search criteria related to literature that focused on the "phonological", "phonics", or "performing arts", generally in the early learning preschool and Pre-K age range (3-5 years old). I made sure to include several empirically based sources, such as articles and book chapters related to literacy research and linguistics pedagogy because I wanted the most reliable, empirically grounded studies from which to draw my knowledge. In searching for articles, I consulted online databases (e.g., Galileo, Open Athens), websites, and texts from my personal collection that focused on language education research for early learners. Although my review mostly yielded empirical and theoretical articles from a variety of literacy-related, scientific journals and texts, I also pulled information from dissertations and education-based websites. Additionally, I conducted several Google Scholar

searches in order to find various scholars and their work based on the articles I read while re-searching the topics of this study. The participants in the empirical studies were educators and/or students in preschool, prekindergarten, or primary education. Finally, any articles that I used were peer-reviewed within the disciplines of education, language, and linguistics.

I began with a general search on the Georgia State University, GALILEO-powered, online library directory. It is comprised of numerous databases covering all disciplines; however, I narrowed many of my searches to the education and language & linguistics disciplines. In my initial search, I used the phrase "phonological awareness in Pre-K classrooms" in my search. This search yielded 1,592 articles between the years of 1991 to 2019, which had some potential articles that met the inclusion criteria. This initial search gave me a good foundation of terms and scholars doing work on this topic. My second search of relevant literature was "emergent literacy in Pre-K classrooms" and "balanced literacy in Pre-K classrooms". I added "phonological aware-ness" and "phonics" to the additional search options to focus the parameters of the previous search criteria even further. As a result, "emergent literacy in…" yielded 312 articles between the years of 1991-2019 and "balanced literacy in…" yielded 116 articles between the years of 1996-2018. I added additional searches using the terms "phonological and Pre-Kindergarten/Pre-K/preschool and continuum," which yielded 3401 articles between 1990-2020. My final search for this portion of the study was using the terms "phonological sensitivity and Pre-Kindergar-ten/Pre-K/preschool and continuum," which yielded 1135 articles between 1990-2020.

I searched several times for the second part of the study focusing on the terms "perform-ing arts in Pre-K classrooms" yielding 58 articles, "music in…" yielding 74 articles "dance in…" yielding 14 articles, "lyricism or rhyme in…" yielding 194 articles, and finally "theater in…" yielding 11 articles. From those searches, I sought to choose the most appropriate articles based

on their relevance to early language development theories and empirical research on early language education, specifically related early learning populations. I also made additional exclusions once I started reading titles or reading through articles because I noticed that many of the articles that appeared in the search were technology-based or centered on other factors in which were not of interest in this study. After looking through hundreds of texts, I utilized 192 sources related to the phonological awareness (PhAw), phonological sensitivity, phonemic awareness, phonics, balanced literacy, emergent literacy (EL), and the performing arts in general and in the four specific areas of interest: music, dance, lyricism, and theater. I settled on these studies because they had the most relevant information regarding the topics that I was researching. In addition, the literature that I chose were sound with regards to theory or empirical research and some were also mentioned in other articles that appeared in the search. In the following sections I parsed the concepts of phonological awareness (PhAw), and phonics in various aspects of both pedagogy and learning, after which, I went into detail about the performing arts as a pedagogical tool for literacy instruction.

**Phonological Awareness: The Overarching Concept**

The concept phonological awareness (PhAw) pervades most, if not all, language and literacy (L&L) research as one of the most important factors that contributes to literacy development (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Hawken et al., 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rodhe, 2015; Shapiro & Solity, 2008; Shaw & Hurst, 2012; Stahl, 2001). While most researchers agree on some of the general skills that should be covered by the overarching concept of PhAw, there are various opinions about how widely across the spectrum of phonological ability the term should cover. Typically, the concept of PhAw is defined as understanding of the ways in which language sounds can be segmented and manipulated (Anthony

& Lonigan, 2004; Blachman, 2000; Chard & Dickson, 1999). Additionally, there are levels to breaking down language sounds (Goswami, 2000; Pullen & Justice, 2003), which is how the PhAw continuum is delineated. The smallest most discrete level of the PhAw continuum is that of the individual language sound or phoneme (e.g., the word 'cat' broken down into the three phonemes—/k/-/ă/-/t/). This most discrete level of language sound awareness is known as phonemic awareness (i.e., awareness of phonemes/individual sounds). Within another sector along the PhAw continuum is the level of onset and rime within a syllable, where the onset is a consonant sound(s) before the vowel sound in a syllable and the rime is the vowel sound and any possible consonant sounds that follow until the end of the syllable. For example, 'breakdown' can be segmented into two onsets and two rimes: 1.1 onset - /br/, 1.2 rime - /āk/, 2.1 onset - /d/, 2.2. rime - /own/. The next level on the phonological awareness continuum is that of the syllable, which is anchored down by the vowel sound (e.g. 'awareness' has three vowel sounds and thus three syllables - /ŭ./wër./nĭs/). Beyond these three basic sub-lexical levels (i.e., levels below/within the word), some researchers also consider the lexical level (i.e., the word level) within the sentence, which is to say differentiating the sound borders between words within sentences. All of these different levels have led to PhAw being described as a continuum of developing phonological skills (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Pufpaff, 2009). The variety of existing definitions of PhAw have incorporated all or only some of these levels depending on the researcher (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004) and the lack of consistency in defining and using terminology as it relates to phonological skills has created confusion in the field, particularly for educators (Pufpaff, 2009). As different researchers believe in various levels being covered by the term PhAw, the starkest difference in the opinion of PhAw boundary is at the level of the phoneme. Therefore, some researchers have used PhAw to cover all the levels of segmentation. Some researchers use PhAw to cover

all levels until the level of the phoneme and then use the term phonemic awareness to cover the level of the individual sounds. Some researchers use phonemic awareness and phonological awareness interchangeably and some researchers use various other terms to describe each level of awareness (e.g., syllabic awareness) (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Pufpaff, 2009).

In lieu of this confusion, Stanovich (1992) divorced the concept of "awareness" noting that conscious awareness cannot be operationalized accurately and chose instead to use the term phonological sensitivity and described it as a continuum, from a "shallow" sensitivity of the largest phonological units (i.e., words), to a "deep" sensitivity of the smallest phonological units (i.e., phonemes) (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004). I take issue with using the term "sensitivity" in the same manner that Stanovich (1992) took issue with using the term "awareness" as I note that, one, semantically the two terms are not divergent enough to alleviate his original claim of lack of operationalization, to which, two, I also disagree that the use of awareness is an issue. Various measures and assessments have been made for abstract concepts throughout human existence and PhAw, at any level of segmentation, has been adequately measured and assessed through research in the field.

Because of the terminological muck and being an Eclectic Pluralist, I have chosen to clarity a few of the phonological concepts and terms in this study. First, I addressed the concept of the continuum of skills related to phonological ability. I typically used the phrase "instruction along phonological awareness continuum" (PhAw continuum) in the context of a pedagogical construct mapping the development of phonological skills and in turn instructional activities from the awareness of the largest phonological units that can be manipulated at the lexical (i.e., word related) level to the smallest at the phonemic (i.e., phonemes/ individual letter sounds)

level. Additionally, regarding the lexical (i.e., word related) border segmentation (i.e., segmenting sentences into words), while I understood that PhAw is necessary to segment sentences into words, I also understood that morphosemantic awareness (i.e., multi-level meaning awareness) is necessary in tandem with PhAw to understand word boundaries. One must understand language sounds interlaced with language meaning in order to know a word boundary in this way. Therefore, segmenting sentences into words is not a purely phonological skill; it necessitates phonological, morphological, and semantic skills. Moving on, I used the most general definition of PhAw understanding it as the overarching awareness of language sounds in spoken language covering all of the levels of the PhAw continuum (i.e., lexical to phonemic levels). Therefore, I viewed each level within the PhAw continuum as subset of PhAw: lexical awareness, syllabic awareness, onset/rime (OR) awareness, and phonemic awareness.

Because children begin to demonstrate PhAw at approximately 2 years old as they begin to parse sounds within words (Skibbe et al., 2016), instruction along the PhAw continuum should be introduced in preschool and could include a variety of activities that elicit PhAw such as engaging in activities that focus on rhyming through song, activities that connect kinesthetic movement with syllable recognition, or activities designed to segment individual sounds through acting like a robot. In early learning programs, PhAw has been researched thoroughly. Studies indicate that not only can young children be instructed in PhAw, but it leads to better reading outcomes (Hawken et al., 2005).

**Phonics: The Dominate Practice**

Phonics encourages recognition of relationships between language sounds and letters as well as the patterns that can occur between the two (Conway, 2015; Tompkins, 2005). Understanding the correlations between language sounds and letters is known as graphophonemic

awareness, where "grapho-" means visual, or in this context, a visual unit or letter, and phonemic means sound unit, or in this context, a sound unit or language/letter sound. Sounding out words is promoted along with combining sounds in a process called blending (Conway, 2015), which is considered an advanced phonological skill (Skibbe et al., 2016). Phonics can be viewed as literacy content and not just a pedagogical strategy for literacy instruction (Buckland & Fraser, 2008). Sources have stated that explicit and systematic instruction in phonics, (i.e., skills-based or bottoms up approach) is key to literacy development (Donat, 2006; Shaw & Hurst, 2012), where direct teaching of isolated letter-sound correlations are the central focus of this instruction. Skills-based, bottom-up instructional approaches suggest that meaning will be acquired by first focusing on graphemes (i.e., letters) and association with their phonemes (i.e., letter sounds), thereby developing the ability to create words through the grapheme-phoneme combinations, which then are strung together to make sentences (Shaw & Hurst, 2012). According to research, phonics instruction produces benefits for all early learning, primary, and middle school students and most especially for any students that have difficulty learning to read or those that come from homes challenged by socioeconomic status (Donat, 2006). In addition, explicit phonics can have a positive impact on teachers as they can become more proficient through high quality systematic phonics instruction (Ehri & Flugman, 2018).

**Phonics vs. Whole language**

For over a century, educators have been investigating how best to help children develop literacy (Carbo, 1996). The pendulum has swung back and forth between two different approaches, sparking the Reading Wars. On one end is whole language, which for the last 30 years has had a strong foothold in literacy education, and on the other end is phonics, which was popular in literacy education from the 70s to the 90s (Carbo, 1996). Some viewed this contention as

merely an ideological conflict with more marketplace competitive implications than academic

merit (Flippo, 2012), that would eventually drain the field of literacy's energies, while both con-

fusing and demoralizing educators (Huang, 2014).

      The major difference between the two approaches is the way that learners are taught to

understand language. Whole language teaches learners to look at language from whole to part,

while phonics teaches learners to view language from part to whole (Kolstad & Bardwell, 1997).

In other words, whole language starts learning at the level of concepts, books, and sentences

working downward to words (i.e., top-down approach), while phonics starts learning at the level

of letters and letter sounds working upward to words, sentences, etc. (i.e., bottom-up approach).

The appeal for the whole language is the focus on rich, holistic and contextually-based literacy

through the use of real books, writing activities, peer interactions, hands-on-learning, and story

repetition, all for the purpose of meaning making (Carbo, 1996; Cassidy, 1996; Kolstad & Bard-

well, 1997). The focal points of the pedagogical aspects of debate relates to the role of skills in-

struction, more specifically if, when, and how to use phonics; the use of text in instruction, either

sampled text or whole text; and the role of context in meaning (Cramer, 2004). The debate has

raged on for decades with no end in sight as both the skills-building approach (i.e., bottoms-up,

explicit phonics instruction) and the holistic approach (top-down, meaning and context-focused

camps) cite research purporting to support their position (Cramer, 2004). Researchers on each

side have addressed and refuted multiple research studies from the opposing side (Krashen,

2002) to the point where it is clear that there is merit to both points of view. What seems to be

needed is a balance between the opposing sides of the debate.

**Balanced Literacy: The Fulcrum of the Reading Wars**

A balance between the two approaches could yield the most effective learning. Effectively utilizing both approaches is the hallmark of balanced literacy, which "stresses the essential explicit teaching of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and vocabulary, expressiveness and comprehension" (Shaw & Hurst, 2012, p. 1), all of which are vital to literacy development and central elements of both approaches. In short, balanced literacy encourages educators to provide everything that has been demonstrated to be effective (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). Balance means taking stock in all of the field's knowledge about literacy and attempting to give effective attention to everything (Asselin, 1999). This balance gives equal value to all literacy components from reading and writing to skill-based and meaning-based instruction (Tompkins, 2010). Even deeper, this balance must be viewed as multidimensional, where there exists a group of interrelated multi-tiered balances based on each of the facets of language (Pearson, 1999 as cited by Asselin, 1999). For example, in some learning situations, there will be an equal amount of time or emphasis devoted to both skills-based and meaning-based instruction through an equal number phonics and guided reading exercises, while other times one approach may necessitate more attention than the other (Rasinski & Padak, 2004). However, it should never be an either/or proposition because one is viewed as more valuable than the other. Equal value is placed on all the vital literacy components, and therefore, in the larger scope of literacy development, comprehensive balance is achieved.

The needs of the students must take precedent because this comprehensive, balanced approach can both accelerate achievement (Donat, 2006), while addressing individual needs of students (Donat, 2006; Frey et al., 2005). Therefore, since phonics is a foundational element to both comprehension and higher order thinking, it needs explicit and systematic instruction along with

regular periods of literature-based experiences and opportunities to read authentic texts to further support vocabulary and comprehension (Asselin, 1999). "Balanced literacy recognizes that word study and phonics are necessary, but insists on a broad instructional context, emphasizing writing process, meaningful use and practice, strategy instruction, response to literature, and recognition of the diverse needs of children" (Cramer, 2004, p. 40). Balancing skill-based and meaning based instruction can ensure positive development of reading and writing in students (Asselin, 1999; Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013). Moreover, this notion of balance extends to the role of the teacher and student. Teacher-directed and student-centered activities must be balanced (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Metsala, 1997). In this way, modeling and scaffolding become key as teachers must balance the level of assistance that they give to their students with the aim of them, the students, becoming self-regulated learners (Frey et al., 2005; Metsala, 1997).

### *Structure and Meaning: Bringing Balance*

Gazing upon the literacy landscape with aims of achieving balance, the picture becomes clearer when viewed through a linguistic lens. Within the nature of language, there exists many dualities (e.g., consonants and vowels, onsets and rimes, prefixes and suffixes, nouns and verbs, phrases and clauses). Moreover, from a wide conceptual vantage, there exists a duality that seems to summate much of this Reading Wars debate—the duality of structure and meaning. Structure and meaning in language are both interconnected and interdependent, in that, structural elements in language, (e.g., letters and letter sounds) when combined in ways conferred as intel-ligible words, are imbued with meaning, creating the communication and expression at the heart of language. It is impossible to convey meaning without structure because the idea of cat cannot be conveyed without visual, sound, or tactile elements. Likewise, structure without meaning has

no purpose because strings of letters or sounds that are not conferred as intelligible words are futile. One other key duality is how language function within the word (i.e., lexis) and outside of the word, creating the innerlexical (i.e., within the word) and intralexical (i.e., outside of the word) levels.

Furthermore, language is parsed by the theories or fields of linguistics: graphology (i.e., study of visual language elements), phonology (i.e., study of language sound elements), morphology (i.e., study of the smallest meaningful parts in language), semantics (i.e., study of global meaning in language), syntax (study of word groups and word order), and pragmatics (i.e., the study of language use in relation to audience). The theories that encompass structure are graphology, phonology, and syntax. The theories that encompass meaning are morphology and semantics. Pragmatics toggles between or incorporates both structure and meaning depending on the context. The theories that encompass the innerlexical level are graphology, phonology, and morphology. The theories that encompass the intralexical level are semantics, syntax, and pragmatics.

With that in mind, I believe the Reading Wars seem to come down to whether instruction should emphasize structure or meaning. Instruction that focuses on the nuances of structural, innerlexical elements, which is graphology and phonology (i.e., letters and letter sounds), whose purpose is to lead to understanding meaning is pit against instruction that immerses students in opportunities for comprehension of intralexical, meaning elements, which is semantics (i.e., general meaning) with aims of providing implicit learning of structure. Phonics is innerlexical, structure-focused instruction and whole language focuses on intralexical, meaning-focused instruction.

**Teachers' Impressions of Phonics**

As with all forms of instruction, there must be support by the educators. Phonics is certainly no exception. The notion of teacher's attitudes towards instruction is important. The ways that educators perceive instructional programs can affect the quality of their teaching. In fact, there is a direct correlation between student achievement and the congruency of the teacher beliefs with the instructional practices (DeCourcey, 2003; Richardson et al., 1991). That is to say, students are more successful when the instructor believes in what they are teaching. Therefore, teachers' impressions of phonics instruction must be addressed.

The research literature investigating teachers' impressions as it relates to PhAw and phonics is still in the emerging stages of development, unlike the research that investigates the effects of PhAw and phonics on early literacy development, which is rich in literature. Nonetheless, there are some studies that focus on teachers' impressions in this area. For example, Dogan (2012) aimed at gaining more understanding of teachers' impressions with regards to the phonics-based sentence method, which utilized phonics components in instruction. The participants were Turkish primary school teachers taking a reading-writing instruction course. The teachers were tasked to produce metaphors that demonstrate their views with the phonics-based sentence method. Since metaphors are a cognitive tool that an individual uses to understand an abstract notion, the researchers believed that examining these metaphors would provide a deeper level of insight into the impressions the teachers had about the phonics-based sentence method. The 218 primary school teachers in the study were asked to write their own metaphors for the phonics-based sentence method through an open-ended questionnaire. This qualitative data set was analyzed in terms of four themes: cognitive, affective, positive, and negative. The cognitive theme

indicates metaphors that centered on the process or structure of the instructional method. For example, one participant said, "It is like doing a puzzle because the pieces in the puzzle are combined to form a new whole" (Dogan, 2012, p. 146).

Another example of research on teachers' impressions in this area is Powell et al. (2008). This study inquired about teachers' perspectives on externally imposed expectations of improving reading skills, which were largely unknown. More specifically, the study looked at the level of responsibility that teachers feel for early literacy outcomes, their perspective of literacy goals in contrast to other developmental outcomes, and their definition of and approach to their role as a literacy teacher. The goal was to codify teachers' views on various topics related to early literacy. First, they investigated teachers' perspectives on early literacy in contrast to other developmental domains to extend the research literature beyond the either/or dichotomy (e.g., academic vs. social development). Second, they investigated teachers' conceptions of key early literacy skills and those skills' primary sources of influence to elicit teachers' understanding of the primary drivers of literacy development. Finally, they investigated teachers' perspectives of the teacher's role in supporting literacy development to understand how teachers viewed the contributions of instruction on children's acquisition of literacy skills. These perspectives are important to early literacy research because they have the potential to expand the field by providing deeper understanding of how literacy theory is operationalized in the classroom.

The results showed that participants beliefs about early literacy had a lot of variation. In general, the participants supported literacy goals for the Head start programs. However, some of the teachers expressed concern regarding the increased expectations to bolster children's literacy competency. Most teachers believed that literacy goals are equally as important as social development goals; however, the sequence of development differed among the group, in that, some

felt that other developmental areas are prerequisites for literacy growth. Others believed they developed simultaneously, while some others believe that literacy skills are prerequisites to other developmental areas. In addition, they believed the dominate literacy skill was alphabet knowledge as well as understanding concepts of print. They believed that the origins of literacy either depended on the child's innate readiness or external factors such as home and class environments prepared the child for literacy. While, some teachers believed their role in literacy development was to provide literacy opportunities that the student would naturally engage in, others believed that their role is to provide explicit instruction and not leave their development up to chance. The most interesting point of this topic was the notion of phonological sensitivity (i.e., PhAw). Of all the other literacy areas, it was given the least attention. It seems that the perspective on PhAw was not as widely addressed, seeing that few teachers stated the importance of students knowing letter sounds, identifying syllables, and understanding rhyme. This was due in part to some of the teachers limited understanding of how to support PhAw and their reliance on curriculum resources to aid them in unfamiliar areas. The problem was that they could not find a resource (e.g., CD) that taught letter sounds.

My final example on this topic is Spear-Swerling and Brucker (2005) who investigated teachers' literacy-related disciplinary knowledge and self-perceptions as it relates to their preparation and experience. The focus of the study was to measure the teachers' levels of experience and preparation against their perceptions of their knowledge, as well as the accuracy of their perceptions and the levels of performance of their actual literacy-related knowledge. There was a total of 132 educators ranging in experience from graduate students to credentialed teachers. They were given a self-perception, 5-point scale to measure general reading and writing knowledge, PhAw and phonics knowledge, and morpheme awareness and structural analysis

knowledge. The participants were then given 5 tasks to complete: general knowledge related to reading development; counting prefixes, suffixes, and roots in words; letter and letter sound segmentation; classification of pseudowords by syllable type; and identifying of phonetically irregular words in a set of common words. The results of the study demonstrate that teachers with the most experience perceived themselves as highly knowledgeable across most tasks, while teachers with less experience perceived themselves as less knowledgeable. The participants' self-perceptions were influenced positively by their level of preparation and experience. In general, the more experienced teachers outperformed teachers with less experience in all tasks. Moreover, the accuracy of teachers' self-perceptions was mixed. While their perceptions were accurate in some tasks (e.g., phonological awareness), teacher perceptions did not correlate significantly to their actual performance in other tasks (e.g., morphemic awareness). These results contrast with Cunningham et al. (2004) whose study also looked at teachers' perceptions of disciplinary knowledge; however, the results of that study showed teachers possessed poor accuracy regarding their knowledge of PhAw and phonics. Despite outperforming less experienced teachers, the more experienced teachers in Spear-Swerling and Brucker (2005) were not at all exceptional in their performance of any of the 5 tasks. Since teachers' disciplinary knowledge about key elements of language development is vital to effective instruction (Moats, 1994, 2004), it is necessary to address the elements that constitute language development, and as a result, effective PhAw and phonics instruction.

**Best Practices of PhAw and Phonics Instruction**

The foundations of reading are concepts about print, letter recognition, phonological awareness (PhAw), phonemic awareness, phonics & decoding, automatic word recognition, and oral reading fluency (Cunningham, 2017). Moreover, while some researchers state that PhAw is

a prerequisite that students must acquire before phonics instruction can be effective (Cunningham, 2017), other researchers state that PhAw can be taught as a precursor to or in tandem with phonics instruction (Moats, 1994). As Cunningham (2017) examined the ever-controversial topics of phonics instruction, he contended that while phonics instruction is necessary, it is pedagogically incomplete alone; it must be taught alongside reading and writing. For example, teachers could help students write words that have been read using phonetic spelling, which helps them with both phonemic segmentation (i.e., breaking down each sound in a word) and possibly the most important PhAw ability, phonemic sequencing (i.e., putting each sound in the proper order and speaking with a proper flow and proper cadence) (Cunningham, 2017). According to the author, one of the main elements that matters most in phonics instruction is best practices, which is comprised of content and strategies grounded in research, as well as instructors that are experienced, and trained professionals applying and creating practices implemented for long enough periods to be effective. In addition, best practices must ensure students having regular opportunities to apply phonological knowledge and decode words, while also allowing students to encode through spelling unknown words. Students should also be taught sound patterns such as blends and digraphs. Regarding phonological awareness, educators must encourage and support students' encoding; use rhymes, chants, jingles, songs, etc., to play with pronunciation; and teach phonemic segmentation explicitly (Cunningham, 2017).

Other studies lend additional support of PhAw best practices, specifically in early learning settings. Roskos et al. (2003) examine the elements of a pre-primary education and details the essential practices of early learning literacy. They aim to draw from both empirical investigation and professional wisdom (research and practice). As such, they put forth several teaching strategies for the preschool phase of literacy development, which have been supported in whole

or in part by many other research studies and educational sources. Best practices include rich teacher talk, which is when preschool educators engage in conversation in various group formats, using rare words, extending children's comments, and including cognitively challenging content and advanced-level vocabulary (Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8, 2015; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Justice et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2008; Rodhe, 2015). Preschool educators should engage in storybook reading aloud to expose students to exciting stories and poems (Burgess et al., 2001; Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8, 2015; Ensar, 2014; Powell et al., 2008). Preschool best practices entail explicit phonological awareness activities to increase students' awareness of sounds through developing rhyme, alliteration, and sound matching abilities (Bowman et al., 2001; Burgess et al., 2001; Connor, 2006; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Ensar, 2014; Hawken et al., 2005; Justice et al., 2008; Mesmer & Williams, 2015; Miles, 2015; Powell et al., 2008; Rodhe, 2015; Shapiro & Solity, 2008). Alphabet activities should be incorporated to promote identification of letters through the use of ABC books, magnetic letters, alphabet blocks, puzzles, and charts (Burgess et al., 2001; Ensar, 2014; Hawken et al., 2005; Miles, 2015; Powell et al., 2008; Rodhe, 2015). Preschool educators should support emergent reading through encouraging children's attempt to read, keeping a well-stocked library, repeating favorite books, using practical print materials (e.g., schedules and helper charts), and posting play-related print (e.g., signs and menus) (Burgess et al., 2001; Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8, 2015; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Miles, 2015; Rodhe, 2015). Preschool educators should support emergent writing by encouraging all forms of writing from scribbling to invented spelling, keeping writing center stocked with utensils, and providing functional writing opportunities as well as play-related writing materials (Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8, 2015; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Ensar, 2014; Hawken et al.,

2005; Rodhe, 2015). Preschool students should engage in shared book experiences by being exposed to big books with enlarged texts, while educators point to the print as it is read. In addition, educators should make distinctions between pictures and print, use left-to-right and top-to-bottom sequencing, view book concepts like cover, title, and pages, and encourage reading along with parts that their students remember (Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8, 2015; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Hawken et al., 2005; Justice et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2008; Rodhe, 2015). Finally, preschool educators should incorporate integrated, content-focused activities by providing topics of interest to the students, promoting the use of oral language along with reading and writing about the world, engaging in teacher lead and individual activities, engaging in observations, experiments, and interviews, and engaging in dramatic roleplay to express what they have learned (Connor, 2006; Miles, 2015).

These general best practices for early literacy instruction give both a general picture of how early learning teachers should deliver content and a general picture of the types of content to delivered. As confirmed by research, PhAw and phonics are key to the L&L development of young students, and therefore are two central components that are critical to an effective literacy program (Watson & Widly, 2014). Since, PhAw is such powerful predictor of students' literacy skills (Melby-Lervag et al., 2012), it must be addressed explicitly and thoroughly, and then the skills that develop from PhAw instruction become prerequisites for phonics instruction. The debate is over regarding if phonics should be taught in early learning settings because all the current research has confirmed that showing emergent learners the correlations between letters and language/letter sounds is beneficial to all students in helping them become better readers and better spellers (Hanford, 2018).

However, at the preschool level, teaching letter sounds had been reported to be of little importance, just two decades ago (Burgess et al., 2001). As educators, we can ill afford to neglect such a pivotal element of literacy development. Currently, while there is an increase in PhAw and phonics instruction, now the pressing issue is the quality of instruction. Because of the intricate nature of the content, both students and teachers need multiple modes of expressing and engaging in the learning process. When students have creative and active modes of engagement, they are more likely to remember the content they are learning (McDonald & Fisher, 2006). The arts offers multiple means of engagement through observing, listening, expressing, creating, and moving that aids learners in acquiring information to help build their understanding (Zhou & Brown, 2018). PhAw and phonics instruction must be both relevant and exciting by engaging the interest of students to promote optimal learning; moreover, teachers must be enthusiastic, authentic, and generally enjoy what they are teaching to be the most effective (National Reading Panel, 2000).

One very effective way to achieve both enjoyable and in tandem effective pedagogical experiences is to integrate performing arts into the learning environment. Integrating the arts in pedagogy is not only in alignment with how students learn (Zhou & Brown, 2018), but participation in the arts increases literacy skills through reading, writing, speaking, listening, doing, and creating. (McDonald & Fisher, 2006). In the next section, I detail the use of the arts as pedagogical tools to address their correlation to language and literacy development and pedagogy, particularly regarding PhAw and phonics.

**The Arts in Language and Literacy Pedagogy**

*Art is standing with one hand extended into the universe and one hand extended into the world, and letting ourselves be a conduit for passing energy – Albert Einstein.*

As the quote would indicate, it seems that even one of the greatest scientific minds of the last few centuries understood the ubiquitous nexus within the essence of the arts. Their holistic, connective nature express experience through creativity and throughout time. The arts have the ability to connect the inner nature of (wo)man: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Therefore, the arts are an extension of the inner workings of (wo)man's nature. Just as (wo)man has various faces and functionalities, so do the arts. The arts are multimodal; therefore, their expressions come in many forms (Kisida et al., 2018). The arts are comprehensive as defined by the follow quote: "The arts often refer to the visual, musical, and performance arts, which include painting, ceramics, photography, films, plays, storytelling, concerts, and others…" (Albers & Harste, 2007; Albers & Sanders, 2010, p. 5). Acquisition of the arts can be explained through various theories such as the theory of cognitive pluralism, which argues that there are multiple ways of acquiring knowledge based on individual experiences, values, etc. (Jones & Kim, 2010) or the theory of multiple intelligences, which argues the existence of a combination of eight intelligences (e.g., linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematic, visual/spatial) that uniquely work in tandem within each individual and affects performance on different tasks (Hou, 2016; Zaini, 2018). Both in education and in art, each of these theories can be applied to address diverse educational needs. For instance, cognitive pluralism could provide the framework for a curricula that supports space for cultural intervention (Mehrmohammadi, 2011), while the understanding of music-rhythmic intelligence can be applied on the topics of vibrational, rhythm, and tonal patterns in a music class (Zaini, 2018).

Many scholars agree that training in the arts enhances artistic skill in a "holistic" way (Brown et al., 2010; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006); however, there is a wealth of studies that examine the arts' greater potential (Brown et al., 2010; Catterall, 2003; Chapman, 2004). Not only

do the arts function as channels for human expression, but they can also be instruments to develop various skill sets and aspects of human intelligence (Brown et al., 2010), such as music as a tool for language development or visual arts being used to help develop spatial awareness. Thus, the arts as pedagogical tools have been the focus of research for several decades. It is my contention that the arts are not only effective tools for teaching a variety of content, but rather, performing arts are the best tools for teaching content, especially as they relate to language & literacy (L&L) development. When I reference performing arts here, I am specifically referring to the use of music, dance, lyricism/rhyme, and theater as teaching tools. It is my understanding that the pedagogical use of performing arts during the critical period of preschool to Pre-K (3-5 years of age) is key to various levels of development. Studies have shown that early childhood exposure and participation in the arts yield positive outcomes related to academic skills, neurocognition, and social-emotional development (Kisida et al., 2018; Menzer, 2015; Phillips et al., 2010).

The effects of the arts focus on three broad areas: the relationship between participation in the arts as they relate to academic skill and neurocognitive outcomes, the relationship between participating in the arts as they relate to social-emotional development, and the relationship between participation in the arts and physiological outcomes (Kisida et al., 2018). Participation in the arts in early childhood often includes music, song, dance, drama, and visual arts (Menzer, 2015; National Endowment for the Arts, 2004). Therefore, most pedagogical approaches of this sort involve production or performance, such as singing, playing an instrument, dancing, or acting (Kisida et al., 2018). With regards to outcomes, studies have shown relationships between arts enrichment and higher writing and science scores, higher grade point averages, and higher

levels of college attendance and graduation (Catterall et al., 2012; Kisida et al., 2018). Other research has found the arts in preschool activities correlates with school readiness skills, higher achievement, and improved vocabulary (Kisida et al., 2018; Ritblatt et al., 2013). Enrichment activities that incorporate the arts engage children's representational, communicative, expressive and social capacities by shifting and stimulating their thought, perception, and awareness (Phillips et al., 2010).

In addition, early success in school is affected by a child's level of "school readiness" meaning they are ready to learn "with the necessary cognitive, communicative, motivational and behavioral substrates to facilitate their adjustment to the school environment and to profit from its learning opportunities" (Phillips et al., 2010, p. 112). Early literacy is of particular importance with regards to these readiness skills because student success in language instruction and formal schooling heavily rely upon these skills (Phillips et al., 2010). However, emergent literacy contrasts with the reading readiness approach because emergent literacy reflects the interwoven knowledge about language, reading, and writing that is gained prior to formal literacy and reading instruction (Phillips et al., 2010). This balanced, comprehensive, multi-form domain that is emergent literacy comprises knowledge of letters, phonics, understanding of syntax, and memory (i.e., inside-out components with narrative context), semantic concepts, and knowledge of writing (i.e., outside-in components) (Phillips et al., 2010; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). With this broad view of the arts established, I will now go into more detail about the four elements of performing arts that I believe have the greatest potential as tools for teaching L&L: music, dance, lyricism/rhyme, and theater.

### The Art of Music in Language and Literacy Pedagogy

*I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy: but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning…Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything. – Plato.*

I believe music is the aural tapestry crafted by human imagination and the cathartic release orchestrated through expression and creation, whereby both the creator and the consumer can find a sense of connection and wholeness. Music can make one brave, happy, or lose control. It has the power to tame the wildest of beasts or enlighten the darkest soul. It can be all things to some people or something to all people.

Music is the universal language of expression; hence, it is humanly conceived, practiced, and used to express human emotions, culture, feelings, ideas, and events, giving life to a society and identity to a culture (Ekong, 2008; Esimone & Ojukwu, 2014). As it relates to early development, music is a holistic experience and a way of knowing (Levinowitz, 1998) encompassing emotion, creativity, and a gambit of senses (Winter, 2015). Since music is an essential aspect of the human experience, it is an integral part of a child's experiences. Therefore, it is an important element of a child's development, and it is children's natural affinity towards music that propels them to engage in musical activities on a variety of levels (Esimone & Ojukwu, 2014). Moreover, music plays a vital role in the life of a child, which helps to shape their outlook later in life (Esimone & Ojukwu, 2014). It has been documented that children are involved in music around the world, in a myriad of cultures, at every socioeconomic status and subculture (Boynton & Kok, 2006; Campbell & Wiggins, 2012; Koops, 2018). In early childhood, children participate in their cultures of origin through listening to music, singing, and dancing; children also participate in other children's cultures in this same way (Koops, 2018). Children also create their own culture through inventing their own musical systems and routines through music (Koops, 2018;

Marsh, 2008). Music seems to emerge from them magically as they find a way to express themselves and to represent their experiences with the world (Esimone & Ojukwu, 2014). Therefore, music is a factor in children's enculturation developed through their interactions with members of their family, their neighborhood community, and their ethnic groups, where all the forms of their system of music from the various pitches, rhythmic patterns, textures, and formal structures are passed along and imbued in their essence (Esimone & Ojukwu, 2014).

Therefore, a pedagogy that incorporates music has universal appeal. Both students and teachers benefit from music integration and the interactions between the two are very important because "young children are keen to engage in music-making behavior when an adult guides the music activity…When a teacher is interested in and enthusiastic about leading a song, children readily follow" (Morehouse, 2013, pp. 82-83). Music can enhance general learning and specific subject areas of learning (Hansen et al., 2014) and because it is a way of knowing, musical intelligence is equal in importance to logical-mathematical intelligence, linguistic intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983; Levinowitz, 1998). The value of music lies on plane of the individual and the larger community because "intelligences are galvanized by participation in some kind of culturally valued activity and that individual's growth in such an activity follows a developmental pattern; each activity has its own time arising in early childhood" (Armstrong, 1994; Levinowitz, 1998, p. 4).

Music has important intrinsic value in preschool as it cultivates language stimulation, math comprehension, motor skills, and works as a vehicle to promote various cultural elements (Ehrlin & Gustavsson, 2015). In this way, the mind is like clay and music is the instrument that aids in molding the mind because music engages many of the brain's synapses thereby increasing

the brain's capacity through increased connections among neurons (Qi, 2012; Winter, 2015). As they participate in music-based activities, young children stimulate their senses, their muscles, and their intellect, simultaneously, which engages their brains in ways that they are rarely activated (Winter, 2015).

Moreover, early childhood is a period of rapid growth and a critical period of a child's development. Children start from a point of infancy, where they are wired to receive music and discriminate between various frequencies, melodies, and stimuli (Bridger, 1961; Levinowitz, 1998; Zentner & Kagan, 1996), then grow to elementary-age where they learn how to unscramble the aural elements of music and develop mental representations (Davidson, 1985; Holahan, 1987; Levinowitz, 1998). This critical early learning period before seven years old is where children gain great advantages through music-based education because music is an active mediator for cognitive activity assisting different parts of the brain to develop at the same time, such as motor and auditory areas (Hansen et al., 2014; Qi, 2012). This balances the brain's hemispheric activity creating cognitive cooperation, which improves cognitive development and academic achievement, particularly through enhanced memory (Hansen et al., 2014; Winter, 2015), concentration, creativity, and other intelligences (Qi, 2012).

Not surprisingly, there are parallels between music development and language development (Kisida et al., 2018). L&L consists of four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which share commonalities with the music processes of creating, performing, and responding (Cardany, 2016). Music helps to improve the way children's brains process the spoken word through decoding, which improves L&L, as well as verbal memory, in addition to improving general memory, visuospatial processing, mathematics, and IQ (Winter, 2015). Moreover,

reading acquisition, while involving visual processing, is related to the development of phonological awareness; therefore, children that develop the ability to discriminate individual sound units (i.e., phonemes) within a word are able to associate phonemes with their letter representations (i.e., graphemes) (Anvari et al., 2002; Goswami, 1990). "Because English uses an alphabetic orthography that maps the written code onto its phonemic equivalent (for the regular part of English), a child who shows auditory sensitivity to the spoken phonemic units has an advantage in learning the orthographic to phonological mapping system" (Anvari et al., 2002, p. 112; Goswami, 1990; Stanovich, 1986). Therefore, learning to listen and participate in the production of general sounds is critical to aural discrimination and phonological awareness skills, and as a result, governs L&L acquisition and proficiency (Hansen et al., 2014). Research suggest that the same auditory skills used in processing language (e.g., blending and segmenting sounds) are similar to the skills necessary for music perception (e.g., rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic discrimination) (Anvari et al., 2002; Lamb & Gregory, 1993).

Language and music have their basis in the same auditory modality and the central mode for music production (i.e., singing) utilizes the same vocal apparatus as speech (Anvari et al., 2002). Additionally, speech and music both combine a small number of elements, which are phonemes and notes, respectively. Both phonemes and notes are governed by a set of rules (i.e., phonotactics and musical syntax, respectively), which generate a myriad of larger meaningful elements in the form of words, phrases, and larger structures (Anvari et al., 2002; Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983). With regards to the brain, there is evidence that music and speech share some cortical areas and mechanisms (Anvari et al., 2002; Patel & Peretz, 1997; Patel et al., 1998), which suggests that speech and music might be closely related in early development (Anvari et

al., 2002). Also of note is that acquisition of basic musical structure, which, as with language, occurs without formal musical training; it simply occurs through everyday experience (Anvari et al., 2002). In addition, music and linguistic information have parallel qualities. A phoneme is the central speech unit that is distinguishable despite changes in duration, loudness, timbre, and pitch, and concurrently, the integrity of a melodic note's identity is sustained across tempo, loudness, timbre, and pitch (Anvari et al., 2002; Dowling & Hardwood, 1986). Therefore, since music and speech depend on many of the same basic auditory process, early music-based development could enhance L&L acquisition through the same basic auditory analysis skills.

### *The Art of Dance in Language and Literacy Pedagogy*

*The dance is a poem of which each movement is a word – Mata Hari.*

*Dance is the hidden language of the soul and of the body – Martha Graham.*

Dance is the embodiment of one of our most visceral connections to the universe; its pre-verbal nature, beginning before the spoken word, is innate in children before they develop the facilities of speech proficiency (National Dance Education Organization, 2019). However, even with those facilities intact, dance can evoke a level of expression "when thoughts or emotions are too powerful for words to contain" (National Dance Education Organization, 2019, p. 1). Movement is natural to the human condition (National Dance Education Organization, 2019) and one of the first means of expression, and of learning about the world (Lutz & Kuhlman, 2000). Children move without thought to express feelings and thought (National Dance Education Organization, 2019) and each movement gives children more information about the capabilities of their bodies (Lutz & Kuhlman, 2000). "Movement experiences that are layered with creative, cognitive, social, and emotional experiences facilitate children's understanding that movement has

meaning, intention, and expression" (Lorenzo-Lasa et al., 2007, p. 25). This expression is impacted by culture and the language and traditions of that culture because all societies create forms of visual representation and organize movement through rhythm into one or more forms of dance (National Dance Education Organization, 2019). Related to this, dance activities generate strong pro-social behavior (Kisida et al., 2018; Lobo & Winsler, 2006).

Dance as a pedagogical element utilizes three domains of knowledge: cognitive, affective, and motor (Birch, 2000). Dance in the classroom affords children the opportunity to engage in an activity that is exciting and fun, simulating behaviors that are associated with physiological development, positive self-expression, enhanced communication skills, emotional regulation, increased memory, greater coping skills, vivid imagination, and greater creativity (Garrison, 2013). In addition, dance teaches coordination and kinesthetic memory through movement patterns and involves a high degree of coordination, strength, and a greater range of motion than most other physical activities (National Dance Education Organization, 2019).

Traditionally, dance had been viewed purely as a kinesthetic activity. However, considering multiple intelligences theory, it is viewed through affective and intellectual lenses whereby expanding the view of literacy and dance embodies all eight intelligences (Birch, 2000). According to Birch (2000), linguistic intelligence is engaged through dance because the body itself is a vehicle for communication. Dance instruction relies on words and various forms of dance have their own terminology that must be conveyed, understood, and reflected in dance. Many of these terms have roots in various languages; therefore, teaching etymology and other linguistic knowledge could be employed to help to develop both linguistic and dance skills, simultaneously. I believe dance moves can also be paired with various content to create a kinesthetic link to material, connecting a specific dance to specific language content, creating a physio-linguistic

connection. Getting back to Birch (2000), logical-mathematical intelligence is engaged through execution of dance movement as it relates to staying on count and in rhythm. Dancers must also have a grasp of geometric concepts important to visualizing dance routines. These sorts of mathematical concepts could be incorporated in a dance thereby enriching the learning environment. Spatial intelligence is one of the most heavily relied on of the eight. This intelligence is engaged when dancers are aware of where they are in space and in relation to others. Whether in free form or choreographed, dance necessitates an understanding of space. Bodily-Kinesthetic is the most prominent intelligence of the eight with respect to dance. The body becomes the instrument by which the dancer orchestrates through their craft to create meaning. Musical intelligence is almost as important as the former because it is engaged when the dancer is in sync with the music. As imperative as music is to dance, even without musical accompaniment, a dancer will create their own music and the dance will create its own musicality. Interpersonal intelligence is engaged when dancers cooperate with others through setting routines, creating dances, receiving instruction, and other impactful social interactions. Intrapersonal intelligence is engaged when the dancers seek to find themselves, increasing their self-knowledge through their craft. They continuously increase their cache of dances and become a more proficient and gain greater understanding their gifts as well as their limitations. Naturalistic intelligence is engaged when dancers connect their craft to nature. Many dances are created by imitating natural events, animals, and other observable phenomena. The above view presented by Birch (2000) shows that dance is interconnected to various intelligences and is holistic in nature.

However, although dance can be adequately explained through the theory of multiple intelligences, cognitive pluralism is another theory that can explain dance as connected to language. Language represents one of several systems of symbolism that reflects human emblematic

activity (John-Steiner, 1995) and dance can be seen as an extension in this manner. Additionally, while the theory of multiple intelligences is viewed from a biological lens of raw computations, cognitive pluralism examines the sociocultural foundation of symbol systems (John-Steiner, 1995). In this way, rather than language and dance being purely a mechanized response fueled by biology, the nature of both language and dance are seen as culturally-centered, diverse, and pluralistic.

Dance is not merely test physical dexterity, but rather taps into multiple facets of human ability making it a very beneficial tool for various pedagogical pursuits. A preschool curriculum that integrates dance would include counting and rhythm, body awareness, creative movement, language expression, and emotional expression (Lorenzo-Lasa et al., 2007). Stinson (1998) developed a preschool specific dance program consisting of four elements: body, space, energy, and time (Chatzihidiroglou et al., 2018, p. 2). The element *body* reflects what the body does during movement, such as the shape the body may make (e.g., arms in a circle). While, the element *space* reflects the space and directions that an individual moves in, such as arm length, forward or backward (Chatzihidiroglou et al., 2018). Chatzihidiroglou et al. (2018) continues and states that the element *energy* reflects the activity level applied to the movement, such as strong or light movements. The element of time reflects to the movement being in sync with the music's rhythm. Dance can be seen as parallel in experience with language and the following quote helps makes that point.

> Dance helps children develop literacy. To the young child, verbal language and movement are entwined. Preverbal movement expression does not cease when a child develops language. The road to literacy involves the translation of movement expression and communication into words. Learning language and learning dance are not separate threads,

but are woven together and incorporated into a fabric of communication and understand-

ing (National Dance Education Organization, 2019, p. 3).

This quote reflects the interconnectedness of dance and language on a variety of levels. The

whole of the body can be seen as an apparatus that articulates in the same fashion that the voice

is an instrument that communicates. They both have the ability to convey information to bring

about understanding.

Some scholars have taken a more novel approach to literacy with regards to dance. The

metacognitive approach defines literacy not only by scribal competence, but by the ability to use

literacy-based concepts in thinking and talking (Tishman & Perkins, 1997). Motif writing is an

example and the follow quote sheds light on the concept as it relates to literacy.

Motif Writing is a tool for facilitating dance content knowledge. It may be viewed as a

general outline or blueprint of the person in dance space. Through Motif Writing, students

can denote the where (level, direction), the when (duration, meter, pulse, tempo),

and the how (strong, gentle, frenetic, percussive, soaring, bumpy, etc.)…Motif writing,

used as a tool in learning, breaks down literacy boundaries and enables children to represent

their physical intellect in written form and vice versa as the written form is represented in

and through the dance itself…Motif writing is experienced through a variety of encoding

modalities– auditory (listening), kinetic (moving), visual (reading), and tactile (writing)–

it has the potential to stimulate learning and to assist in understanding information (Bucek,

1998, p. 29).

Thus, motif writing further expands the definition of literacy into the spatial realm. This multi-

literacy approach allows young children to have the opportunity to think multi-literately (Birch,

2000), whereby they can elicit even deeper levels of expression and creativity.

**The Art of Lyricism in Language and Literacy Pedagogy**

> *Lyric helps invoke the core person. And, without lyric, it is difficult to touch the core—*
>
> *Dayanada Saraswati*

I believe that the lyric is one of the purest manifestations of the human condition because it incarnates the deepest corners in the ubiquitous realms of self. It is at the epicenter of the soul blueprinting the inner landscapes accessing, not just an image, but the wholeness of one's essence. The lyric is powerful. It has the propensity to invoke a sense of peace and purpose. The lyric is immortal. Throughout time, the lyric has bequeathed a wealth of wisdom. Many of the greatest stories are in the form of poems, lyrical epics, and songs that have withstood the test of space and time, etching their way in (wo)man's collective mind. This is because the lyric can be so memorable. It becomes ingrained in the most accessible areas of the psyche, and therefore, the lyric might be the most powerful mnemonic device for anything worth remembering.

The contemporary lyric finds itself, in many respects, in the state it was in the days of old; however, in others, it has also evolved, inspiring cultures, such as Hip-Hop, or genres of music, such as Rhythm and Blues (i.e., R&B). The lyric has provided opportunities for self-expression, storytelling, recreation, and revolutions, some of which televised, and others not. Typically, what makes lyrics so powerful is the art of rhyme. In fact, in some cultural circles, Hip-hop in particular, yet not exclusively, the songs' lyrics are called rhymes because rhyming is the central and most important element of Hip-hop music. Pedagogically, there is a wealth of research that examine the use of Hip-hop in the classroom to cover a variety of instructional purposes from linguistics and language arts to sociology, science and social justice (Alim, 2006; Alim et al., 2010; Alim et al., 2016; Au, 2005; Ball, 2013; Cutler, 2007; Emdin, 2011; Emdin & Lee, 2012; Kelly, 2013; Love, 2014a; Love, 2014b; Prier, 2012), which I will not address in this paper;

however, their importance is worth noting. Getting back to my point, rhyming, in the most commonly understood sense of the term, is the reoccurrence of the same vowel sounds, sometimes accompanied by similar consonant sounds at a given interval within a section of spoken or written conveyance occurring at the end of the word (i.e., assonance). The reoccurrence of the same sound at the beginning of the word is called alliteration, which is a linguistic device like rhyme, yet distinct from it because the central element of rhyme is the vowel sound. Of note is the fact that the vowel sound is the key to rhyming, and because of its nature, one could argue that it is the vowel that is the centerpiece and most important structural element for all human communication.

Because children learn a tremendous amount of information in the first eight years of their life (Ready To Learn, 2010) and the brain development at this stage builds the foundation for future learning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020), this is one of the most critical times to develop all the skills they need to be successful in language and literacy. For many children, their first experiences with lyrics come in the form of nursery rhymes, while some others, because of the cultural underpinnings and legacies within languages, might have their first experiences with lyrics through Hip-hop or other genres of music. Some children could have been introduced to rhyme by reading Mother Goose, while others listened to the rhymes of Papoose. Regardless of how a child comes in to contact with lyrics, what is clear is that lyrics are integral to early experiences with language.

> Nursery rhymes carry all the parts of language that lead to speaking and reading. As children hear the vowels the consonants in rhyme, they begin to imitate the sounds. All the parts of speech are practiced in rhyme, and the rhythmic and melodic flow of language is intensified (Kenney, 2005, p. 28).

While the content is usually different, the same can be said about the structure of Hip-hop lyrics (Cutler, 2007; Moore III, 2016) because the lyrics of Hip-hop incorporate a variety of language elements that are essential to language development. In addition, lyrics give children exposure to words that they may not hear in everyday parlance thereby increasing their vocabulary (Kenney, 2005). The ability to hear distinct sound elements of language (i.e., phonological awareness) is paramount to building the skill necessary for L&L competency (Bryant et al., 1989; Fernanadez-Fein & Baker, 1997; Harper, 2011; Ready To Learn, 2010). "This awareness and understanding of phonemes fosters a child's ability to hear sounds, blend sounds, encode and decode words, and spell phonetically" (Harper, 2011, p. 66). Bryant et al. (1989) states, "…knowledge of nursery rhymes enhances children's phonological sensitivity which in turn helps them to learn to read…[because] Nursery rhymes are related to the child's subsequent sensitivity to rhyme and phonemes [i.e., language sound units] " (p. 407). This has future academic implications for the child.

> Research reveals that there is a link between nursery rhyme knowledge of preschool chil-
> dren and their future success in reading, writing, and spelling. Bradley and Bryant (1983,
> 1985) report that sensitivity to rhyme [i.e., word sound repetition at the end of words] and
> alliteration [i.e., word sound repetition at the beginning of words] prior to a child's entry
> to formal schooling pays a casual role in their reading success for several years (Harper,
> 2011, p. 66).

Explicit instruction in graphemic and orthographic awareness (i.e., awareness of letters and spelling, respectively), rhyming, word identification, and alliteration affects a child's reading ability both positivity and dynamically (Harper, 2011). Preschool and primary school-age teach-ers use nursery rhymes to teach these skills and content (Cardany, 2013; O'Herron & Siebenaler,

2007). Cognitively, nursery rhymes cultivate development of children's memory, sequencing ability, hearing, speaking, movement, and tactile patterns; moreover, the basis for all L&L and math study, as well as the basis of all the rhymes, is patterning (Gifford, 2017; Kenney, 2005). Kenney (2005) argued that lyrics also provide the patterns for storytelling and open children's minds to new ideas that may be outside of their realm of experience. Physically, many nursery rhymes include movement, and therefore, cultivate muscle and spatial development, balance and coordination. Oral dexterity is another physical skill developed by the use of nursery rhymes through their sometimes difficult phonotactic patterns (i.e., the finite set of sound patterns within a language). She continues stating that socially and emotively, nursery rhymes are often shared with children by caring adults wherein children are held, touched, tickled, and snuggled. This positive physical contact is important for the child's emotional and social growth. In addition, because many of the nursery rhymes are silly, funny, or have components that are sad or shocking, children get to experience a range of emotion in the stories in a safe setting where they can begin to delineate fiction from reality. Her final point is that musically, nursery rhymes are imbued with rhythm because the beat and rhythmic patterns are conveyers of the spoken, heard, or written rhymes. Moreover, culturally, nursery rhymes carry the knowledge of their origin through the melodies, poems, finger plays, riddles, and storylines at their foundation (Cardany, 2013).

### The Art of Theater in Language and Literacy Pedagogy

*I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being – Oscar Wilde.*

Storytelling is without a doubt an art and one does not have to be an Outkast, named Antwan Patton or Andre' Benjamin to know that, although lyrically, they might have done it best. Theater/drama/acting is one of the oldest artforms. The ancients would create plays that would entertain, inspire or be inspired by philosophers, and reflect or create myth, many of which have been transferred through time where they have been redramatized and immortalized. The cathartic and multivariant function of drama has been an important stimulus for various sciences, including philosophical, psychological, and sociological studies (Costa et al., 2014). At the center of theater is play. The use of the word play in this context is very sensical because, while playing, children use their imaginations to theatrically transport themselves to distant lands and/or dramatically personify various characters. Essentially, children are in constant states of theater. The impetus to play is fundamental to the human condition and is the centerpiece for educational theater. "Preschool theater arts skills emerge in the context of play, or 'drama in its natural state'" (Mages, 2008, p. 127; Susman-Stillman & Englund, 2018, p. 250). Theatrical activities have been viewed on a spectrum with imaginative play at one end and traditional theater on the other end, where there is interaction between the audiences and actors, (Mages, 2008; Susman-Stillman & Englund, 2018).

Early years of development have long lasting impacts on children. A quality education, particularly at the preschool level, must maximize a child's potential by providing a well-organized playing atmosphere (Tombak, 2014). Furthermore, "preschool education also intends to lay the foundations for a positive personality and aims to reveal creative aspects of children…children find a chance for physical, emotional, lingual, social and mental development in a healthy way" (Tombak, 2014, p. 373). Participation in early childhood theater fosters development of

language skills, perspective-taking abilities, and imaginative propensities (Mages, 2018). Additional research supports the relationship between play, environmental supports, and literacy development (Morrow & Schickedanz, 2006). Specifically with regards to language and literacy, subsequent studies on the effectiveness of theater enrichment in preschool settings have shown that both verbal skills and social skills significantly improve through theater programs (Gulec & Macan, 2014). In addition, other studies have concluded that drama in preschool education contributes to all fields of development including: increases in creativity, imagination, decision making, independent thinking, psycho-motor skills, coordination, flexibility and balance; develops communication skills, cooperation, social sensitivity, responsibility, and other social skills; and contributes to positive self-perception (Tombak, 2014).

**Literature Review Conclusion**

Language acquisition begins developing prior to formal language instruction. Through some stroke of fate or intelligent design, children are imbued with the biological, cognitive, and social tools to acquire language, where their foundational language awareness and skills emerge automatized. However, through explicit instruction, children become more proficient in the various types of language awareness and skills that lead to multiple levels of literacy, and therefore have a greater capacity to govern and create through language. The balance between all the vital elements of literacy development from structure to meaning, within and outside of the word level are key to effective pedagogy. Phonological awareness (PhAw) is one of these elements at the heart of language proficiency and later conventional literacy. Educators have a wide cache of pedagogical tools at their disposal to support language and literacy development. One of the most effective is phonics instruction, wherein PhAw is the prerequisite. In early learning environments, PhAw and phonics instruction are invaluable. Early learning programs that employ

PhAw and phonics activities shape children's innate language awareness and skills into polished implements ready to do effective communicative work that can be both pragmatic and aesthetic.

While PhAw and phonics are vital to balanced and comprehensive emergent literacy instruction, performing arts can be deliverables educators employ to effectively convey PhAw and phonics content. The arts host a wealth of channels for expression with great potential as pedagogical instruments. The arts, specifically, music, dance, lyricism, and theater can be used creatively to elicit and connect multiple modalities of learning. Since music is such an integral part of human experience, as a pedagogical tool, especially for balanced emergent literacy instruction, music is very effective because of the parallels between music development and language development. In addition, there are many cognitive, affective, and motor skills benefits to using music in language instruction. Dance as a pedagogical tool for emergent literacy facilitates creative, cognitive, social, and emotional elements that evoke multiple levels of development from physiological to communicative. Dance embodies multiple intelligences and cognitive pluralism, affording children a high level of expression, while learning the interwoven aspects of communication. Lyricism as a pedagogical tool is arguably the most suitable art for a balanced, emergent literacy approach because, by its very nature, lyricism/rhyme uses language elements that lends itself to phonological awareness (PhAw) and graphophonemic awareness (GphA) development. Nursery rhymes and song lyrics are powerful mnemonics that can help early learners remember various forms of content, while in tandem building their proficiency in language and literacy. Theater as a pedagogical tool for emergent literacy has elements of play that are in alignment with young learners' natural affinities. Theater for early learners fosters language development as well as eliciting their imaginative proclivities. Each of the four performing arts are rich in benefits for emergent literacy development.

Therefore, the onus is on the educator to utilize these arts as media to implement instruction along the PhAw and phonics continua to develop young learners' PhAw and GphA. Implementing these performing arts as strategies for increasing emergent learners' literacy development was at the center of this study's inquiry. Research made it clear that PhAw and phonics are key to EL and performing arts are effective as pedagogical strategies. This study examined a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program to confirm these assertions through early learning educators' experiences with and impressions of PhAw, phonics, performing arts, teacher motivation, and student engagement in their classrooms. This literature review sets the stage for my research by providing a sound knowledge base in the areas of both L&L concepts and L&L strategies. The reader now has a good foundation with which to view the coming chapters: methodology, results, and discussion.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study aimed to understand early learning educators' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies. The L&L concepts are phonological awareness (PhAw), graphophonemic awareness (GphA), and phonics. PhAw is the awareness of language sounds in speech and the PhAw continuum is the continuum of skills related to language sounds at the center of early learning L&L pedagogy. GphA is the awareness of letters and letter sounds correlations. GphA is the central focus of phonics, which is the instruction of letters and letter sounds correlations. The L&L strategies in this study are performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, and theater). Accordingly, another aim of the study is to understand how performing arts are used as strategies that impact various elements of L&L pedagogy. And because this impact can affect teachers and students interactions in the L&L learning environment, the final aim of the study is to understand early learning educators' experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation and student engagement in their PhAw and phonics instruction.

I collected several sets of data for the study. I conducted interviews with each of the six early learning educators (ELEs), collected four lesson plans from the lead ELEs, acquired The Creative Curriculum – Literacy (Heroman & Jones, 2010) used by the early learning program, and acquired the state's early learning standards. Both content and thematic analyses were conducted to identify patterns within the qualitative data sets, and then I developed categories, and then themes based on the data. Content analysis analyzes and interprets a variety of communicative material with context as a central focus (Ary et al., 2020). Thematic analysis is a search for themes to succinctly capture and summarize a major idea (Saldaña, 2016). I detailed both content and thematic analyses further in the sections to follow.

Overall, this study sought to understand if there is a bridge between theory and practice regarding how PhAw and phonics are theorized in the field of literacy research versus how they are practiced in an actual early learning program by actual early learning educators. More specifically, within its given early learning context, I sought to determine teacher experiences with and impressions of PhAw, phonics, performing arts, their motivations to teach, and their students' engagement in their respective classrooms. As such, I examined the following research questions:

1.  What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies, particularly the phonological awareness, phonics, and performing arts in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

2.  What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation, as well as student engagement, particularly regarding L&L concepts and strategies, in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

These questions summate the inquiry into a central objective, which was to understand the role of L&L and more specifically, language sounds in conjunction with performing arts, while also understanding how teacher motivation and student engagement operated in the classrooms of the early learning program at the center of the study.

**Qualitative Design**

Qualitative methodology is a position in which a researcher investigates phenomena using approaches, such as biography, ethnography, or grounded theory in a research study or program of interest (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017; Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). Qualitative research incorporates a variety of approaches and orientations covering multiple academic disciplines (Bogdan et al., 2016). The importance of individuals and their actions, interpretations,

works, and expressions is highlighted in this form of research. Bogdan et al. (2016) states that

"Qualitative research is particularly interested in the way in which the world is understood, ex-

perimented on, or produced by people's lives, behavior, interactions and narratives" (p. 4). Re-

search of this sort is naturalistic through the direct sourcing of data, as researchers typically

spend a lot of time in locales at the center of the phenomena inquired. Elements of context be-

come important to the qualitative researcher as they must get a full understanding of how the

phenomena occurs. Qualitative data is descriptive and is approached as if anything can be signif-

icant to eliciting the greatest level of understanding of the phenomena of study (Bogdan et al.,

2016). Commonly, qualitative research results are narrative in nature and the analysis is thematic

using a variety of inductive and iterative techniques through contextualizing categorical strate-

gies and methods (Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009). In many studies using this methodology, one ex-

ample of an end result is to develop a set of themes that make sense of and garners meaning from

the phenomena in question (Bogdan et al., 2016; Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Meaning and interpretation are central foci of qualitative research, and because quality in

qualitative research is measured in terms of rigor and credibility, the researcher must clearly elu-

cidate understanding of the participants' meanings and interpretations (Ezzy, 2002). The qualita-

tive researcher must then design data analysis that follows well-thought-out procedures that re-

veal the structures of understanding held by their participants (Ezzy, 2002). I believe content and

thematic analyses were the most appropriate approaches to elicit both meaning and interpreta-

tions of participants in this study, especially considering the inquiries of this study regarding ex-

periences and impression about PhAw, phonics, performing arts, teacher motivation, and student

engagement in the early learning program. The deductive nature of content analysis allowed for

these inquiries to be answered in a way that is effective, in that empirical data can be tested

against preexisting theories (Ezzy, 2002). Through content analysis, the data collected in this study (i.e., interviews, teacher lesson plans, and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010)) were coded. Those codes were counted and comparisons made against the research problems stated in chapter 1 of this study (i.e., Introduction) as affirmed by prior research, regarding teachers' understanding and use of PhAw, phonics, and performing arts to elucidate the nature of the phenomena (Ezzy, 2002). Therefore, the elements of PhAw, phonics, and performing arts were predefined codes (i.e., provisional coding) that drove the methodology of study, which developed logical meaning and interpretations of the data. In concert, the use of thematic analysis through open coding allowed for additional categories to be developed inductively during the analysis process (Ezzy, 2002). Therefore, I believe content and thematic analysis together created a strong set of themes that accessed the holistic nature a phenomenon by being both situated in existing research and sensitive to emergent meanings and interpretations garnered by the analyses.

**Teaching Institution of Research Participants**

This research necessitated a site with an early learning program; therefore, access to preschool and Pre-K Pre classes was essential to this study. At Nulantic University (NU), the Child Development Program (CDP) provides early care and education for university faculty, staff, and students through its centers, the Shrewd Child Development Center and the Blueberry Valley Child Enrichment Center (all names are pseudonyms). The CDP is an interdisciplinary research program supporting educational inquiry and research related to young children. Teams of faculty and students from various departments, including education, psychology, nursing, and sociology, contribute different perspectives to the research. The centers serve as a demonstration and training site for the state's early care and education community. In the centers, theory and research

are implemented into educational practices. In addition, the program offers local educators and university students and faculty the opportunity to observe master teachers using developmentally appropriate lessons and materials with children.

The centers provide a universal Pre-K program that is open to all student regardless of income or any specific "risk" factors. There is typically a low teacher to student ratio, (approximately 10 to 1), as compared to private childcare ratio standards for the state (15 to 1), approximately 60 students and 8 teachers at each center. The CDP is state-funded, and as such, is subject to a set of standards set forth by the state. The early learning standards for the state of Georgia are known as GELDS (i.e., Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards) and are otherwise known as Bright from the Start. GELDS/Bright from the Start is divided into a set of domains, each focusing on various developmental skills: physical development and motor skills (PDM), social and emotional development (SED), approaches to play and learning (APL), communication, language and literacy (CLL), and cognitive development and general knowledge (CD). For the purposes of this study, APL and CLL are of central importance. The Approaches to Play and Learning (APL) domain standards cover a variety of skill sets related to initiative and exploration (APL 1-2), attentiveness and persistence (APL 3), and play (APL 4-5). The Communication, Language, and Literacy (CLL) domain standards cover a variety of skill sets as it relates to language and literacy outcomes of receptive language (CLL1-2), expressive language (CLL3-4), early reading (CLL 5-8), and early writing (CLL9). In general, students should develop listening skills, expressive skills understanding of vocabulary, narrative abilities, alphabet knowledge, rhyming awareness, syllable awareness, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, basic writing skills, etc. Figure 2 is a list of the CLL standard specifically for phonological awareness, which is designated as CLL6.

*Figure 2: Bright from the Start standards for phonological awareness*

| CLL6.4a | CLL6.4b | CLL6.4c |
|---|---|---|
| • Listens and differentiates between sounds that are the same and different. | • Identifies and produces rhyming words. | • Isolates the initial (beginning) sounds in words with adult guidance. |

| CLL6.4d | CLL6.4e | CLL6.4f |
|---|---|---|
| • Segments sentences into individual words. | • Segments words into syllables. | • Manipulates and blends sounds (phonemes) with adult guidance. |

Because of the current COVID- 19 pandemic, third-party research is prohibited on the site. The Center for Disease Control has set forth guidelines to which each center must adhere. Initially, only state employees were allowed in the center. Not even parents could come in the building. Instead, they had to drop their children off outside, where teachers would usher each student directly to their class. Due to the current state of mandatory social distancing, all interactions between the researcher and participants were conducted digitally via phone and email. The interviews were audio recorded. An attempt was made to video record the interviews; however, there were several technical difficulties. Therefore, the more reliable method of phone and audio recording was used.

**Participants**

The director of the childcare development program (CDP) at NU preapproved the centers as sites for the study. I was first provided with a list of the educators' contact information by the

center manager and contacted them via phone and email. I then emailed the educators to recruit them to the study. IRB authorized that the teachers' reply confirmation emails to me serve as consent for the study. Six of the seven Pre-K and preschool early learning educators (ELEs) that I contacted from the CDP centers agreed to participate in the study. All of the ELEs were females and had at least 10 years of teaching experience.

Two categories of ELE are employed at the research sites: lead teachers and assistant teachers. Lead teachers are centrally responsible for academic development and overall classroom management. They develop lesson plans, manage both academic and emotional development of students, and spearhead communicate with administrators, parents, and other teachers. Early learning lead teachers are required to have at least a BA in early childhood education (ECE) or an Associate degree, Technical college diploma, or Technical certificate of credit, all with an ECE major. The starting salary for this position ranges from 27-30K a year, which can increase beyond this threshold based the teacher's level of education. Complimenting the lead teachers are assistant early learning teachers who help the lead teachers with class instruction and other duties by reinforcing lessons and engaging students in one-on-one instruction. Assistant teachers must at least have a valid certificate as a paraprofessional, development associate credential or some equivalent. The starting salary for this position is 16K. Both lead and assistant teachers at the research site have been trained to adhere to the standards of Bright from the Start. They are also required by the state to complete a certain number of training hours yearly. 3 lead teachers and 3 assistant teachers from the 2 different centers participated in this study.

*Introducing the Participant Early Learning Educators (ELEs)*

The participants in this study were early learning educators (ELEs) with a variety of backgrounds and both educational and teaching experiences. Table 1 below is a list of descriptions providing the ELEs' names (pseudonyms), teaching level (preschool or Pre-K), teaching title (lead teacher or assistant teacher), center location (Shrewd Childcare Development Center or Blueberry Valley Childcare Enrichment Center), educational background (specialized training in education and/or degrees in education), and teaching experience (years teaching and at what levels).

*Table 1: General Participant Descriptions (Note: All names are pseudonyms)*

| Participants | Teaching Level, Title, *Center Location* | Educational Background | Teaching Experience |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alicia | Pre-K, Lead, *Shrewd* | B.A. in Early and Elementary Ed. (Reading Endorsement); Associates (Unspecified) | 10+ years experience in early learning education |
| Toni | Preschool, Lead, *Blueberry* | M.A. in Teaching K-12; B.A. Early Childhood Ed. | 16 years experience in early learning and primary education (Preschool, Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st grade, 5th grade), Co-designed Performing Arts early learning program, Former Pre-K Lead (*Blueberry)* |
| Chloe | Pre-K, Assistant, *Shrewd* | CDA (Child Development Associate) Credential | 15 years experience in early learning teaching (preschool, Pre-K, and Kindergarten) |
| Halle | Pre-K, Lead, *Blueberry* | B.A. in Birth-5 Education | 11 years experience in early learning education (Infants, preschool, & Pre-K), Former Pre-K assistant, *Blueberry* |

| Anita | Pre-K, Assistant, *Blueberry* | B.A. in Business/Accounting | 26 years experience in early learning education (Infants, preschool, Pre-K) at *Blueberry* |
| Selena | Preschool, Assistant, *Shrewd* | M.A. in Physical Ed.; B.A. Early Childhood Ed. | 15 years experience in early learning education; Taught and educated in another country before moving to the U.S. |

**ELEs' Metaphors Describing their Impressions of PhAw and/or Phonics.** In a somewhat novel fashion, I have provided further description of the ELEs using a set of metaphors that they created illustrating their impressions of PhAw and/or phonics instruction, which was inspired by Dogan (2012). The participants in the Dogan (2012) study were primary school teachers taking a reading-writing instruction course. The data was based on the teachers' productions of metaphors that demonstrate their views on the phonic-based sentence method. In my study, the aim in requesting ELEs produce metaphors related to phonics was to get a sense of how they viewed phonics as a pedagogical process and/or concept. The ways in which they crafted their metaphors gave a glimpse of how they conceptualized and approached both PhAw and phonics. These impressions are important because the ELEs provide a snippet of their creativity and pedagogical prowess. When I introduced the question to the teachers in this study, I asked them to create a metaphor for phonics initially, but then gave them the option to mention PhAw, if that was easier for them to conceptualize. Table 2 below details the responses from each teacher. The chart provides the ELEs' names, their metaphor, and the conceptual focal points, the latter of which were the interpretations that I crafted from the metaphors.

*Table 2: ELEs Metaphors for PhAw or Phonics*

| ELE | Metaphor | Conceptual focal point(s) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Alicia | [PhAw/Phonics] is like the foundation of a house, a strong foundation. Without it, you know, your house can crumble easily. | Grounding for language and literacy |
| Toni | [PhAw/Phonics] is like a kid in a candy store… you're constantly getting into different candy…like taste wise | Variety of skills and avenues of acquisition |
| Chloe | Phonological awareness is like learning to run. First you have to crawl, then walk, then you run. First, we learn the letters, then the sounds, then the words. | Progression of language skills and levels of language awareness |
| Halle | When it comes to teaching anything, it's a collaborative effort between the parents and teachers. So I would probably say phonics is like a teacher and parent ~ the child is the shoe and you've got like two strings. You put them together in like make a knot. So I feel like those between the teacher and the parent. Those are the two strings. Like tying it all together. | Collaboration of learning responsibilities between teachers, parents, and students |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Them working together will create like a solid foundation for that child. | |
| | Anita | Phonics like children's clothes. There are a variety of choices: shirts, skirts, ties, polka dots, shorts, long pants. And some go together in and fit together well, and some maybe a little strange or odd, but that's ok because you're learning how to put them together. You can create an out-fit. And you can create many outfits, with just a few pieces. | Unique use and development of language skills |
| | Selena | Phonics is like learning to fish. If you are patient enough, you know you will catch your fish. | Pedagogical patience and per-sistence |

Each of these metaphors gives an interesting glimpse into how teachers perceive PhAw and/or phonics. Alicia sees PhAw and phonics as the foundation for language development with her house metaphor as her metaphor possibly suggests that PhAw and phonics is the foundation for all learning in a student's academic life.

Toni sees PhAw or phonics as a candy store because of the variety in language skills and acquisition avenues afforded by them. This gives rise to the variety of pedagogical strategies available to teachers and the wealth of benefits that these strategies offer.

Through her metaphor of crawling, walking, and then running, Chloe sees the sequential nature of PhAw. This can be reflective of one of many sequential details within language development: the development of receptive and expressive skill, the various tiers within the PhAw continuum (i.e., lexical awareness to phonemic awareness), or any number of other progressive elements within emergent literacy development.

Halle has probably the most unexpected perspective as expressed through her metaphor likening the phonics learning process to tying a shoe. She saw the language learning process as a whole from a collaborative lens, where parents and teachers work together to form a strong foundation and sense of security for the student. Viewing the knot as the foundation of security displays her perspective of the academic synergy of school and home environments. With caregiver and educator as collaborators, this seems to show that she highly values the communal, co-creative aspects of the learning process.

Anita sees phonics like children creating their own attire, as a process of unique development, where students have a variety of options in how they use language creatively. Although children's language may sound odd to others in a prescriptive sense, their language is their own and eventually they will find a communal harmony regarding language use, while keeping their own stylistic sensibilities.

Finally, Selena expressed how patience and persistence are vital elements to the language learning process through her metaphor about fishing. This could relate to both the teacher and the student. Both must be patient with the process of learning and persistent in their pursuit of learning language.

All ELEs in the study saw PhAw or phonics in a beneficial light, which shined through all of their very impressive metaphors. Each one had a unique perspective on how PhAw or

phonics benefited the learning process. I believe this additional information provides a good understanding of who the ELEs are as the study moves into introducing the codes and themes in the coming sections.

**Data Collection**

The central data collection method was a single, semi-structured interview with each of the six participant early learning educators (ELEs). In addition, I collected four lesson plans from lead ELEs, Heroman and Jones (2010) – The Creative Curriculum *for* Preschool vol. 3 Literacy (The Creative Curriculum – Literacy) used by the childcare development program (CDP), and the state's early learning standards to crystalize the analysis, totaling four sets of data. I used the definition of semi-structured interview proposed by Kvale and Brinkman (2009). It is defined as "an interview with a purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 3). I chose semi-structured interviews because I wanted to have dialogic flexibility in the conversations with the educators (Brinkman, 2018). When there was an element of the interviewee's responses that they or I deem important, I had the leeway to follow whatever stream of knowledge that the flowed from the dialogue. Inherent in conversation is the potential for a wealth of various avenues to explore, and while I have a destination in mind, I wanted the journey to be one that is unhampered (Brinkman, 2018). Each interview of an ELE was scheduled via email and then conducted virtually via phone for one and a half to 2 hours, an hour and a half on average. All interviews were audio recorded. The interview questions (see Appendix A) covered participants' general educational experience, their experience and understanding of language arts pedagogy with specific focuses on PhAw and phonics, and their thoughts on motivation and engagement. The lead ELEs also provided me with their lesson plans (see Appendix B), four in total, which I reformatted to remove

any identifying information. I also purchased a copy of The Creative Curriculum – Literacy Heroman and Jones (2010), which I examined thoroughly. Lastly, the state government early learning standards website provided me with the state's early learning standards (see Appendix C), and the applicable standards were also integrated by the participants in each the activities of their lesson plans.

**Data Analysis**

The data sources for the study were a single interview for each ELE, six in total, which focus on PhAw, phonics, and performing arts in their early learning classrooms, as well as four lesson plans, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, and the applicable state early learning standards. The interviews were used to attain descriptions of the participants' teaching experiences. The four lesson plans and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy were also directly coded, analyzed, and used to support the experiences and impressions of the teachers. The applicable state early L&L standards were integrated within the analysis of the lesson plans where they were aligned in each of the activities, and taken together with the analysis of the interview transcriptions and curriculum, created a holistic picture. As a result, I was able to interpret the meaning and produce knowledge regarding the phenomena of this study— language and literacy concepts and strategies, teacher motivation, and engagement in the participants' classrooms.

The interviews were transcribed with a loose verbatim coherence to the transcription recordings (Rapley, 2007). I used an adaptation of the Poland transcription notation system (Rapley, 2007), which I will detail below.

1. Pauses – Denote pauses by a series of six dots (……).
2. Laughing, coughing, etc. – Indicate in brackets [cough], [sigh], [sneeze], [laugh or laughter].

3. Interruptions – Indicate when someone's speech is broken mid-sentence with a hyphen (-).

4. Overlapping speech – Use colon to indicate when one speaker interjects into the speech of another, include the speech with [overlap] then return to where the original speaker was interrupted.

5. Garbled speech – Flag words that are not clear with square brackets and a question mark [?] and use x's to denote passages that cannot be deciphered at all, where the number of x's denotes the approximate number of words that cannot be deciphered.

6. Emphasis – Use CAPS to denote strong emphasis.

7. Held sounds – Repeat the letters of the sounds that are held, separated by hyphens, and capitalize them as well.

8. Paraphrasing other – When a speaker assumes a voice that indicates he or she is parody-ing what someone else said or is expressing an inner voice in their head, use quotation marks.

I also sectioned the transcripts based on the exchange between the interviewer (IR) and the inter-viewee (IE). Each exchange of dialogue where either one had the floor (i.e., speaking), was num-bered creating a sequential order (e.g., 1 IR, 2 IE, 3 IR, 4 IE). Additionally, when referencing a line or lines from the transcripts, I referred to the teacher's transcript, then exchange number (e.g., Alicia 30).

After transcribing the data, I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), specifically NVivo, to assist me in mapping the relationship between codes within the QUAL data because CAQDAS is best able to assist with analysis when the unit of analysis is a word, phrase, or idea (Ezzy, 2002; Saldaña, 2016). The interview transcriptions were uploaded

to NVivo where coding of the data occurred. In addition, I used NVivo to memo my thoughts through the analytic process. The purpose of doing this is to make sure I remained open to the data, so that any possible assumptions will not cloud my interpretation of the data. Where appropriate, I integrated my coded memos into the overall narrative of the analysis themselves, which I attempted to make them streamlined and comprehensive. I drew upon the notion of challenging my biases and assumptions during my writing and made sure to ask myself if the notion at present comes from an assumption based on my own experience or research that I have studied. Finally, I made sure that I had a strong understanding and empathy for the teachers and their environment.

I used both content analysis and thematic analysis for all the data sources, except the state standards, which were natively integrated with the lead ELEs' lesson plans. These analyses were used to identify patterns and relationships through developing codes, and then categories, and finally themes based on the interviews, the lead ELEs' lesson plans, The Creative Curriculum - Literacy, and the early learning state standards data. By code, I mean "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). In other words, I labelled segments of text or other data with a word or short phrase while reading through the data to identify the meaning in context in order to get a general sense of the content (Creswell, 2014). Next, I present the set of coding schemes utilized to drive the analyses of the study.

### Coding Schemes Layout

I used eclectic coding, which utilizes a compatible combination of multiple coding methods that will be synthesized into a more unified scheme (Saldaña, 2016). The following is an excerpt detailing the first coding scheme.

Eclectic Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and studies with a wide variety of data forms (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, journals, documents, diaries, correspondence, artifacts, video). Eclectic Coding is also appropriate as an initial, exploratory technique with qualitative data; when a variety of processes or phenomena are to be discerned from the data; or when combined first cycle coding methods will serve the research study's questions and goals (Saldaña, 2016, p. 212).

In addition, I used simultaneous coding, which occurs when multiple codes are applied or overlap the same passage or sequence of passages in a text (Saldaña, 2016). Simultaneous coding is appropriate when the data suggests multiple meanings necessitating more than one code because social interaction is dynamic and not always discrete. CAQDAS lends itself well to this coding type because multiple codes can be assigned simultaneously. Therefore, both eclectic and simultaneous coding were global approaches to coding rather than coding schemes themselves.

Through eclectic coding, I used multiple coding strategies in dual cycles: 1st cycle and 2nd cycle. I used simultaneous coding as a result of using multiple overlapping coding strategies; therefore, both eclectic and simultaneous coding were utilized as global approaches to coding rather than coding schemes themselves. I coded the data sources through two coding cycles using six different coding schemes. I also divided the two cycles into six different phases, three phases in the first cycle (A, B, C) and 3 phases in the second cycle (b, c, d). I made this choice to help me conceptualize and then navigate the interconnected coding schemes in NVivo. The full list of codes from the study along with the number of files (i.e., data sources) and references (i.e., sections from the data sources) related to each code is in Appendix D.

I chose to use multiple coding schemes in order to add to the rigor of the study, and also being an intermediate coder, I wanted to ensure that delved as deep as possible into the data, accepting a codical overlap as a casualty of rigorous research. I detailed these coding strategies below, where I have provided a table to synopsize each of the multiple codes used (Table 2), followed by a figure to aid in conceptualizing the how I mapped my analysis (Figure 3), after which, I provided general descriptions of each type of code along with how they were used in the study.

*Table 3: Coding Synopsis*

| Coding scheme (Coding cycle and phase) | Coding use description | Importance to the study | Sources coded |
|---|---|---|---|
| Structural coding (1st cycle, phase A) | These codes linked large, initial data chunks, and all other codes from subsequent coding phases and cycles, directly to research questions | This coding scheme was important because it aided in quickly connecting the data and codes directly to research questions, so that none of the data was analyzed outside of the considerations of the research questions, which helped to streamline the analysis process | Six interview transcripts |
| Provisional coding (1st cycle, phase B) | These codes established a list of predetermined concepts based directly from research literature and preparatory researcher-developed notions | This coding scheme was important because it was as the basis for the study's content analysis and served as the initial search terms used to analyze the data within the NVivo program | Six interview transcripts |

| Initial/open coding (1st cycle, phase C) | These codes were created from a general exploration of the data and a consideration of all theoretical directions | This coding scheme was important because it was the basis of the study's thematic analysis creating an open lens with which to examine the whole of data | Six interview transcripts, four lesson plans, and program curriculum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subcoding (2nd cycle, phase b) | These codes were created as secondary tags from the primary (provisional) codes in order to narrow particular qualities or conceptual relationships within and between the data sets | This coding scheme was important because it further narrowed the concepts from 1st cycle provisional coding scheme (phase B) within the content analysis, creating a set of categories that would aid in the later creation of the final themes | Six interview transcripts |
| Focused coding (2nd cycle, phase c) | These codes were created selectively to identify the most significant codes that are constructed emergently from reorganized data | This coding scheme was important because it because it further narrowed the concepts from the 1st cycle initial coding (phase C) within the thematic analysis, creating another set of categories that would aid in the later creation of the final themes | Six interview transcripts, four lesson plans, and program curriculum |
| Pattern coding (2nd cycle, phase d) | These codes summarized the data down to the most salient concepts that are in-turn designed the themes of the study | This coding scheme was important because it was used to find the patterns between the categories of the subcoding (phase b) and focused coding (phase c) within the 2nd cycle, | Six interview transcripts, four lesson plans, and program curriculum |

which would culmi-
nate into the overarch-
ing themes of the
study

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*Figure 3: Dual Cycle Coding*

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                        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │  Dual Cycle Coding   │
                        └──────────┬───────────┘
                                   │
   ┌──────────────────────────┐    │
   │  Eclectic and Simultaneous│───┤
   │  coding applied globally  │    │
   └──────────────────────────┘    │
                        ┌───────────┴──────────┐
                        │   1st Coding Cycle   │
                        └───────────┬──────────┘
                        ┌───────────┴──────────┐
                        │  Structural Coding   │
                        │      Phase (A)       │
                        └───────────┬──────────┘
        ┌───────────────────────────┴───────────────────────────┐
┌───────┴────────┐                                      ┌────────┴────────┐
│ Provisional     │                                     │ Initial Coding  │
│ Coding Phase (B)│                                     │   Phase (C)     │
└───────┬─────────┘                                     └────────┬────────┘
        │              ┌──────────────────────┐                  │
        ├──────────────│   2nd Coding Cycle   │──────────────────┤
        │              └──────────┬───────────┘                  │
┌───────┴────────┐                                      ┌────────┴────────┐
│  Subcoding     │                                      │ Focused Coding  │
│  Phase (b)     │                                      │   Phase (c)     │
└───────┬────────┘                                      └────────┬────────┘
        │              ┌──────────────────────┐                  │
        └──────────────│   Pattern Coding     │──────────────────┘
                       │     Phase (d)        │
                       └──────────────────────┘
```
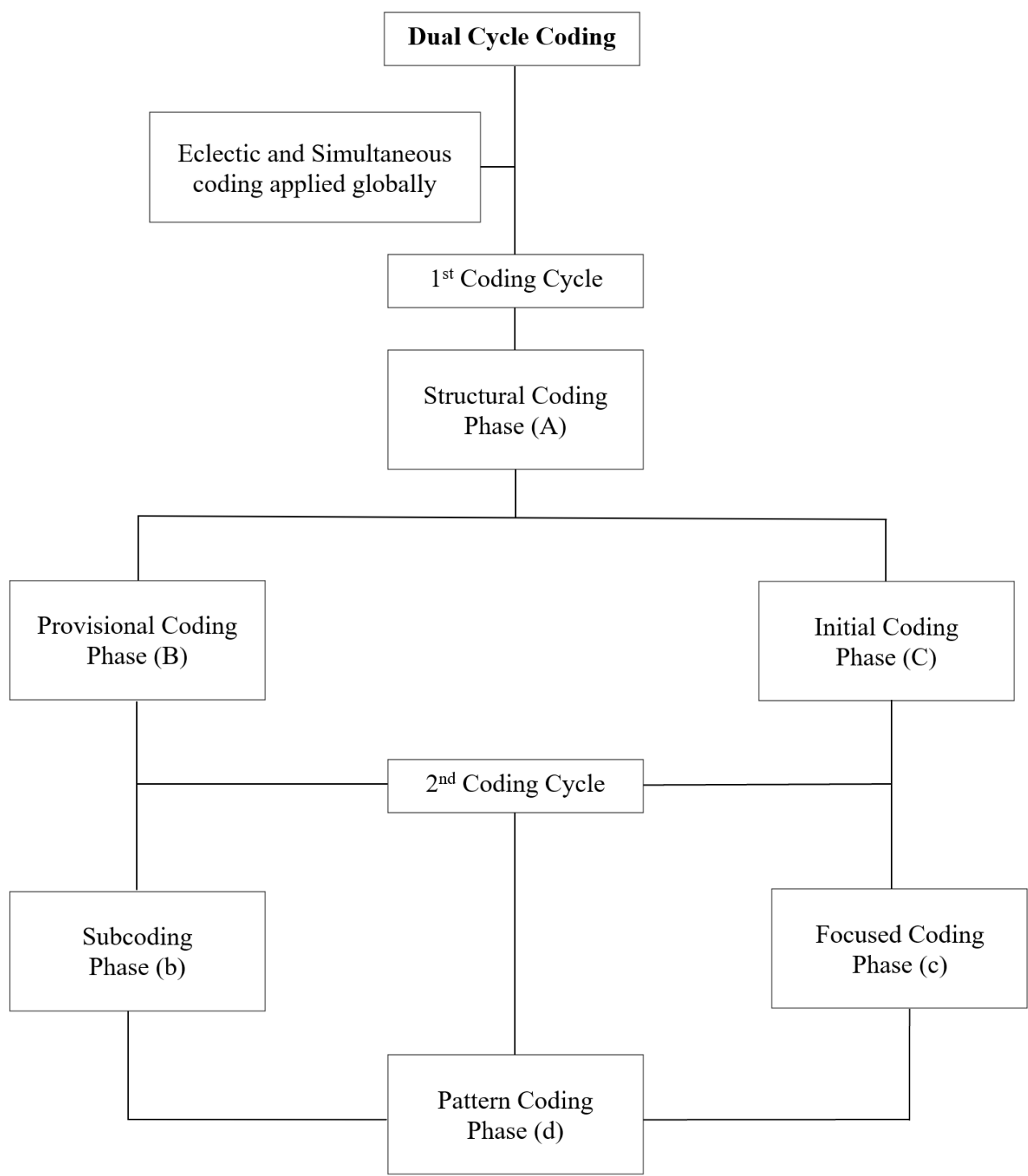
The first cycle structural codes (A) were used to create connects from large raw chunks of data to research questions and had no second cycle parallel. The subcodes (b) were second cycle coding, which became content analysis categories from the pre-designed, researcher-created provisional codes (B) of the first cycle. The focus codes (c) were second cycle coding, which became the thematic analysis categories from the free-formed, multi-dynamic initial/open codes (C) from the first cycle. The second cycle pattern codes (d) thematize the codes from the categories of the second cycle coding schemes (b) and (c).

**Structural Coding.** Structural coding applies a conceptual or content-based phrase that connects a segment of data to a specific research question and provides a general foundation for further detailed coding (Saldaña, 2016). This coding system both codes data and is question-based to index relevant data directly to the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, this coding results in identification of large segments of text on broad topics (Saldaña, 2016).

Through content and thematic analyses (Ezzy, 2002; Saldaña, 2016), I used structural coding (A) to index large sections of data sources and create nexuses directly to the research questions. I believe it was the most beneficial to start with structural coding so that I could trace all subsequent codes from each of the various coding schemes back to the research questions more seamlessly. For the 1st cycle structural coding (A), I created four codes to delineate the research questions between experiences and impressions.

> *(A) Structural codes [4]*
> RQ1.1 - Experience w/ PhAw, phonics, PA
> RQ1.2 - Impressions of PhAw, phonics, PA
> RQ2.1 - Experiences w/ motivation to teach and student engagement
> RQ2.2 - Impressions of teacher motivation and student engagement

Each code was graphed directly from the research questions in this study. All six interview transcripts were coded in (A) with a total of 196 referential data points.

In Figure 4, I have provided a random data point used in the NVivo program as an example to track through each presented coding schemes. The red portion is the coded text and the yellow box to the right is the list of codes attributed to that text using the coding density property. Below, I have provided a step-by-step guide with additional figures to track to how this section of data, (i.e., Alicia, 79 IE) was coded within each scheme.

*Figure 4: List of Codes for Selected Unit of Content (Alicia, 79, IE)*



78 IR: Wonderful. I love that kinesthetic.

79 IE: Also like the rhyming bingo where they actually are seeing like a cat and the /ăt/ family is my favorite one any way that's the most (IR laughter) elemental one, core one, the /ăt/ family, but (IR laughter / overlap – Right). You know, we have different things that they object that they have to rhyme or match together  So they use we use activities like that as far as rhyming. But we also use stuff like back in the day, the banana fanna bow banna be bi bow bana (IR overlap – Man, yeah), you know silly stuff. We talk to them about like no nonsense words, but as long as the end sounds the same, you know, (IR overlap – Right). Then it's a rhyming word I think they will go into alliteration. But yeah, so.

For the structural coding (A), (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded as Research Question 1.1 (RQ1.1) – Experiences with PhAw, phonics, and performing arts (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Structural Coding Scheme with Code for (Alicia, 79 IE)*
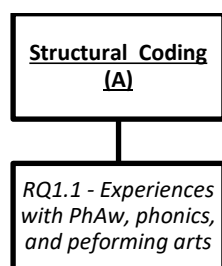


Upon first reading of this data point (Alicia, 79 IE), I believed that RQ1.1 was the best and only fit within the structural code (A) scheme because the data point directly reflected an experience regarding PhAw. It seemed to be an easily coded in this way.

**Provisional Coding.** Provisional coding establishes a predetermined list of codes that are developed from anticipated responses, actions, or experiences from data yet to be collected (Saldaña, 2016). The provisional list is generated from preparatory investigations from literature reviews, previous research findings, researcher-formulated hunches, etc. (Saldaña, 2016). The list can range from 5 upwards to 60 codes (Saldaña, 2016). A researcher must be willing to tolerate ambiguity, flexibility, remain honest, and allow resulting categories to be subject to continual modification and renewal (Saldaña, 2016). CAQDAS programs allow the entry and development of provisional codes to be directly assigned to selected portions of data (Saldaña, 2016).

With the data sources divided by research questions using the structural codes (A), I then took those data units and utilized provisional coding (B) by creating 1st cycle preexisting codes based on elements of PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. Therefore, every mention of an element PhAw, phonics, or performing arts in the data was given a corresponding code. For 1st cycle provisional coding (B), I initially created six codes: phonological continuum, phonological awareness, phonics, teacher motivation, teacher engagement, and student engagement. Each of these codes were pre-designed based on prior research concepts and notions of my own interest regarding language and literacy pedagogy. My use of the term 'phonological continuum (PhC)' rather than 'phonological awareness continuum' may have created some confusion when introduced to the participants, which I address in later sections and have modified through the research study; however, since I did use PhC in this stage of the coding sequence, I have left it unaltered. During my NVivo navigation, I used the word search query feature with generalizations find option, which searches for other words related to the target word (e.g., talk is target term ~ communication is added as generalized term). I then expanded the provisional codes to better

elicit terms more inclusionary of my targeted concepts and notions. I finalized this phase with

seventeen provisional codes.

*(B) Provisional codes [17]*
Acting
Alphabet
Dance
Excitement
Language skills
Language sounds
Lyricism
Music
phonemic awareness
Phonics
Phonological awareness
Phonological continuum
Rhyme
Student engagement
Teacher engagement
Teacher motivation
Theater

All six interview transcripts were coded in (B) with a total of 263 referential data points. For the

provisional coding (B), (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded as language sounds; phonological awareness;

and rhyme (see Figure 6). Having a set of predetermined set of provisional codes (B) boded well

at this point of the analysis. This data point (Alicia, 79 IE) fit into the initial provisional codes

and an additional expanded code, language sounds, that was later created through the text inquir-

ies that I conducted. This occurred because I realized that often the teachers did not use Linguis-

tics metalanguage, (i.e., language science jargon), yet instead used laymen's terms. I went back

and search using those laymen's terms in conjunction with the metalanguage. In going back

through an analyzing again, I at times found cases where the teacher would be describing a

PhAw activity and just mentioning the concept of language sounds in other contexts, in which,

like in the case of (Alicia, 79 IE), I coded it as both PhAw and language sounds.

*Figure 6: Structural and Provisional Coding Schemes with Codes for (Alicia, 79 IE)*
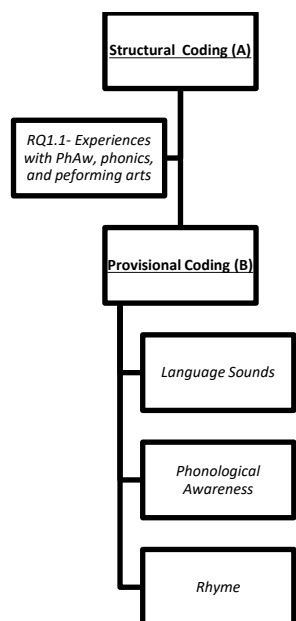


**Initial Coding.** Initial coding is also known as open coding, which breaks data into discrete parts, examines them closely, and compares and contrasts the data (Saldaña, 2016). The goal is to remain open to all possible theoretical directions suggested by interpretations of the data, giving the researcher the opportunity to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of the data (Saldaña, 2016). This coding is a starting point for analytic exploration from the prospective of seeing where the study goes through digesting and reflecting on the data and paying attention to rich dynamics throughout the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Through thematic analysis (Bogdan et al., 2016; Saldaña, 2016), I utilized initial coding on all of the data in tandem with the first cycle content analysis coding schemes. For the 1st cycle initial/open coding (C), I created 209 codes, (see Appendix D). Each code was created after examining each data set including all six interview transcripts, the four lesson plans provided by the teachers, and sections from the language and literacy portion of the program curriculum.

Therefore, all eleven data sources along with a NVivo memo were coded with a total of 509 referential data points. For initial coding (C), (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded as supporting PhAw continuum & PhAw (see Figure 7).

*Figure 7: All 1st Cycle Coding Schemes with Codes for (Alicia, 79 IE)*
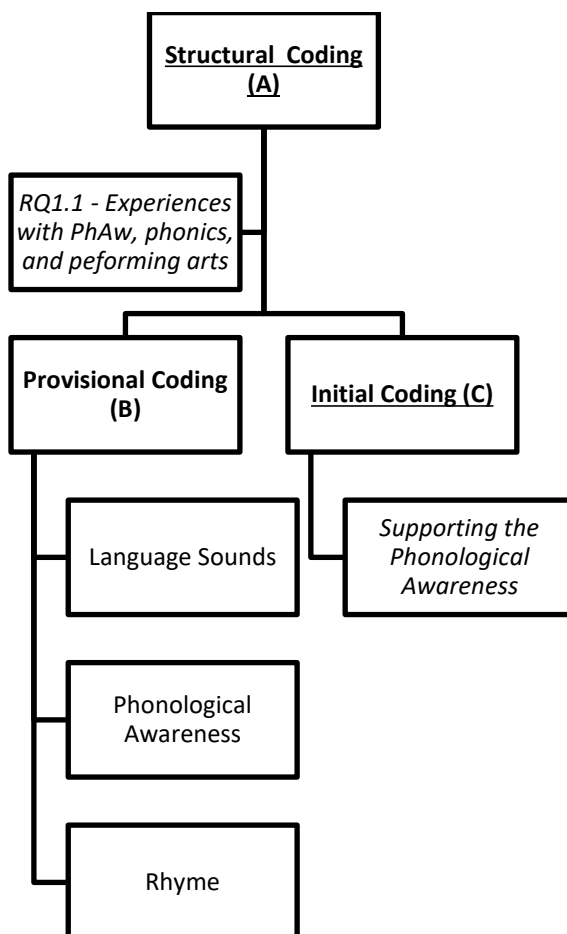


With (Alicia, 79 IE) and this coding scheme, surprisingly, it was only coded once. I say surprisingly because I created over 200 open codes. As I attempted to be broader with the creation of initial codes (C), there were some data points that fit efficiently within a single code, as was the case here with (Alicia, 79 IE).

**Subcoding.** Subcoding is a secondary tag assigned after the primary codes, or in the case of this research, after the provisional codes, to enrich or bring more detail to a data entry and is

dependent on the level of specificity needed to categorize and analyze the data (Saldaña, 2016). This coding is employed to narrow the classification scheme or as an addition for particular qualities of emergent relationships (Saldaña, 2016). The primary code becomes a parent, while subcodes become children sharing the same parent as siblings in the hierarchy (Saldaña, 2016). CAQDAS permits subcoding as a smaller portion of text coded within a larger portion of coded text (Saldaña, 2016).

During the second cycle coding, provisional codes (B) were subcoded (b) in order to detail more specific elements of the PhAw, phonics, or performing arts (e.g., phonological awareness activity, ideas about phonics, using music). This second cycle subcoding (b) scheme came to serve as my content analysis categories. For the 2nd cycle subcodes (b), I re-examined the provisional codes (B) and then conducted various text queries related to each of the subcodes that I elicited. I finalized this phase with eight subcodes, which served as my first set of analytical categories.

*(b) Subcodes [8]*
Agency
Concept confusion or unsurety
Confidence
Language and literacy skills and activities
Modelling and scaffolding language and literacy
Motivation and engagement
Passion
Performing arts integration

All six transcripts were referenced, yielding 260 referential data points. For the subcoding (b), (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded as Language and Literacy Skills and Activities; Motivation and Engagement; and Performing Arts Integration (see Figure 8). The subcoding scheme (b) narrowed my conceptual lens of the data points. I really honed in on the important concepts through all the data points that I was coding. I also made more connections with data points that I did not make previously because of the connections elicited from the creation of codes and coding of the data.

For instance, subcoding for (Alicia, 79 IE) expanded to include motivation and engagement as well as performing arts integration.

*Figure 8: All 1st Cycle Coding and Subcoding with Codes for (Alicia, 79 IE)*
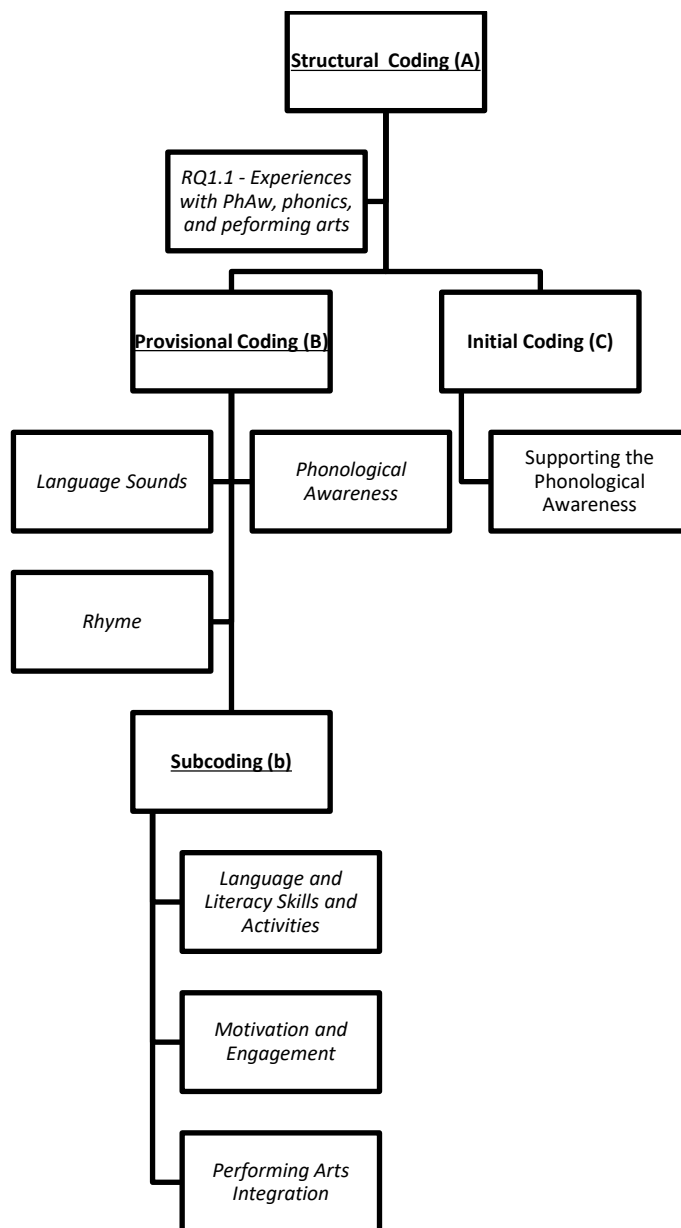


This connection was made because of the correlation between the presence of rhyming with that of motivation, engagement, and performing arts in other data points. That is to say, teachers were motivated and students engaged when rhyming was present as it had elements of performing arts.

**Focused Coding.** Focused coding is selective coding, which follows initial/open coding to be applied with other coding methods to categorize the data (Saldaña, 2016). Focused coding looks to identify the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories (Saldaña, 2016). The goal of this method is to develop categories without distracted attention to their properties or dimensions, which enables the comparison of newly constructed codes across the data to assess comparability and transferability (Saldaña, 2016). Categories are constructed emergently from reorganization of data and should not be forced into pre-conceived categories or discarded to keep an existing theory intact (Saldaña, 2016). CAQDAS programs lend themselves well to focused coding since they simultaneously enable coding, category construction, and analytic memo writing (Saldaña, 2016).

During the second cycle thematic analysis, I went into focused coding in order to create richer detail based on the decisions that emerge during the analysis process. For the 2nd cycle focus codes (c), I re-examined the initial/open codes (C) and then conducted various text queries related to each of the focus codes that I elicited. I finalized this phase with sixteen focused codes, which became my second set of categories.

*(c) Focused codes [16]*
Comprehensive pedagogical literacy experience
Dictating student language
Focus on fun and happiness to elicit engagement and motivation
Innate language ability
Language as both art and science
Multimodality
PhAw, Phonemic awareness, and Phonics focus
Positive metaphors for Phonics
Rhyme as pedagogical staple for phonological activities
Song as medium of engagement
Storytelling and character connection as a catalyst to content retention & student engagement
Teacher engagement as a catalyst to student engagement and vice versa
Teacher invigoration through student success
Teacher programs need dedicated PhAw continuum/PhAw courses

Teacher student connection as catalyst to motivation

Use of common experience as bridge to academic content

All eleven data sources were referenced, yielding 233 referential data points. For focused coding

(b), (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded as rhyme as a pedagogical staple for phonological activities (see

Figure 9).

*Figure 9: 1st Cycle Coding, Subcoding, and Focused Coding Schemes with Codes for*
*(Alicia, 79 IE)*
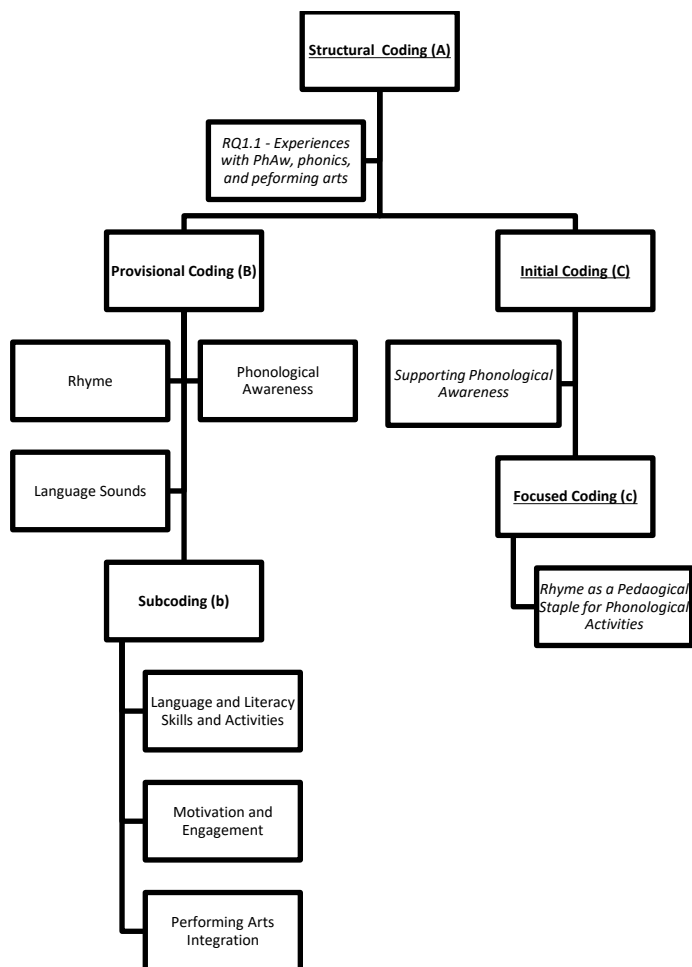


Reducing over 200 codes into 16 code/categories was not as difficult as I would have imagined,

mainly because many of the initial codes (C), overlapped in subtle ways. The focused coding (c)

gave me a very good vantage to see the entirety of the data conceptually, especially after using

the other coding schemes and reviewing the data many times. Focused coding (c) for (Alicia, 79

IE) only had one category, rhyme as a pedagogical staple for phonological activities; however, that one category, among others, really helped to sharpen my final conceptual lens, which led to the development of my final themes.

**Pattern Coding.** Pattern coding is a second cycle method that groups summarized segments of data into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern codes can be exploratory or inferential by identifying emergent themes, configuration, or explanations (Saldaña, 2016). This coding scheme collects similarly coded passages from the data to develop a statement that describes a major theme, a pattern of action, a network of interrelationship, or theoretical construct from the data (Saldaña, 2016). Several pattern codes can emerge and each one may hold merit as a major theme to analyze and develop; however, they are hunches where some pan out and others do not (Saldaña, 2016).

I synthesized the content analysis and thematic analysis codes through pattern coding, categorizing the codes based on patterns of meaning that I detected, and thus the categories grouped data that share commonalities (Creswell, 2014). The focus of the categories was pedagogical in nature particularly with regards to language and literacy. For the 2[nd] cycle, final phase pattern codes (d), I re-examined all the codes from all the phases paying particular attention to the 2[nd] cycle (b) and (c) phases. From there, I conducted text queries related to the codes at the foundation of the pattern codes as well as related to the concepts and notions that I deemed the most apropos and important to thematize. I finalized on seven pattern codes, which became my themes.

*(d) Pattern codes [7]*
Need more Phonics and/or PhAw training for teachers
The power of using student names
Confusion and unsurety regarding Language and Literacy concepts

Multi-Causal catalyzation of teacher motivation

Multimodal, comprehensive literacy experience

Performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies

PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content

These pattern code themes coded all eleven foundational data sources, yielding 284

referential data sources. For the pattern codes (d), (Alicia, 79 IE) was multi-causal catalyzation

of teacher motivation; performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strat-

egies; and PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content (see Figure 10).

Theming the data is the ultimate objective for coding. The term theme is often used inter-

changeably with category, domain, phrase, unit of analysis, and others (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

The purpose of a theme is to bring meaning and identity to a recurring pattern of experience,

which unifies the bases of an experience into a meaningful whole (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

More specifically, a theme is an extended phrase or sentence identifying what a unit of data is

about and/or what it means, which can be identified at the manifest level directly observed in the

information as an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeated ideas, or at the latent level,

underlying the phenomenon to gain deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday

experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

*Figure 10: All Coding Schemes with Codes for (Alicia, 79 IE)*
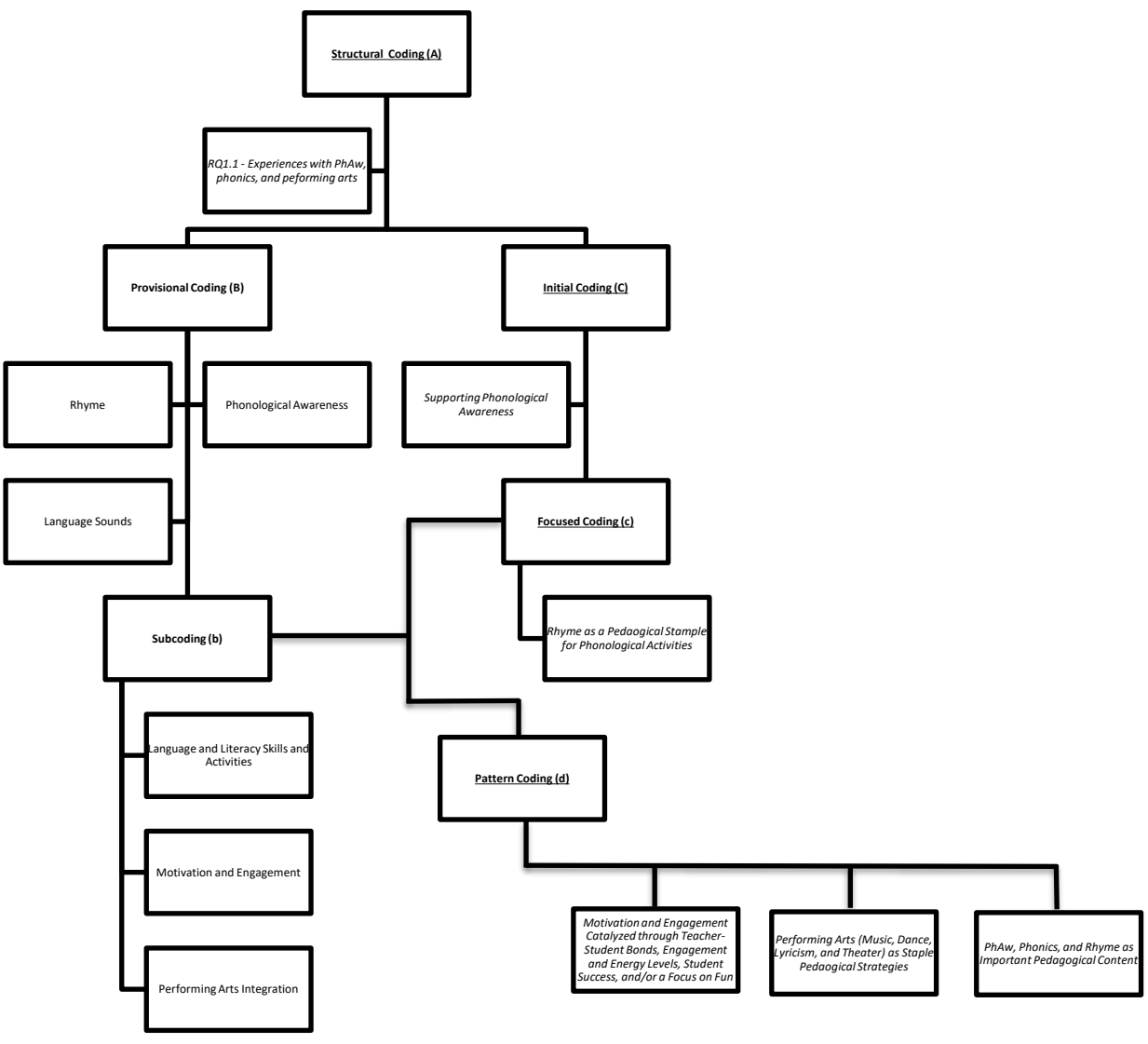


Themes can be statements of ideas presented in the data that summarize what's going on, explains what's happening, or suggests why something is done a specific way and can also consist of descriptions of behavior, iconic statements, or morals from participant stories (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, themes do not simply emerge; they are the product of interpretation telling more about the researcher than about the data (Saldaña, 2016).

As the final example from (Alicia, 79 IE) showed in Figure 10, I thematized the data as pattern codes (d) using the $2^{nd}$ cycle subcode (b) and focused code (c) categories as foundations, where I elicited more implicit and abstract elements from the meanings across the categories. Therefore, this final coding scheme, pattern coding (d), was the theme creation stage and it really flowed because I had engaged in so many cycles and phases of coding. I was really able to see the data clearly. The pattern codes (d), which became themes for (Alicia, 79 IE) reflected heavily on the prior coding cycles (b) and (c) regarding pedagogical content and strategies as well as motivation and engagement. (Alicia, 79 IE) was coded and reflected the themes of multi-causal catalyzation of teacher motivation; performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies; and PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content.

Through the themes created in this study, I attempted to elicit a greater depth of meaning to the categories and codes. It was my hope that the themes I identified articulated meaning across the entire data set, and were not solely based on quantifiable elements, but rather I hoped they captured relevant understanding related to the research as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Additionally, I kept in mind as Brinkman (2013) eluded that there may be internal conflicts among the narratives and descriptions of the participants resulting and the lack of a single "voice". Therefore, the research could have resulted in themes that seem incoherent. Whether the result was going to be a homogenous set of patterned experiences or multiple, perspectival, and even contradictory accounts, I made sure that I remained open to the data and challenged my own assumptions. I wanted to capture the essence and nature of PhAw, phonics, performing arts, teacher motivation, and student engagement through the pervading patterns in the early learning educator's experiences and impressions. I both compared and contrasted the

ELEs' pedagogical experiences and impressions within their narratives and across all their pro-

vided data sources. Through the analytical strategies mentioned, I refined categories and devel-

oped themes at the highest conceptual levels thereby elucidating a coherent understanding of the

early learning educators' experiences with and impressions of PhAw, phonics, performing arts,

teacher motivation, and student engagement in their classrooms.

**Ethics**

I conducted an ethical study as dictated by the guidelines of the Georgia State University

Internal Review Board (IRB). I gathered consent from the educators as approved by the IRB

committee and the education facility administration. I made sure to respect the participants' time

and made accommodations regarding scheduling and contact procedures. Of the seven possible

teachers, six agreed to the study and I did not attempt to coerce the last teacher to participate. I

made sure to maintain a professional rapport with the teachers and I constantly expressed my ap-

preciation for their participation. I was also complimentary of their stories making sure that they

knew of the great work they are doing as educators. Since the data collection process has ended,

I have kept the data from the interviews secured and will continue to do so, adhering to the con-

sent that all parties agreed upon.

**Rigor and Credibility**

The rigor of this study was grounded in sound theoretical underpinnings across three dif-

ferent theoretical perspectives: 1. Theoretical perspective on empirical research through Eclectic

Pluralism; 2. Theoretical perspective on literacy pedagogy through Balanced Literacy; and 3.

Theoretical perspective on language acquisition through Emergent Literacy. The university-man-

aged program for which the participants of the study came also added a deep sense of rigor be-

cause it is such a strong, well-run organization with great leadership and administrators along

with well-educated and experienced teachers. In addition, the fact I was able to interview six of

the seven teachers gave this study the ability to have a clear picture of the multiple experiences,

impressions, and voices of the educational guidance at the helm of the program. The interview

questions were designed after careful consideration of all the factors of the study and really elic-

ited the knowledge needed to illustrate the early learning experience in this setting. Along with

the interview data, I gathered three other sources of data (teacher lesson plans, The Creative Cur-

riculum – Literacy used by the early learning program, and the state early learning standards, the

latter of which were also integrated into the lesson plans) to help crystalize the picture of the ed-

ucators early learning. Once gathered, the data was carefully analyzed using two forms of analy-

sis, content and thematic analysis, as well as two coding cycles with a total of six different cod-

ing strategies. Because of all these factors, I believe the study exhibits a sufficient amount of ri-

gor and credibility.

# 4 RESULTS

In this section, I present seven themes based on the coded results of the interview questions (see Appendix A). My attempt was to keep the presentation of the data flowing in a clear and concise manner while telling the story of the teachers in the study. I relied heavily on direct data from the interview transcripts because I want to use the authentic words and expressions of early learning educators (ELEs) themselves. As additional evidentiary support. I also used four lesson plans from the lead ELEs (see Appendix B), the state early learning standards (see Appendix C) integrated with the lesson plans, and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), which is used as the language and literacy (L&L) pedagogical foundation for the childcare development program (CDP).

I started with themes that correspond with PhAw and phonics as language and literacy concepts within research question one.

1. What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies, particularly the phonological awareness, phonics, and performing arts in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

I then moved on to themes that correspond to performing arts as language and literacy strategies within research question one in tandem with themes related to teacher motivation and student engagement from research question two.

2. What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation, as well as student engagement, particularly regarding L&L concepts and strategies, in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

Performing arts as L&L strategies seemed to be a bridge between L&L concepts (i.e., PhAw and phonics) and teacher motivation along with student engagement because performing arts as strategies to convey L&L concepts often correlated with teacher motivation and student engagement. As a result, some of the themes answered or addressed multiple research questions or parts thereof. Therefore, I chose to present the themes in a way where performing arts acted as a link connecting the L&L concepts portion of research question one with the teacher motivation and student engagement portions of research question two. I made sure to indicate when such thematic overlap of the research questions was present. In the next section, I began with my first set of themes related to the concepts of L&L content.

**Themes Related to Phonological Awareness and Phonics**

My first research question was designed to examine early learning teachers' experiences with and impressions of L&L concepts, particularly, phonological awareness (PhAw), phonemic awareness, and phonics, along with performing arts as L&L strategies in early learning classrooms. However, regarding themes, this section will solely focus on L&L concepts (e.g., PhAw), while themes related to L&L strategies (i.e., performing arts) will be focused on in a later section, since performing arts conceptually and thematically overlapped with both research questions. Nonetheless, many L&L concepts in general, and more specifically many linguistics (i.e., the science of language) concepts such as phonological awareness, are used in the curricula of L&L programs at all age levels. Therefore, teachers should have an adequate grasp on these concepts if they are expected to teach these concepts in their classrooms.

*Theme 1: PhAw, Phonics, and Rhyme as Important Pedagogical Content*

By far the most coded and referenced data points were those involving phonological awareness (PhAw), phonics, and rhyme. The interview questions elicited a great deal of information regarding these foundational L&L concepts. I sought to find if and how teachers were educating students using these critical pedagogical elements. Teachers' interviews, lesson plans, and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy provided me with a wealth of information to help me answer part of my first research question regarding their experiences with and impressions of PhAw and phonics in their classrooms. Therefore, I present my first theme, *PhAw, Phonics, and Rhyme as Important Pedagogical Content.* By "important", I mean that PhAw and phonics, as well as rhyme were beneficial to the development of students' literacy skills, and were frequently used in L&L lessons. The ELEs' experiences with and impressions of teaching PhAw and phonics, as well as rhyme were prevalent throughout their transcripts as each spoke at length about how they navigated and thought through this part of the pedagogical journey.

**PhAw and Phonics in the CDP Literacy Curriculum.** The stance that teachers need to have a suitable understanding of linguistics concepts led me to analyze The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), used by the childcare development program (CDP) at the center of this study. The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), defines phonological awareness (PhAw) as "hearing and understanding the different sounds and patterns of spoken language. It includes the different ways oral language can be broken down into individual parts" (p. 543). The Creative Curriculum – Literacy also describes PhAw in various contexts in the follow passage:

> Phonological awareness develops as a progression, from simple skills (e.g., listening) to very complex skills (e.g., manipulating individual sounds in words). Each phonological

awareness skill involves varying levels of difficulty. Phonological awareness begins with listening to sounds in the environment. These beginning listening skills help children later attend to the separate sounds in words. The next skills are noticing and discriminating rhyme and alliteration. For preschool children, rhyming requires recognizing the sounds in word endings. Alliteration involves hearing similar initial sounds, such as in big beautiful buttons (p. 543).

The Creative Curriculum – Literacy used by the CDP defines phonemic awareness as, "the focus is on the smallest unit of sound, the phoneme" which is "at the more complex end of the continuum of phonological awareness" (p. 543). Therefore, the curriculum describes PhAw as a continuum of phonological principles, where phonemic awareness is at the most discrete and difficult end of the continuum. The curriculum also explains the skills associated with phonemic awareness, "for example, if you sing, Dow, dow, dow your boat, gently down the stream, the children will probably-say, No! That's not right! It's row. In this playful way, they are paying attention to phonemes" (p. 543). The curriculum used by the CDP also bridges the concepts of PhAw and phonics in the follow passage.

> Phonological awareness lays the groundwork for phonics. After children have a good understanding of the sounds of language, they begin to connect printed symbols with their corresponding sounds, for example, 'M' with /m/. Be aware that phonics is not the same as phonological awareness, which [PhAw] involves only auditory skills and not sound-symbol correspondence (p. 545).

This passage describes the difference between PhAw and phonics, which at times can be confused. It also states that PhAw is in fact the foundation for phonics. The Creative Curriculum – Literacy goes on the express the power of PhAw and phonemic awareness on literacy.

As children's phonological awareness skills advance, they learn to manipulate phonemes in many different ways. They blend and segment phonemes, or substitute one phoneme for another. These manipulation skills found at the most complex end of the progression are called phonemic awareness. Research shows that these advanced skills are one of the most powerful predictors of success in learning to read (p. 543)

As such, the curriculum used by the CDP encourages teachers to provide students with exposure to an environment rich with PhAw, phonemic awareness, and phonics. "Preschool, kindergarten, and primary-grade teachers should provide linguistically rich classroom environments where children play with sounds" (p. 547). The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), supports the theme of *PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important* because it clearly defines each concept, describes the importance of the concepts on literacy, and encourages their use in the learning environment.

**PhAw and Phonics in the ELEs' Lesson Plans Integrated with State Early Learning Standards.** After learning exactly how The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), advises ELEs in the program to navigate L&L instruction, I examined a few of the teachers' lesson plans (see Appendix B) to see how they were planning their lessons and if they were incorporating any official class time to address any of these L&L practices. Their lesson plans showed that they dedicated daily blocks of time for various instruction and activities, such as verbal and linguistic, music and rhythmic/movement, and language and literacy. For each of the instructional blocks of activities, teachers indicated where the state standards were being met. For example, in lesson plans 1 and 4, the teachers allotted blocks of time to phonological awareness. The lesson plans indicate that they have an activity called "letter sound chant" where they chant sounds in relation to ranges of letters in the alphabet (e.g., A-F, A-I, G-L, J-Q). The lesson

plans indicate that these activities addressed the state standard (see Appendix C), *Communication, Language, and Literacy, CLL6.4a -* Listens and differentiates between sounds that are the same and different. The description of this standard describes a phonemic awareness activity.

In lesson plan 2, the class engages in an activity called "Down by the bay" where students create rhyming words in a song. This lesson plan indicates that these activities addressed the state standard, *CLL6.4b -* Identifies and produces rhyming words. Another activity from this lesson plan is "Bippity Bopity Brew," where students pass letters around in a pot. When the pot stops, the teacher gives the sound of the letter the student is holding. This lesson plan indicates that these activities addressed the state standard, *CLL6.4c -* Isolates the initial (beginning) sounds in words with adult guidance.

These lesson plans support the theme of *PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content* because they indicate specific blocks of time dedicated to various activities the feature these L&L concepts (e.g., PhAw). The state early learning standards were operationalized in each of the activities that focused on these concepts, thereby indicating that both the standards and the lesson plans support the importance of the PhAw, phonics, and rhyme. After analyzing these initial data sources, I had a good grasp on how ELEs where prepared to teach, particularly from the approach of language skills. Next, I needed to examine the experiences and impressions regarding L&L concepts directly from the teachers. I examined the interview transcripts to deeply investigate how teachers practiced the L&L principles that their curriculum and lesson plans stated.

**Teachers' Impressions of PhAw and Phonics.** One of the first interview questions that I asked teachers was related to their impressions about language skills on overall learning. I

wanted to get a sense of how they measured the importance of a student's language skills because the teachers' perspectives could have an effect on their levels of fervor to teach language and literacy principles.

Alicia offered her impression of how language skills affect overall student learning in the following passage from her interview.

> Sure, the first part as for how important the language skills are, just in general overall for the students, I think that is very important. I think that it is important for them to give it as a foundation. But I think that they use it more, as far as language, in the later part of grade school when they are actually reading on their own in order to follow instructions or to complete tasks and different assignments. As far as Pre-K, I don't feel like the two intervene with any other subjects at the at the moment other than reading because we are reading everything to them. So we are getting a lot of cognitive skills when it come down to math, when you come down to science that they are not using their phonics and things like that to complete those tasks or to show what that they know as far as their comprehension skills…I feel like if they don't get those language skills and things like they are in Pre-K. It will affect them in their later part because I feel like Pre-K or like whatever foundation they have in Pre-K or kindergarten, I think that is very essential for them to get those skills down in the early part because it affects them in the later parts. It just doesn't affect them in the early part because that is the time when they should be getting that strong foundation, when it come down to language skills and their overall learning when it comes down to language skills because it affects them so much later. (Alicia, 30 & 32 IE)

Her beliefs here support, albeit indirectly, the theme of PhAw and phonics as important pedagogical content because she believed language skills, in general, are important overall as a foundation for student learning. She stated that this foundation is key for student success later in their academic career. However, she felt that language skills, and literacy in particular, are more important for students once they are in higher grades where they have more scholastic autonomy and agency. She did not feel that, at the Pre-K level, a student's language skills affect them in other subjects because Pre-K students do not need a strong grasp on literacy since teachers continue to carry the literacy load for them by doing most, if not all of the reading. Although they might not have needed literacy skills at the Pre-K level to understand other subjects, they would undoubtably need those skill to be successful later in their academic careers. Therefore, it made sense to denote these skills as important to early learning pedagogy, which support this first theme.

Another teacher provided similar evidence to support this theme of PhAw and phonics as pedagogically important. Toni offers her impression of language skills on overall student learning.

> This is really about the language. It plays a very important role in any aspect, especially different skills for different subjects…like math, science and stuff like that. Yes. So I do believe that……it can play a role in other subjects. You know, I feel like when children have oral language skills and when they have strong language skills…I just feel like when children have stronger oral language skills then their literacy and language skills are stronger…if you can't read, if you're not a good reader or you don't speak very well, that has to do with communication. That messes up other subjects. I start to feel like that gets into the other subjects. (Toni, 68 IE)

Here, Toni detailed how language skills, both oral and literacy, affect other subjects like math and science. Once again, if teachers held the impression that these skills were important, it stands to reason that they would most likely focus their pedagogy on activities that helped these vital skills to develop. Toni continues following the logic of how lack of language skill can impact other elements of learning.

> You can't do anything in a language arts class because you can't even interpret what the literature is about. So, you know, then you have math. Well, now you can even figure out a math problem. You may……you may be good in math. It's not like you can't be good at math, but things happen. You can't even explain it. Can't verbally explain it. How you got that answer. (Toni, 68 IE)

Her perspective was similar to Alicia in that she felt that language skills, in general, affect other subjects; however, she did not mention a difference in student level. It seems that she believed this to be true on any student level, early learning included. I found her tying language skills to math interesting as she talked about having to verbalize mathematic understanding by explaining logical sequences that arrive to mathematical answers.

   Other teachers echoed similar sentiments about the effect of language when asked about their impressions of the importance of language skills to other subjects. Chloe stated, "I think it's [language skills/literacy] useful in all areas" (Chloe, 28 IE), along with Halle who stated, "yes, I definitely think that language is essential in every subject area" (Halle, 20 IE). Anita expanded on this logic:

> I do believe that language is extremely important and it can affect them in other subjects. Because if you don't understand something and it comes from communication, which is language, then you kind of get lost or left behind if you aren't able to……to be able to

receive what someone is saying or explaining or trying to get across to you. So, I think if they don't have that ability to express themselves or the receptive language to receive, then it do put them at a disadvantage in every other area of learning. (Anita, 28 IE)

Not only did she agree about the need for language in terms of the communicative elements necessary to learn any subject, but she also took it a step further by explaining how the lack of expressive and receptive language will disadvantage a student in other areas, once again supporting the theme of PhAw and phonics as pedagogical important for early learning.

Selena rounded out the understanding of the importance of language skills to all areas of learning with a comprehensive model of her impressions.

Okay, so the first is, of course, I think that learning is like holistic and comprehensive……we piece them together. You cannot separate like the process, how the kid is learning. So, you cannot say that if you don't teach those skills, the language they will be bad in other area or they don't will be bad in another area. So, you need to be like……for me……teachers have to be aware that they are like a holistic…process to learn. All of them……all of the process to concrete their development. (Selena, 79 IE)

Her perspective drew on the holistic nature of language as it cannot be delineated from the learning process. She continues along this line of thinking later in the transcript.

Like they have language skills if you promote language skills…They definitely they want to improve their skills in other areas because language is a cognitive process, so that cognitive process impact in order in all the areas. So that is why when you are teaching languages skills, I mean, for a me, literacy and language, is everywhere all around you, the whole life in different any manners. So that is how you have to teach or focus on how kids

they learn that part. I mean, like like the base of our life, you know, that's how we com-

municate with each other…That is how you communicate with everything around you. So

for me. Like, yeah, definitely. You can be sure that if everything works together, you can't

separate it (Selena, 83 IE).

She provided details about the function of language in everyday life, and since language is a cog-

nitive process, she believed it affects every other area of life. Her understanding of the compre-

hensive and ubiquitous nature of language gave me an adequate picture of her impressions re-

garding the importance of language skills in both academic and social contexts. Once again, the

theme of PhAw and phonics as important in early learning pedagogy is supported through teach-

ers' impressions of the importance of language skills. However, this is not substantial enough.

Their impressions alone about the importance of language skill needs additional support by what

they are actually experiencing.

**Teachers' Experiences with PhAw, Phonics, and Rhyme.** Beyond their impressions of

language skills and their relation to overall learning, the teachers provided examples of their ex-

periences regarding their language and literacy (L&L) activities, which includes various activi-

ties that focus on various L&L concepts, such as, phonological awareness (PhAw), and more

specifically within the PhAw continuum, syllabic awareness, phonemic awareness, and rhyme,

as well as graphophonemic awareness (GphA, i.e., the awareness of letters to letters correlations

at the center of phonics instruction). Alicia spoke about one of her favorite activities.

So, we have different activities. We will have a lot of activity, but I'm to give you two

examples. We have this one. what we do, slap it, clap it, stomp it, count it, where we talk

about words have beats. So, we talk about the different syllables and words…so we could

get…so it's all that touch and it's crossing over and things like that where they are getting

their brain to think about it. And they actually love is this, like hickety-pickety bumblebee

can you say a word for me? And you might say 'Ever' (changed the original word, which

was the name of participant) and say it, Ok, let's snap it 'Ever" (IE snaps fingers for each

syllable). Let's clap it 'Ever' (IE claps hands for each syllable). Let's stomp it 'Ever' (IE

stomps feet for each syllable). Let's count it 'Ever'. We'll say how many syllables does it

have? They'll say two. We'll say do hear those beats in the words. So sometimes we'll hear

them at the table doing that same thing. So, we have activities like that. (Alicia, 77 IE)

This multimodal activity focused on syllabic awareness within the phonological awareness con-

tinuum (PhAw continuum) allowing the students to work on vocabulary as well as PhAw. I think

one of the key elements of the passage is at the end when the ELE revealed that the students au-

tonomously engage in the activity in their time away from an official lesson. That spoke volumes

with regards to the retention of the information and the depth of the engagement. Thus, the theme

of PhAw as important pedagogical content is supported through this ELE's experience.

Alicia also talked about the focus on rhyming with an activity called "rhyme time" where

she wrote the rhyming word and use images to cover up the word itself. She provided additional

description:

We have so much when it come down to rhyming, but we do have a whole unit based on

rhyming, books where they are coming up with their own rhymes after they get it after a

while the different activities and things like that. (Alicia, 130 IE)

This activity was one example that helps support the importance of rhyme in this first theme be-

cause the Alicia provided a good amount detail regarding PhAw activities that heavily feature

rhyme. Not only did she provide rhyming content herself, but she also gave the students autonomy to create their own rhymes. Therefore, rhyme is an important tool capable of helping to navigate the L&L landscape.

Other teacher's experiences continue to support this theme. Toni talked about how she was introduced to phonics growing up. Her own early learning experiences with phonics lessons seems to prompt her to focus on PhAw and phonics as an educator. She felt as if PhAw and phonics skills are necessary for students to develop in order from them to be prepared for kindergarten. She expressed her discontent with having students jump right into sight words, which apparently some programs or schools do, as opposed to having a solid foundation in phonics and PhAw first. She felt that students should be comfortable with skills like rhyming, blending, and phonemic awareness before moving to what she felts was the next academic level. The following interview excerpt picks up with her experiences with teaching PhAw and phonics after talking about learning phonics at an early age:

> I think as an educator and just been doing this for a while. Phonemic just blends, phonics blends in with isolation of sounds and segmenting and all that. I'm teaching in that aspect still because it's because, like I say, it is always a preparation of getting ready to go to kindergarten. As soon as they get over there, they're jumping into the sight words. They start with the letter sounds and then it's they jump around…which they shouldn't. We should try to hit from the beginning, which is phonics and then gradually work our way up to like blending and, being able to put a letter in front of a rhyme and then put it together [?] and alternate rhyme for like for instance like 'lake' and 'ache' during activities like and put it on different it plays or not plays, just acting it out so that they can get more comfortable with it. (Toni, 94 IE)

Additionally, this also supports the theme of PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content because she states very directly that she focuses on activities that are phonics and rhyme oriented and how important these activities are to build the skills necessary for students to move to the next academic level.

Additional facets of PhAw were expressed by other teachers. Chloe details an activity that she uses in her classroom with the aim of leading to literacy.

> We break it down into small groups. I mean, you'll be surprised how many different games that are for this type of thing. The goal is to get them some reading. So if they can understand, first off, they got to know the letters, then know the sounds of the letters, and then some sounds……well all sounds and have multiple sounds so it's like that, to figure out what goes with what. So, when we introduce it, we're going to say in the……families. So if we doing the /ăt/ family, we know that end, they know that the end is always going to be /ăt/. Now, we just gotta work on the beginning sound. So now we can focus on the beginning sound and not have to worry about the rest the rest of it, just focusing on the beginning sound trying to make a beginning sound to go with /ăt/. (Chloe, 50 IE)

In this activity, the focus was on onset/rime awareness. Onset refers to the consonant sound before the vowel sound within a syllable and rime refers to the vowel sound (i.e., nucleus) and any consonant sounds that come after (i.e., coda) within a syllable. Onset/rime awareness is a middle level along the PhAw continuum. Teachers in this study called these groups of words with the same rime 'families"; therefore, they can be denoted as "rime families". Students are given multiple words with the same rime and then they are to determine changes in the onset sound. They spiced up the activity with some imaginative play with the picnic basket. Chloe offered more detail about her classroom content.

When we're talking about the letters in the alphabet, we try to always go over the sounds…the most common sounds or the most common words that they use right now. So if we're doing 'a', 'a' is /ă/, /ă/, /ă/, 'b' is /b/, /b/, /b/, and so on and so forth. So when we do alphabet letter soup, we're looking for the letter that makes the /b/, /b/ sound and then they understand it's a 'b' because we've been working and they notice why. (Chloe, 60 IE)

This lesson was phonics oriented as they matched letters with their correlating letter sounds. Teachers gave students the letter and then provide the opportunity for them to find the letter sound. These activities continue to support the theme of PhAw and phonics as important early learning content.

Halle offered an interesting nugget of information regarding teaching vowel sounds in the follow passage.

Vowels is not really something that we stress in pre-K…….as much. It's almost it's good to know the difference. You know, the 'a' can make different sounds, the long 'a', the short 'a', the long 'e', the short 'e'. But, you know, some of them are still grasping the sounds. So sometimes it's kind of hard to to show them that this letter makes another sound when they're still grasping the initial sound. So, that's why we don't really stressing as much, but if they happen to know the vowels, you know, it's because their parents or older siblings work with them, then we can go……we go farther. You know, what I mean, like so, if a child has already grasped a certain in concept, we can go farther with that child. But initially, we just kind of see where they are and then we can introduce, you know, vowels in that sort of thing, if they've already grasped that sound. (Halle, 42 IE)

In this passage she talked about how they do not focus on vowel sounds; however, further into interviewing her, she gave another phonics example where she actually talked about teaching vowel sounds.

> They see the letters they actually see the word because when they say /ă/ /ă/ 'apple', they show you a picture of the word apple. They show you a picture of 'apple' and they have the word 'apple' and then /ā/ /ā/ 'acorn'. They show a picture of the 'acorn' and the word acorn. And then what they. Ok. Ok. I'm about to sound like the song, so it be like, 'a' 'a' this is the letter 'a' 'a'. So they have the 'a' then they show you like the upper case 'A', the lower case 'a', the signed 'a' using your hand and then they show you a picture of the /ă/ /ă/ 'apple'. /ā/ /ā/ 'acorn'. And then once again, 'B' uppercase 'b' and lowercase 'b'. So, it give you the sound and give you the sign and give you the picture and the word. So it's a whole lot. (Halle, 101 IE)

In this example of a phonics activity, she used print by showing the word in type, the image by showing a picture to what the word refers, and the language sounds by pronouncing the word. She also used both short and long vowel examples with the words 'apple' and 'acorn'. It seems as if she did at least introduce her students to multiple vowels sounds. Regardless, a wealth of phonics activities was continuously present in the teachers' pedagogy.

Anita, was asked during the interview about how she uses phonemic awareness in her classroom, which is focusing on individual sounds within a word. According to her experiences, the students are exposed to phonemic awareness activities at the second half of the school year and only in small amounts for the whole class. Students that are more advanced or skilled in this area could get more extensive one-on-one instruction. The logic behind not focusing on phone-mic awareness in her class seems to be that teachers in this class want to meet their students

where they are and provide what they believe to be age-appropriate material. The following was her response.

> We don't really kinda focus on on that and maybe until like the second half of the school year. And it would just be the beginning of the beginning letters in the words. It really sometimes depends on the children that we have. If, we have some kids that they can only kind of focus on just the beginning sound. Like, when you said 'bat'. I have some kids that say, "I hear 'at' at the end. 'Cat' sounds alike. You would kinda move those kids who are ready to go to those sounds, definitely you kind of break off into like smaller groups and like individually work with them. In a larger group, we kinda, you know, go over and go over the beginning sound with them, especially with the kids who who are just beginning to get there. And then with the kids who are a little bit more advanced, they will probably pull them to the side in a smaller group and find some activity or, you know, or do a lot of concrete teaching. So we try to find a item, and then have the words that go along with it in kind of like sound it out. Let them see what a 'bat' is or 'furniture', maybe, or an object and then maybe have a card with the word written on it. (Anita, 58 IE)

This was one of the only occurrences where a particular L&L concept was purposefully not addresses.

In Selena's experience, she utilized phonemic awareness and vowel focused activities, which is prevalent throughout the passage when she talks about pronunciation of each letter in different words, particularly in the student's names. She felt it was important for them to pronounce each sound in correlation to each letter. She describes an activity that she used in her previous teaching experience where the students use two-syllable rhyming words and changed the ending sounds.

I always start with their names and we play various names with their names with the foundation on their name. And we do some dynamics from it. And then one that they that they work for a long time with their names. I start to introduce different words. Like to make sure that they pronounce the sounds of each letter. You know what I mean I read their names in front of them all the time. Then they can know how each sounds, how they can hear each sounds, and how I read those sounds. For me, very important to show them how to read. And they if they can see me, how I read their name and how I pronounce each single sound of each word, each letter for me. I think that we can do another thing, it can be write words in front of them all the time and make sure that we pronounce the sound of each letter as we are writing down the letters in front of them, too. And there are some songs and a rhyme that you can use to where they take the songs as you are singing…they they they change the letters. So you have to change the sounds in the end of their word that you say, what is that…that you changed the last word. That is song in the Spanish. I can't remember the song in Spanish. And you need to change the vocal in the end…first time say [? ~ she pronounces a series of two syllable Spanish words with the same second syllable coda and changes in the final rime] So you can switch all the sounds and the same sounds. (Selena, 101 IE)

Selena's experience provides additional support to PhAw and phonics as pedagogically important through her focus on pronunciation, rhyme and rime awareness, phonics, and using students' names within the very interesting Spanish early learning L&L activity.

The data sources in this study (i.e., teacher interviews, teacher lesson plans, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, and state early learning standards) all support the importance of PhAw,

phonics, and rhyme as pedagogical content. The Creative Curriculum – Literacy defined the language and literacy concepts, stated their importance on literacy, and encouraged their usage in the learning environment. The lesson plans had daily blocks of time dedicated to activities that help to develop these L&L skills and the state early learning standards were satisfied through the activities. The ELEs in this study had many positive impressions about PhAw and phonics, as well as a great deal of pedagogical experiences centered on PhAw, phonics, and rhyme activities. They concurred that language skills were important for student learning in all areas and these impressions were operationalized through their many PhAw, phonics, and rhyming activities. The evidence presented in this section attests to the legitimacy of this first theme: *PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content*.

### Theme 2: The Power of Using Students' Names

The Creative Curriculum – Literacy states the importance of using students' names. "Children's own names are highly motivating for learning letter names" (Heroman & Jones, 2010, p. 556). It also states the following.

> While this progression is typical, children often recognize the letters in their own name first, because these are the letters of the words that are most important to them. Including activities with children's own names is an excellent way to make letters and words meaningful. After children learn the letters in their own names, they often learn the letter of other words that are significant to them, such as the names of family members and pets. (p. 554)
>
> Selena, in the final passage of the last section, described not only how she addressed various language and literacy (L&L) concepts, such as PhAw, but also a pedagogical jewel came up in this passage, which was the use of student's names in L&L activities.

I always start with their names and we play various games with their names with the foundation on their name. And we do some dynamics from it. And then they work for a long time with their names. (Selena, 101 IE)

Selena mentioned the use of names and how important they were in another part of her transcript.

Yeah, I did. I mean, I start with that all the time because I……I remember that I was reading something in the college that was talking about how you feel so important when somebody is taking your name and how your name is giving you identity. So, when you get your identity, through somebody is like making your name important. That's how it makes sense for you…the language. That's how you understand that those letters, they say something. They have one sense. They can……you can read those words. You can read those letters. So that is why they get like more……positive sense……They get more excited about how they are learning to read their name. You know, they love their name. So they go, I can read my name. I can write down my name. So that is why they are excited about it. (Selena, 91 IE)

She expressed how identity is tied to a person's name and how using a student's name is a way of connecting the student to literacy content and invoking a sense of excitement. Chloe expressed a similar sentiment in her transcript.

I'm me personally, I'm most excited, when we work with their name because it's already a connection there. They're already excited about their name because they know their name. And when you bring it out or break it down, they realize that it's them and they're excited to learn about it and they want to mimic what you just did. That's the same for me. I'm connected to their names. They're super excited or connect with some type of thing they know. (Chloe, 107 IE)

Here, Chloe talked about how the use of student names not only got the students excited, but she was also excited to use the students' names.

This led to my second theme, *The power of using students' names.* This theme had some overlap with regards to addressing research questions. It mainly helped me to answer parts of research question one related to teacher experiences with and impressions of PhAw and phonics because the students' names were used as examples in L&L activities. To a lesser degree, it also helped me answer research question two related to experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation and student engagement because the use of student's names elicited the students to engage directly to the content, and as a result, indirectly motivated teachers to teach the content. While it was not as heavily coded as other themes, I felt it was salient because the use of student names served as L&L content and affected teacher motivation and student engagement, touching on all the inquiries of this study.

Both of these educators, Selena and Chloe, expressed using the instructional strategies set forth by The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), and according to their experiences, the strategy of using student names in their lessons helped to create a richer classroom environment in both content and engagement. Their impressions of the importance of using student names were paralleled by their experiences with using student's names in their classrooms. *The power of the students' names* was themed because this power spans from the use of names as foundational pedagogical focal points of L&L content to acting as catalysts for teacher motivation and student engagement. Students' names incorporate language sounds, which connects to PhAw, as well as print, which connects to phonics. This also connects the students' personal identities soundly into the learning environment as a whole, which garners teacher motivation and student engagement.

***Theme 3: Confusion and Unsurety Regarding Language and Litearcy Concepts***

Although these ELEs had a high degree of knowledge and experience, throughout the interviews, there were moments when they encountered various terms with which they were unfamiliar. There were other times when they were confusing terms. In such cases, they were prompted to describe one concept, yet in actuality, they were describing another concept. This led me to my third theme, *Confusion and unsurety regarding Language and Literacy concepts.*

The phonological awareness continuum (PhAw continuum) was a concept that was not as well-known in general by teachers in the study. However, the understanding of PhAw as a continuum was one of the more problematic aspects of this theme for a few reasons. First, I, as the researcher, could have introduced some confusion with my use of terminology. When introducing the concept, I used the term 'phonological continuum,' and while this term does appear on some instructional websites and subsequent visuals and teaching aids, the term 'phonological awareness continuum' is much more prevalent. It is very possible that by me removing the word 'awareness,' teachers may have thought it was a different concept. However, I do contend that someone who had a solid understanding of the term 'phonological awareness continuum,' could realize that phonological continuum and phonological awareness continuum are one in the same. Conversely, I have an extensive background in linguistics, and many educators and even reading specialist, do not have formal training in this area. So, I must be cautious when making assumptions about a teacher's ability to analyze terms without considering their exposure to the content. With that said, it is completely plausible that my use of the term 'phonological continuum' could have introduced some confusion. Nevertheless, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010) mentions PhAw as a continuum when referencing phonemic awareness by stating, "the more complex end of the continuum of phonological awareness" (p. 543). Therefore,

the curriculum describes PhAw as a continuum of phonological principles; however, it never

uses the terms 'phonological continuum' or 'phonological awareness continuum'.

Anita was unsure about the concept of the phonological (awareness) continuum. When

asked she responded, "I know what phonological awareness is, but what is the phonological con-

tinuum?" (Anita, 48 IE). Toni had some trouble with the term phonological (awareness) contin-

uum. The following passage illustrates.

> The phonological continuum that's along the lines of……that's pass the phonological
>
> awareness. Is that pass the rhyming and syllable sounds and things like that? Are you say
>
> like blending and rhyme type thing or pass that? (Toni, 82 IE)

She seemed to perceive PhAw as separate from the skills of blending and rhyming and did not

realize that those skills that she was inquiring about were in fact along the phonological (aware-

ness) continuum itself. She went on to describe her understanding of the difference between pho-

nological awareness and the phonological (awareness) continuum in the following passage.

> Ok, so before you go on from my understanding. You have phonological awareness and
>
> then you have a phonological continuum and the continuum is, let's say you're working on
>
> a specific part, aspect of phonological awareness. So, I'll let's say letter sounds. I'll just use
>
> that as a……Yeah, I'll just use letter sounds. So we're talking about the sound that the 'a'
>
> makes. So it's not just the aspect of /ă/……so the continuum falls in……so I guess what
>
> I'm trying to say is there's a continuum with that letter sound 'a' because……So is that the
>
> aspect like when their saying phonological continuum? Because I don't really know how
>
> that looks in the classroom or if that makes sense and I know what phonological awareness
>
> looks like in the classroom. Maybe not……I mean I may know it, but didn't realize it.
>
> (Toni, 84 IE)

In the passage, she described how a single grapheme (i.e., letter) can have an array of phonemes (i.e., letter sounds). That is not what the phonological (awareness) continuum means, rather what she is describing are principles related to phonics. I would call this array of phonemes associated with a single grapheme the graphophonemic array. Toni also says that she does not know what phonological (awareness) continuum looks like in her classroom. While she might not know it explicitly, as she stated, she has used the phonological (awareness) continuum in her classroom, which was apparent in her descriptions of teaching concepts from syllable awareness, rhyme, and phonemic awareness, which are all various levels along the PhAw continuum. She went on to talk about her understanding of the term phoneme in later in her in interview.

> So when I when you say phoneme. That's when I……I think, though, is has nothing to do with rhyming or anything like that. It's just how I see it…Ok, so I would say phonemic is letters……I would I would definitely have to. That's how I see it that way. The knowledge of it. (Toni, 90 IE)

Her understanding was that phoneme did not relate to rhyming. Instead, phonemes reflect individual sounds that are directly connected to rhyming. She also confused phonemic awareness with phonics as she continued to attribute "phonemic" with letters. She continued.

> As far as me teaching, those are some of the things that we do or you know, or phonemic awareness and that it is not is no longer phonological, but it's just setting them up for being able, well, we do get phonological awareness we're setting them up to be able to do that before we're asking them when they don't know what the letter 'a' is and things like that. You can't really go into the sound of it or vice versa with any of the letters. (Toni, 90 & 92 IE)

The notion that she describes is phonics-oriented, but she believes is phonemic-oriented. This is

not surprising. Many of these terms and concepts are not as heavily presented to teachers in gen-

eral. However, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), does give a

clear contrast between PhAw and phonics.

> Phonological awareness lays the groundwork for phonics. After children have a good un-
>
> derstanding of the sounds of language, they begin to connect printed symbols with their
>
> corresponding sounds, for example, M with /m/. Be aware that phonics is not the same as
>
> phonological awareness, which involves only auditory skills and not sound-symbol corre-
>
> spondence. (p. 545)

> Other teachers like Chloe, accurately named a few elements she believed were associated

with phonological awareness, but then showed unsurety about "what else goes with phonological

continuum?" (Chloe, 36 IE). Halle, when asked about phonemic awareness responded with un-

surety stating, "and that's like sounds right?" (Halle, 38 IE). She goes on to describe a phonemic

awareness lesson presented here in the following passage.

> So, I think kind of like with what I was saying, with sounds and stuff. So, we start off with
>
> their names. That's just the easiest. And, you know, might say if there's anybody in the
>
> class and that has the same sound as your name [?]. Pretty soon my once we've done that,
>
> they're kind of get it like, "Oh, ok. So, and so name have the same sound as me. So, we're
>
> going to line up to go outside". Back to my lovely, See it, Say it, Sign it, the letters of the
>
> alphabet. I like that so much because we do that and then like I said, the same chants, "The
>
> 's' says /s/. The 's' says /s/." and we break it up into sections. So we might do 'a' through
>
> 'h', and you know, 'i' through, you know, whatever day or something, you know, like we
>
> break it up and we do the increments so that was not overwhelming. And then in small

groups we play like, sound bingo. Or, what is it, …sound bingo…and then like after they graduated from, you know, maybe their name or their first name go to last name. So, it's kind of like…or any other phrasing that might have the same sound as their name. And back to my little letter jar thing that I would say and well, we kind of passed it around instead of identifying the letter, now we're focusing on sounds. So, whatever letter you pull out, I want you to make the sound. (Halle, 40 IE)

Much like with Toni, initially she was confusing phonemic awareness activities with phonics activities, although at the end of the passage she does describe a PhAw instruction activity. The focus on letters through visuals or sound/letter correlations are textbook phonics strategies. Phonemic awareness was the concept with which the teachers were the most unfamiliar.

Anita also confused phonics with PhAw. The follow passages from her transcript provides details.

Ok. Well, my understanding of what phonological awareness is being aware of the sound in words. [IR overlap: Ok.] And in pre-school, we start of first with the letters…we don't do 'a' through 'z', but say if someone says, "oh, that's an 'a'" And we'll just kind of be in conversation we'll say 'a' /ă/ is the 'a' sound or when it's circle time we'll they today is Wednesday /w/ /w/ Wednesday, making the 'w' sound. Can anybody tell me what that letter is? And there's a song that we currently sing that goes over all the letters in the in the alphabet where the kids learn all the sounds. Also, it's a casual conversation when we say words and they don't understand. We kind of you kind of sound it out and then kinda explain to them that, you know, these are the letters that form this word and it is sound that it makes this is how you pronounce the word…basically. (Anita, 50 IE)

Much like Halle, the activities she describes are also phonics-oriented when she believes she is describing PhAw. When asked about phonemic awareness she needed me to define it for her, indicating that she was not fully aware of all the nuances among the conceptual spectrum of language pedagogy.

The teachers in this study have a wealth of experiences with teaching in early learning. All of them have been teaching for over 10 years and some much longer. Nevertheless, some of the teachers were confused or unsure about some of the foundational concepts related L&L pedagogy, most notably and understandably, was the confusion between PhAw and phonics. This was by no means an inditement on their teaching skills or the early learning program as a whole because, based on the descriptions of their teaching experiences and their lesson plans, they are doing well with connecting to their students with effective L&L activities. However, it must be stated that there is room for growth with regards to their knowledge base of L&L concepts and practices by clearing up confusion and alleviating unsurety with regards to terms such as phonological (awareness) continuum, PhAw, phonemic awareness, and phonics. The data presented her firmly supports the theme, *Confusion and unsurety regarding language and literacy concepts.*

### Theme 4: The Need for more Phonics and/or PhAw Training for Teachers

Because of the confusion and unsurety surrounding PhAw and phonics, the next theme arose. This fourth theme, *The need more phonics and/or PhAw training for teachers*, helped me answer part of research question one related to the experiences and impressions of PhAw and phonics. It was not heavily referenced; however, it is an extremely important finding of this research because teachers' levels of training can impact on the educational environment, from the selection of information being taught, to how that information is taught. What also has to be considered are the pedagogical choices made by early learning program leadership based on various

schools of thought related to focusing on either phonics or PhAw. Some early learning programs choose PhAw as their L&L pedagogical focus (i.e., focus solely on teaching language sounds), while others choose phonics as their L&L pedagogical focus (i.e., focus on teaching correlations between language sounds and letters). Additionally, since PhAw is the foundation for phonics, teachers in a program with a focus on phonics should have sound knowledge in teaching both PhAw and phonics. Teachers in programs that focus solely on PhAw should have a sound knowledge base regarding teaching PhAw and a working understanding of phonics, without confusing the two. This is why the theme is 'phonics and/or PhAw training'. I wanted to be clear that the type of training suggested is based on the L&L philosophy of the program leadership.

In the data, only one teacher, Alicia, explicitly stated the need for more training in the areas of phonics or PhAw, and ironically, she was one of the teachers with the strongest grasp on the terminology, albeit possibly from the fact that she had the interview questions before hand. Regardless, she was very adamant about the need for more explicit training in these areas. The follow passage details her appeal.

> I do think that just my experience with other teachers and things like that, I do think that part of our education program for teachers, they need to have a bigger light on phonological awareness for teaching the teachers and that stuff…I think that they need to break that down to all the teachers. So, they'll have a clear instructional format continuum when they are teaching, because sometimes you have to get in there and you have to learn those things because they don't teach you. And you know that it's just a general teaching. But because it's so important in teaching kids and reading that think that educational field really need to do more for teaching teachers as far as phonological awareness…I don't remember it

class or anything like that that was teaching or re-jogging our memory as far as phonolog-

ical awareness, more reading, reading concepts, so those things…[Professors] focused on

those [literature-based] big concepts….I just feel like phonological awareness should be a

class of its own…I think they need to really have a portion like a whole class phonological

awareness when it comes down to language and literacy because it's so important. (Alicia,

187, 193, 199 IE)

Alicia expressed that, between her own teaching experiences and her experiences with other

teachers, more training is needed for them to gain a deeper understanding of PhAw. She did not

feel that she had a rich enough training with regards to phonological awareness. I assert that

based on this study, all early learning language development and pedagogical concepts and strat-

egies need to be addressed through additional training. Toni also states in her transcript, which

will be detailed in a later theme, that she felt she did not give her students a rich enough under-

standing of PhAw even after several years of being a Pre-K teacher. "I felt like what I was doing

wasn't really getting them where they should be…I felt like I was just giving them the mini-

mum" (Toni, 142 IE). She therefore sought professional development where she had a great

learning experience bringing the wealth of knowledge about PhAw back into the classroom.

Likewise, and as previously stated, Alicia feels like PhAw training is so important that there

should be a class dedicated to the explicit instruction of phonological awareness.

Because of some of the gaps in the ELEs' knowledge bases, and at the recommendation

of one ELE, and through the experience of another ELE, the theme, *The need for more phonics*

*and/or PhAw training for teachers,* arose. This is not to say that the teachers are not adequately

equipped with enough knowledge to be effective teachers. Additionally, considerations must be

made regarding the L&L philosophy of the program leadership. However, there is room for improvement with regards to some of the foundational knowledge of L&L concepts that I suggest be addressed through additional phonics and/or PhAw training. I believe that with what was presented in this section, as well as the preceding section regarding confusion and unsurety of L&L concepts, an adequate amount of evidence is present to support the theme for more training in phonics and/or PhAw. Additionally, training in this regard creates opportunities for teachers to continue to develop their L&L pedagogical knowledge and skills through sharpening their pedagogical practices, thereby providing their students with much richer L&L learning environments.

Now that I have adequately described the first set of themes related to L&L concepts, I now transition into the second set of themes that are related to performing arts as L&L strategies, teacher motivation, and student engagement. As I stated before, there exists a significant amount of overlap regarding coding and thematizing of concepts (e.g., the power of using student names, which incorporated both L&L content and levels of student engagement). In the next set of themes, performing arts acts as a link to connect the first research question with the second research question.

**Themes Related to the Performing Arts, Teacher Motivation, and Student Engagement**

My first research question was designed to examine early learning teachers' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts (e.g., PhAw) and L&L strategies (e.g., using music and lyricism to teach PhAw).

1. What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of language and literacy (L&L) concepts and strategies, particularly the phonological awareness, phonics, and performing arts in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

My second research question was designed to examine early learning teachers' experiences and impressions regarding teacher motivation and student engagement in their classrooms.

2.  What are teachers' experiences with and impressions of teacher motivation, as well as student engagement, particularly regarding L&L concepts and strategies, in a university-managed, state-funded, early learning program?

Performing arts as L&L strategies seemed to be a bridge between L&L concepts (e.g., PhAw), and teacher motivation along with student engagement because performing arts as strategies to convey L&L concepts often correlated, codically and thematically, with teacher motivation and student engagement. This study's research questions were designed to draw meaningful data from the educators in order to help garner greater understanding in these regards. As previously stated, the data showed a variety of interrelated factors that created thematic overlap across the two research questions (i.e., question one regarding L&L concepts and strategies, and then question two regarding teacher motivation and student engagement). That is to say that some of the themes address elements of both research questions. The first research question focused on the L&L concepts, and in actuality, the linguistics concepts that are at the heart of early learning pedagogy. However, these scientific aspects of language are not the only notions present in early learning pedagogy. The arts are also very much related to language, hence the subject "language arts". As such, the understanding of how the arts relate to language is also very important to the research presented here because the presence of the arts have a high correlation to the levels of teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning classrooms. In this section, I delve deeper into the notion of the arts in early learning pedagogy, in general, and the effect that performing arts have on the notions of teacher motivation and student engagement, as well as many other factors that influence them both.

*Theme 5: Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Lyricism, and Theater) as Pedagogical Strategies*

Performing arts was heavily coded with regards to both L&L concepts (e.g., PhAw), as well as student engagement. The fifth theme attests to how the educators of this study greatly relied on performing arts as mediums of delivering content as a way to engage to their students. This means that each of the arts was used as a teaching strategy to deliver pedagogical content, motivate teachers, and/or engage students in the L&L lesson. This theme helped me to address both research questions directly and indirectly. The first question was addressed through performing arts being strategies to convey various L&L concepts. This is not to say that the arts can only be used as mediums to convey pedagogical content. Art can be the content in and of itself; however, for the purposes of this study, the focus will be performing arts as strategies of conveyance for L&L content. Additionally, the second question was addressed through the impact that those strategies had on student engagement in the early learning classrooms. Because performing arts are interrelated, some of the arts were often coded together (e.g., music and lyricism/rhyme/song). Nonetheless, each of the performing arts presented in the study are addressed in this section.

**Performing Arts and Student Engagement in The Creative Curriculum – Literacy.** With the understanding of performing arts as pedagogical strategies bridging L&L concepts with teacher motivation and student engagement in mind, I again examined Heroman and Jones (2010), The Creative Curriculum – Literacy used by the CDP. The aim was to analyze the curriculum for the general use of performing art as well as teacher motivation and student engagement in the early learning classrooms, and particularly, if and how the arts, more specifically, performing arts, plays a role, pun intended, in teacher motivation or student engagement.

At the heart of student engagement are experiences that are enjoyable. The follow passage describes the pedagogical benefits of creating enjoyable literacy experiences to engage students.

> Children practice reading more often when they find it enjoyable and useful… Most preschoolers do not read yet, a central goal is to introduce young children to the power and pleasure of literacy… When a parent holds a child and reads aloud, the child begins to experience reading as a pleasurable activity. Those experiences later inspire the child to persist through the often difficult stages of literacy learning. Not all children have had these enjoyable experiences, so it is essential to provide positive literacy experiences in the preschool classroom. (Heroman & Jones, 2010, p. 534)

This passage made it clear that providing literacy experiences that are enjoyable is vital because one of the pedagogical foci of L&L instruction should be to engage students even through those challenging stages of the learning process. If these experiences are not created, the results could be detrimental to the student's literacy development. "Children who have never experienced the pleasure of literacy are likely to be unenthusiastic about learning to read and write" (p. 536). As educators, we can ill afford to fail providing these positive literacy experiences that engage our students. Another passage provided guidance about ways to engage students with literacy.

> Talk about enjoyable purposes of literacy. When you read a story to children, talk about why you chose the book and why you enjoy it…Make story time pleasurable. Demonstrate your enthusiasm and excitement about reading. Create a warm, nurturing atmosphere for reading so that children look forward to participating…. Select high-quality literature that the children will want to hear… Read books that you enjoy. Your love of the stories will show in your facial expressions and your voice. (p. 537)

This passage gives prescriptions as to how the teacher can increase engagement with the students. If the teachers utilize their own acting skills when engaging in a literacy activity, the students will most likely be more enthusiastic and excited about literacy.

In addition, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy stated the benefit of providing consistent literacy opportunities.

> Children benefit when teachers provide children with daily opportunities to experience literature pleasurably, to discuss stories, to relate literature activities with content, and to share the books they read or look at. (p. 536)

The passage pointed out the use of storytelling as a pleasurable pedagogical endeavor to engage students. The follow passage showed an example of how the curriculum suggests the use of imaginative, which is related to performing arts through acting for literacy learning.

> Encourage children to write while they play. Through their play, children explore writing for different purposes. As they write, observe their knowledge and use of the alphabet. (p. 558)

This passage suggests performance through play as an avenue to literacy exploration. It mentions performing arts in relation to print literacy and graphemic awareness (i.e., awareness of letters), which also has some correspondence with L&L concepts at the center the previous set of themes. Another idea offered by The Creative Curriculum – Literacy relates back to the use of play leading to specific outcomes:

> Dramatic play is related to comprehension in powerful, yet complex ways. Metaplay is a significant factor in increasing story comprehension. Story retelling helps children develop a sense of story structure and understandings about language that contribute to their comprehension of text. (Heroman & Jones, 2010, p. 561)

The curriculum stated that using performing arts in the form of drama, acting, and storytelling has direct effects on how students retain and understand content. This supports the theme of performing arts as pedagogical strategies because drama/theater/acting is suggested as a strategy to convey content and help develop L&L skills, specifically comprehension. This is very important because a vital outcome of the learning process is retaining and understanding information. In addition, storytelling leads to engagement and the following passage provides more details.

> A child who enjoys literacy activities will probably participate during interactive read aloud times, notice print in the environment, ask questions about the meaning of print (e.g., "What does that say?"), and spend time reading once he or she is able. Teachers consider a variety of ways to motivate children and help them experience the power and pleasure of literacy learning…Literature use increased dramatically when teachers incorporated enjoyable literature activities into the daily program when library centers were created in classrooms, and when recreational reading was scheduled on a daily basis. (pp. 534-536)

According to the passage, teachers should find ways to associate enjoyment with literacy. Teachers have a wealth of strategies with which to increase engagement in literacy activities, which in an interactive format suggested by the curriculum, could include using performing arts by acting out the storylines. Another passage takes the use of storytelling and integrates with performing arts through acting.

> Capture children's interest before beginning to read aloud. Set the stage for a story by connecting it with an experience familiar to children. For example, you might introduce a story by asking, "Have you ever thought about what you could do with a magic pebble" In our story today, Sylvester, the donkey, finds one." Use props, sounds, fingerplays, games,

or personal recollections as ways of motivating children to listen and respond to the story.

(p. 537)

Another passage suggested the use of the arts in the form of musical performance to teach L&L content.

> Sing the alphabet song. Singing the alphabet song helps familiarize children with the names and order of the letters. Sing it slowly enough so that the letter names do not run together. For example, pronounce l, m, n, o separately and not as one word, elemeno. For variety, sing it to a different tune, change the tempo, or start and stop at different parts of the song. Have a large alphabet chart handy so you can point to the letters as you sing them. (p. 557)

Here, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy suggested the use of performance through song in conjunction with graphemic awareness (i.e., letter awareness). Adding musicality to the learning process is an effective way to help with both retention and engagement. Again, the theme of performing arts pedagogical strategies is supported because music and lyrics are used to covey L&L concepts and increase engagement. Another passage expounds on this notion of performance and musicality in conjunction with language and engagement.

> Enjoy songs, rhymes, and fingerplays together throughout the day. By doing so, children learn new words, hear different forms of language, and develop an awareness of the rhymes, rhythms, and other patterns of language. (p. 542)

This is another case where the curriculum prescribed several arts-related strategies as deliverables for L&L concepts, which leads to the students enjoying the lesson. Because of the thematic overlap, the principles of L&L concepts were present with the notions of motivation and engagement in the form of enjoyment and exciting new experiences.

The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), details the importance of enjoyable experiences and engagement in the literacy environment. In addition, the curriculum promotes the use of several performing arts as pedagogical strategies to convey L&L concepts (e.g., music, lyricism, theater). The evidence presented here supports the theme, *Performing arts as pedagogical strategies* because the curriculum promotes music, lyricism, and theater as conveyors of L&L content and instigators of enjoyment and excitement.

**Performing Arts in the ELEs' Lesson Plans Integrated with State Early Learning Standards.** Once I had a good grasp on how The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), addressed the arts and engagement in early learning, I analyzed the teachers' lesson plans (see Appendix B). I wanted to see how ELEs were to utilize performing arts-related strategies, as well as how they were planning to invoke student engagement in their classroom. The lesson plans confirmed that ELEs dedicated blocks of time for musical and rhythmic activities, as well as storytelling and role play.

For example, lesson plan 1 indicated a daily activity called "Music and movement" where the topic of the activity changed each day. The topics presented in this particular lesson plan were animal action, bean bag boogie, body rock, and get up and go. While it was not clear as to exactly how these different topics are carried out, although it was later confirmed during the interviews that animal action was them mimicking the actions of animals, what was clear was that there was a concerted effort to promote the arts through performance. According to this lesson plan, this activity also aligns with state standards (see Appendix C), *Creative Development,* **CD-CR3.4a -** Uses familiar rhymes, songs or chants, and musical instruments to express creativity. The same lesson plan indicated daily blocks of time dedicated to engaging students with verbal/linguistic activities. There were several print books listed, two for each day, which covered a

variety of topics. According to lesson plan 1, this activity also aligns with state standards, *Communication, Language, and Literacy, **CLL5.3b** -* With prompting and support, retells a simple story using pictures as well as ***CLL5.3c*** *-* Answers questions about a story. Both the lesson plan and the state standards support the theme performing arts as pedagogical strategies because the music, lyricism, theater helped to convey pedagogical information and promote engagement in the lesson.

Lesson plan 2 described another activity where the students engaged in role play in various pre-designed areas of the classroom. The lesson plan also indicated that these activities addressed the state standard, *Approaches to Play and Learning*, ***APL4.3a*** *-* Uses imagination to create a variety of ideas, role-plays and fantasy situations. Lesson plan 3 also has a dedicated "Music and movement" block where they use materials produced by Marc D. Pencil, who provides a variety of music-oriented, e-learning content. The lesson plan indicates that these activities addressed the state standards, ***CLL1.4a*** *-* Listens and responds on topic to conversations and group discussions for an extended period and, *Physical Development and Motor Skills, **PDM5.4a** -* Coordinates movements to perform more complex tasks. Here, the theme of performing arts as strategies was supported through the use of theater, music, and dance as conveyers of L&L content and tools of engagement in the content.

Lesson plan 4 indicated daily group literacy activities where students are able to "act out" the created scenario. One in particular, "Tattling vs. Telling," allowed students to take turns acting out various situations to help them discover the difference between tattling and telling. The lesson plan indicated that this activity addressed the state standards, ***CLL1.4a*** *-* Listens and responds on topic to conversations and group discussions for an extended period and ***CLL2.4a*** *-* Demonstrates understanding of more complex vocabulary through everyday conversations.

Analyzing these data sources provided sound support of the theme, *Performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies*. Each of the arts were present in the ELEs' lesson plans as strategies to convey L&L content, as well as promoters of student engagement. These sources also provided sound understanding about the arts-related knowledge that teachers had at their disposal and the pathways they designed for themselves to utilize their arts' knowledge. Next, I needed to further investigate the experiences and impression regarding performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, and theater), teacher motivation, and student engagement directly from the teachers themselves. Therefore, I deeply explored the ELEs' interview transcripts to examine how they utilized the arts and how they experienced teacher motivation and invoked the student engagement that their curriculum and lesson plans stated. What follows here are the experiences and impressions of the ELEs with regards to each of the four performing arts (i.e., music, dance, lyricism, and theater) in their classrooms.

**Music in the ELEs' Interviews.** Performing arts through music was stated as a pedagogical strategy to convey L&L content. Toni's transcript offers experience about how music was integrated in her classroom to teach a concept related to PhAw.

> Each and every day throughout the day. And I do that on different levels. We do that in the classroom through music. We'll either clap or you know, syllable sounds or incorporate it in the small group maybe doing something where they have to give us the syllables. (Toni, 82 IE)

Her illustration of her classroom incorporated several elements from music to kinesthetics with the L&L content, specifically syllabic awareness along the PhAw continuum. Chloe also talked about the use of music in relation to language.

> We do a good job at introducing a language and music at the same time that we go over the song. We learn the words or we learn the instrument. We use language to find what something is. We use language to make the sound of something. It may not be a real sound, but when using language to get the point or the message across. And when you use the language to follow the music. (Chloe, 81 IE)

She talked about how music was used to convey a message from teaching various words to naming specific instruments being used. Additionally, Halle stated emphatically her impression of the importance of music in her classroom.

> I couldn't imagine being in a class where we did not listen to music or did not sing anything that our children could learn. If they just talked everything out, I don't think that it would be fun. So music and movement, like I say, our morning circle, we sing to them the day of the week. We sing to them the months of the year, good morning, you know, as they get ready to go outside, I know you know where we're lining up. We're like, I'm thinking of a word. We're chanting or whatever it is. Transitions, you know…music is very important. We usually give them like, music sticks or musical instruments to kind of help with language a little bit. We might get them to clap a beat. And they have music sticks. I make a beat. They repeat it, you know, or they separate syllables with their music sticks, you know? So. Yeah, music is key. (Halle, 56 IE)

In her passage, she found it unfathomable to have a class without music because it was such a key element to her classroom. They used music to convey various pedagogical content, including, but not limited to instruction along the PhAw continuum through syllabic awareness activities. They also used music for morning routines, transitions to various classroom activities and other classroom related elements. Her high impression of music as a pedagogical strategy was

matched by her high use of music in her classroom. The theme of performing arts, specifically music, as a pedagogical strategy was supported in this section. The interviews showed how music was used as to convey L&L content, such as syllabic awareness, and to engage the students as classroom management tools.

**Dance in the ELEs' Interviews.** Performing arts as a pedagogical strategy was also described in the form or dance. Halle talked about dance being used as an engagement strategy and a medium to develop PhAw through rhyming.

"So, with dance, I have to really credit my co-worker. She's just good at like getting the kids up and moving and creating little fun things. She might tell them like ok, I mean, it works differently. She might say, "Dance big. Dance tall. Dance medium." Well, you know, that language right there that goes into math. You know, I mean, we might say dance like this kind of animal. We dance, so we're kind of like going into their imagination a little bit. Dance like a monkey. Dance like an alligator. Dance like croc. You know, whatever it is, you might dance like squirrels. Ok there's this thing called, [???] on YouTube. And it's kind of like, you know, and it's like they have them clapping their hands, stomping their feet, all at the same time. They love it. They get so tickled. I'm sure you've heard the rhyming station [??]. Just…following rules, listening and following directions, that goes with language and literacy. It's one of the biggest things. So when we're dancing, sometimes we might even Simon says. You know, just making sure they can, you know, follow instructions. And yes, that's how we incorporate dance. Sometimes we just have them do their own little dance in the middle. You know, we get up and say their names and they do a little dance about for about 20 seconds and sit back down." (Halle, 64 IE)

Dance in the passage was used in a variety of ways to engage the students' imaginations using their conceptual knowledge through imitation. Students were using their whole bodies, while using their listening skills and their abilities to adhere to directives. The students being "tickled" by the activity is a clear indication of both their engagement in the activity and the high level of enjoyment that they experienced.

Anita also talked about how she implemented dance in her classroom.

I do dancing with the kids in the classroom and for language and literacy, sometimes it can just be following directions. You know, you do what Mrs. Teacher is going doing. When the song come on, and it is an instructional sound. [IR overlap: Right]. So how to listen and follow directions and implement it. (Anita, 86 IE)

Here, dance was used in L&L related to listening and following directions.

In her interview, Toni discussed the use of dance in relation to PhAw, particularly, rhyme.

We'll do a little dance and freeze type of thing. But when I say like, for example, in the movement aspect of it, when I say, I'm going to give you some words. And you have to freeze, if they don't rhyme or you're going to hear a bunch of rhyming words and I'll play the music. You know, I'm playing different types of music. And when the music freeze, like the music stops sometimes on time or if I can't do that, I might make up, on the top of my head, nine time out of ten, this is what I do because I just like music and stuff and I'll say and I'll go like 'pig' 'big' and they're still moving. And I can give them a thing, they're jumping. Everybody's jumping and I'll say 'pig' 'big'. Do those rhyme "Yes." And I'll keep doing that. And I'll say 'wig' 'bob'. And they all freeze. And then you're looking for so much, you're looking to see if they're listening, if they're listening to the sounds or they

just, you know, doing their own thing. So that's kind of some of the things that we do a lot

in here. (Toni, 117 IE)

This activity utilized music and dance to engage the students' PhAw in the form of rhyming and

her high impression of music itself fueled her use of it in the activity. Students in this activity de-

veloped their listening skills, motor skills, and PhAw skills. The theme of performing arts, and

specifically dance as a pedagogical strategy was supported by the evidence in this section. Dance

was used to convey L&L skills, such as listening, and promote engagement in classroom direc-

tions.

**Lyricism/Rhyme in the ELEs' Interviews.** Performing arts was discussed with regards

to the use of lyricism/rhyme. In her interview, Chloe talked about using rhyme in stories.

We do a lot of short stories and rhyming stories. The rhyming is an easy way for a child to

pick up reading because they know they were just looking for a word that sounds the same.

So, we'll give them the rhyming books and then they're able to pick up reading it faster.

(Chloe, 95 IE)

Rhyming was used as a way to introduce students to print literacy through PhAw, which she

stated accelerates literacy development. She also talked about the use of song lyrics for an end-

of-the-year performance for parents.

And then lyricism, I'm guessing, in the end of the year we have a pre-k graduation, not

graduation, but a pre-k day and it's kind of like a graduation. But we do a pre-k song. We

actually take the time to learn a song with the class. We learn it first and then we bring it

to them to teach them the words of the song. So when we're teaching it to them, we intro-

duce the song. Let's listen to this song. This is going to be our end of the year song. We

want to learn it and we want it to be surprise for your parents, so we want to practice it

often so we know the words and you know the words. So, let's learn this song, so let's

listen to it first and then let's learn maybe the first line of the song. The kids are really

smart. They pick up on song way faster than what I would do. (Chloe, 95 IE)

Both music and song lyrics are used as a medium to help develop PhAw and engage parents in

the pedagogical process. Chloe mentions the use of lyricism with regards to pedagogical content

at another point of her interview.

A lot of the time they come already singing that ABC song. So, but they did know the song.

They don't know the letters. So, we go through the letters of the song and it break down

then go through and break down the sounds. Sometimes, we'll do their name and the letters

in their name. You don't have to go through the whole ABC. (Chloe, 62 IE)

She talked about how early learners came into the classroom with the ABC melody, but in class

they received instruction in phonics to help bridge their understanding of the exact letter sounds

and their correlations to the letters. There was even mention of the use of students' names which

reflects theme 2, *The power of using students' names.* In addition, Selena also talked about the

use of "rhymes with some songs, with a specific objective format, with different kind of rhymes,

and there are differing kind of words that include the letters of the music" (Selena, 111 IE),

where rhyming, song, letters, and music are all utilized in unison. The theme performing arts,

specifically lyricism is supported by the evidence in this section. Lyricism/rhyming was used to

convey L&L concepts, such as graphemic awareness (i.e., awareness of letters) as well as garner

engagement in class related activities, such as the end of the year program.

**Theater/Acting in the ELEs' Interviews.** Performing arts in the form of theater/acting

was also mentioned in conjunction with the use of print, where teachers spoke about using their

acting skills when presenting stories in order to engage their students. Alicia addressed the use of acting as a pedagogical tool.

> They're so engaged, in don't know why, but they are. I think it's just the acting out of it. Because before me, it was David (pseudonym) I don't know if you know him, but he was the one who would kind of teaching me like you can't just teach them. You have to actually make it fun for them. You'd have to bring in your acting skills. So when we are excited about it, they are too. So, when I'm that excited about it, when I'm having the day or something like that, they are less engaged. They are like, Ok, when is it over? I really do feel, you know, a lot of the teacher making it exciting, about them learning, and then actually doing more than one thing, and not just sitting there through the whole thing. Them actually participating. So like I say, when you come down to hickety-pickety bumblebee that's just a prime example of them participating, them, patting, clapping, doing different things. And I'm asking them to come up with the words so they're actually participating where they get so say a word and everyone get to do it and do it with their acting. (Alicia, 172 IE).

According to her passage, acting was a central element to the engagement of her students while connecting them to print literacy as the "acting it out" referred to her using her acting skill, while reading the students a book. In fact, she also spoke about the students themselves being engaged in acting out the stories. The enjoyable elements engaged students in ways beyond that of simply sitting down and being told the information. Many of the teachers talked about the enjoyable elements that performing arts provided for students and themselves, which really enhanced the learning experience.

Toni describes an activity where she had to utilize her acting skills to teach language and literacy content.

So acting, theater, and acting……it can be us, like I love to do the thing called 'the hungry thing' and that's when acting out the kids just…….it's a pretend little monster. I made one out of a trashcan before I made one out of……..I do it and let the mouth open and in that moment. The only thing that the hungry monster…….the only things that it eats are whatever I decide to use so let's say, I'll say the hungry thing you have this monster. You know, we've dressed up a couple of times in like a monster. It just depends on how we're feeling……what type of mood we're in……what type of mood the kids are in. And we'll say, the only to the hungry thing will eat are words that start with the letter /t/. And I'll say, can you say that for me? And they'll say /t/. And I'll say, Alright, now remember, the only thing and this is me making them give me…this is after we've already talked about the sounds and that experience with it and now we can get into it. You know, the lesson that is. And someone will say, Oh, I know. And then a toy. Oh, of course. Yes. And then I'll or either you already have pictures set up and we'll say, can the hungry thing eat this. And I'll have a variety. I'll have words that have that sound that the 't' makes and another variety of words and then they'll have to come up and drop it in in the hungry things mouth. I'll make the noise like [IE makes monster eating noise; IR laughter]. And their all excited and stuff like that. It's fun. That's one of my fun ones. (Toni, 137 IE)

The activity ignites the students' imaginations and engages them with phonics content. The students are "excited" because "It's fun" according to her interview. This excerpt ties together performing arts as a strategy to deliver L&L concepts that leads to student engagement.

The results of the study showed that performing arts played a role in various facets of the pedagogical process, acting as conveyers of information, as well as inciters of engagement. Music, dance, lyricism/rhyme, and theater/acting were all present throughout the interviews of the

teachers as they had high impressions and positive experiences related to each of these areas of performing arts. The evidence presented in this section adequately supports, *Performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies*, and the ends to which these strategies playout, directly relates to L&L concepts, teacher motivation, and student engagement.

### *Theme 6: Multimodal, Comprehensive Literacy Experience*

Multimodality was presented as a necessary element in Heroman and Jones (2010), The Creative Curriculum – Literacy used by the childcare development program (CDP) at the center of this study. The following is a passage from the curriculum regarding multimodality.

> Encourage sensory exploration of the alphabet. Children obtain and interpret information more readily when several of their senses are stimulated. They make important connections and understand concepts more easily when the learning experience includes sight, sound, and touch. By seeing and feeling letters, they not only learn the names of letters, but they also learn their features and how each letter is formed. Offer children a variety of ways to explore the alphabet: by using sandpaper, salt trays, clay, magnetic letters, and felt letters and by forming letter: with their bodies. (Heroman & Jones, 2010, p. 558)

The sixth theme, *Multimodal, comprehensive literacy experience,* is based in the fact that the literacy experiences described by the ELEs were not only characterized by a variety of different modes of expression and activities, but they were also comprehensive, in that, students were exposed to a litany of L&L concepts. This theme helped me answer both research questions regarding teachers' experiences and impressions with L&L concepts, teacher motivation, and student engagement in their classrooms, much like the previous theme on performing arts. Additionally, using multiple performing arts can be considered multimodality, and in fact, there was a great

deal of codical overlap, where some data points were coded as both performing arts and multi-modality. However, there were data points specific to multimodality that did not utilize performing arts and were comprehensive in the array of modalities that were employed. Although the number of these data points relative to just multimodality were not as high as the ones relative to performing arts, the descriptions were vivid in their explanation of the multimodal and versatile nature of the activities in the classrooms. Halle provides such a description in her passage.

> You know, we have different kinds of learners, so you have visual learners. You learners that learn through audio, hands on kinesthetic learners. You know so, different ways of teaching it. Maybe you play a video. There is a thing called See it, Say it, Sign it, the letters of the alphabet. Maybe you heard it before, it's on Youtube. So, we do like little chant stuff like that where we might have the 'a' says /ă/ and you know, we do. I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with or whatever. I'm packing for a picnic, we're focusing on the letter 'p' or I'm packed to go to the beach depending on whatever theme we're doing. And we're focusing on the letter 's' and remember the 's' makes the /s/ sound… Some of the time, you know, we'll be like, hey, if your name begins with the letter 'a' and then moving on, if your name has the /ă/ sound and then move on. If your name or you know…If your name sounds like you know…….this, when we doing rhyming and then moving in to like if your name has the /ă/ sound, You know so, gradually building it up. Making it fun. (Halle, 32 IE)

In this excerpt, Halle went into great detail about the different modalities, as well as the activities that occur in her classroom. She discussed visual learners, audio learners, and kinesthetic learners. She talked about videos she uses through technological means and games that incorporate various motor and cognitive skills in tandem with the L&L content related to phonics and PhAw. Her impression was that these various tools make the activity enjoyable. She continued.

Also, for like my hands on people, you know, we have like cards that we actually let them see or we have like letters that they pull out of a jar where we sit down and pass it around. They dip their hands in it and they pull out of a letter or whatever letter they see. They have to say it, you know, we have them write out their letter on the whiteboard. So it's many different things that we do, you know, to kind of like connect the different learners and making sure that it's not mundane, like you phonological awareness time or sit now, you know, if we're doing syllables, "Clapping out the syllables. Stomping out the syllables. Jumping out the syllables". You know, stuff like that. You know, making it versatile. (Halle, 32 IE)

In this part of her passage, she talked about using the tactical modality to develop skills along the PhAw continuum, specifically syllabic awareness. The multimodal nature of both the content and deliverables were on full display in this passage. Not only were multiple areas of L&L content (e.g., print, PhAw, and phonics) addressed, but various learning modalities (e.g., audio, visual, kinesthetic).

When asked how she can help her students develop their language skills, Chloe's impression was that there are multiple ways in which students should be exposed to content and interacted with by teachers.

The kids that need to see it visually, writing it out doing that daily, letting them rewrite out the words. We write out what we're trying to say and then give them markers and do it themselves. I feel like they learn it better that way…you have to break down those twenty-two kids to see how each one of them learns better…I continue to add different things to it. We will fly a kite. Will make a paper airplane. They're learning more language, but they understand that today we will do this…pushing in new vocabulary daily and then sitting

down and having a conversation with kids….sit down and actually talk to the kids and hear what they have to say. I help to express themselves more. So, [IR overlap: Absolutely]. I guess communication……communication and language. (Chloe, 30 IE)

She provided multiple ways to convey the information (e.g., visual and tactile) wanting them to both see the language and use the markers to write. She spoke about vocabulary and opportunities to develop conversational skills. Her impression was that communication itself is the best way to help student develop their language skills. These comprehensive experiences (e.g., print awareness, writing development, and oral development) were provided through multimodal approaches (e.g., visual, audial, and tactile). In another area, Chloe detailed other experiences using a multimodal approach.

We use wooden blocks with letters on them. We have books…the 'Read with Me' stories, where in the book he goes through the letters and words and things like that. We have magnetic letters. We write the letters in the board. They go over those. They're able to draw on dry erase boards the letters and sounds. We talk about the letters and we talk about the sounds and words can be made from letters and what is a connection to this. A is for Apple. Things like that. They try to make a connection after we get so far in it. (Chloe, 65 IE)

She discussed several different items and materials that she used to cover a variety of different content, each from a different modality or purpose. She described tactile elements with the blocks and then the visual elements with the letters on the board and print elements using books. She allowed them to scribe themselves and verbalize their understanding, while also making connections to other content after a certain amount of exposure.

While other teachers mentioned elements of multimodality from the perspective of performing arts, the experiences and impressions here were directly related to traditional multimodal elements (e.g., visual, audial, tactile). The pedagogical experiences were also comprehensive in their literacy skill development touching on print skills, oral communication skills, writing skills, phonics, and PhAw. The evidence in this section presents an adequate case for this theme, *Multimodal, comprehensive literacy experience.*

### Theme 7: Multi-Causal Catalyzation of Teacher Motivation

The final theme, and one that was interrelated to the prior two, (i.e., performing arts and multimodality), was *Multi-causal catalyzation of teacher motivation.* By "multi-causal" I mean that there are multiple of causes and by "catalyzation" I mean to facilitate a change. Taken together, this theme refers to the fact that there were multiple causes that spurred the ELEs' motivation to teach. Much like the prior two themes, many of the data points within this theme were referenced through multiple coding schemes, and as a result, directly or indirectly addressed both research questions, but more specifically, it addressed part of research question two directly in relation to teachers experiences and impressions regarding teacher motivation. The interconnectedness of the final three themes became more and more apparent as I continued to analyze the data. The coding that produced these final three themes regarding performing arts, multimodality, and teacher motivation often clustered together. This is logical because typically if there was performing arts, there would also be multimodal activities, and as such, teachers would be motivated because students would be engaged. Nevertheless, there were other factor besides performing arts that were catalysts for teacher motivation.

Toni detailed an experience where her motivation to teach was catalyzed by her engaging in professional development training on the subject of PhAw so that she could better instruct her

students in PhAw to enhance to their L&L success. The impetus of her attending the professional development was that she felt that she was not providing her students with sound enough instruction in the area of PhAw to get them where they should be academically. Once in the professional development training, she found it lively, exciting, and vibrant, where the trainers used song and dance to convey the PhAw and phonemic awareness activities. The passage picks up after the training was complete.

> So after that training, I felt like I took away so much. And it was maybe the next day or another month, and my assistant lead teacher or the assistant, which is the second person, she was looking at me like I was crazy. I was like I can't wait girl when I get back to school. I got so much stuff to tell you…….when she seen me, she was looking at me like I was a new teacher. Like I was like……what in the world. I was like we did all this stuff, and I wrote it down and after that training, I never thought wanting to learn different ways of teaching, not just phonological awareness, but everything in general on the pre-K level and but just that……that little training right there is showing me so many ways that you can incorporate phonological awareness and into class. Well, especially the pre-K classroom. (Toni, 142 IE)

She describes the excitement that she had based on what she learned from the professional development and how she was like a new teacher. This motivated her to get back to her school to teach her students and share the information with her colleagues. She goes on to describe how the training was so engaging for her as a student with the music and other performing arts elements, until neither she nor others wanted to leave and requested additional days of training. The passage picks up at the point where she speaks more about her takeaways.

We were all excited and engaged and I don't know anybody else took away what I took away. But it was definitely a great experience…trainings like this is what motivate teachers to want to do more in their classrooms because you know that you're giving them the ideas…I was like, amazing. I was like my goodness I never would have thought, like for me like I said, if anyone comes in the classroom, I'm singing. We're singing. We're making beats. We're doing something because that's what they love to do. The kids love that. They love to move and they don't want to be in a classroom where they're sitting now in their so structured. And they can't……I just don't like that type of environment. I mean, it was probably good for us, but not for the kids that we have now" (Toni, 142 IE).

Her experience was very revealing from several viewpoints. She was motivated by learning new material to teach her students because she did not feel like she was providing them everything that they needed in terms of L&L knowledge. This experience from Toni was briefly mentioned in theme 4 regarding the need for more phonics and/or PhAw training because it was strong evidence to that fact. In addition, during this experience, she also became the student and was motivated by the engagement strategies that have been espoused throughout this study. She then took those strategies to the other teachers and implemented them with students, bring it all full circle; where the teacher becomes the student and then once again becomes the teacher. Interestingly, the same elements that engaged her in the professional development were the same performing arts that engaged her students as well. In this case, she was engaged as the student and motivated as a teacher by the same elements. The excitement when speaking about this experience was fully evident in her tone and volume during the interview.

In another transcript with evidence supporting this theme, Alicia also told a story about how the success of one of her students really motivated her.

It's really like the spark and the kids to see the growth in them, but specifically on the individual level, I would say it was one child in particular that they came in and not knowing anything wasn't even interested in education and things like that. And she actually wasn't there to learn. She's like Ms. Alicia. I really don't want to learn, you know. I'm like why don't you want to get you education? Come to find out she kind of wants to be a mom baby always. So…...but I was told she can still be her mom's baby. (Alicia, 162 IE).

In the above passage, she provided the background reason for why the child did not want to learn, which was because the child wanted to be her mother's baby forever. Alicia continued the story about this experience.

But she can still learn her name. So, we're teaching her her name, the letters, having her identify those things, and when she started to like brighten up, it kind of motivated me more to like wherever she was, you know, they try to push her a little farther and she'll go write down letters like, Look! You know, we'll see and we'll make a big deal out of it. And what letter is this? And she'll say it. And we'll say that makes the [Teacher paused to indicate producing a random sound] sound so after a while she started to do that without us even asking. So it just motivated me with things like that, like kind of spark you as a teacher and you're pouring in. You're helping them to go from one from one part to the next (Alicia, 162 IE).

Her motivation was based in not only the overall success of her student, but also in witnessing her student's growth. She saw her student as a vessel in which she "pours" knowledge and experience. Alicia also spoke of another similar experience; however, this involved her daughter.

Just my own personal experience, of course, with my with my daughter, and it always motivates me in the classroom anyway. Every child, because I had one teacher to work

with her a little more, because at first, I didn't know I didn't know as a parent what to do, that thing that would kind of put me into teaching. I didn't know how to teach, what to teach, what would come first, second, last. I didn't know the continuum or anything like that, as a parent, so sometimes as parents were allowing teachers to do that, because by the time I studied how to do it like she's passed what I need to pour into her what I would have wanted a teacher to……get her from the level that she was and kind of help shape her and mold her before she went to kindergarten you know with her foundation. So, it always was the driving force for me because I wouldn't want……kids leaving me without having that experience (Alicia, 166 IE).

To me this was one of the most fascinating and moving remarks on motivation that was offered by the educators because it bridged personal/home experience with professional/work experience. Alicia was intent on being the example teacher that she wanted for her own child, carrying forward a deep sense of devotion and integrity for her profession as measured by the success of her students.

Teachers were not only motivated by the students' success and engagement, but they were also motivated by the natural bonds with their students as teachers. Anita had a touching explanation when asked about an experience where she felt the most motivated to teach.

I think it's the mindset when you come into the classroom. If I come into the classroom and I'm kinda down, then that's going to be my mindset…language wise, I just feel like I do like talking to my kids, so and I like interacting with some of the things that, some things that they say just amazes. It's out of this world. You have to look and say, I'm not a 3-year-old. So for me, it's like all the moments are motivating cause I'm excited to talk to them and I'm excited to hear some of the things that they have to say….. just talking I mean, just

come into the classroom and begin conversations about whatever throughout the day is

motivating for me….Yeah, that's for me. And you know, it's no one thing. Actually, the

one thing is the kids. The kids themselves, they're the motivating factor." (Anita, 108 &

112 IE).

To state it colloquially, "she jus' luv da kids". I found it touching that the purity of the interac-

tions and amazement induced by their conversations, beyond content or deliverables, beyond

skills or practices, just the desire to bond with her students was all the motivation that she needed

to drive her to provide her students with the best version of herself as a teacher.

This final theme, *Multi-causal catalyzation of teacher motivation* reflects that teacher

motivation was catalyzed by multiple causes from learning new concepts and strategies and

wanted to increase students' growth and success to direct bonds with students and a natural affin-

ity towards interacting with children. Because teachers are not a monolithic group, there was no

one cause that motivated them to teach. The evidence in this section creates an adequate case for

the nature of teacher motivation having many causes.

**Thematic Conclusion**

These seven themes were educed from the data as a direct result of my efforts to answer

the two research questions at the center of this study. I believed that they gave a more than accu-

rate representation of the teachers experiences with and impressions of language and literacy

(L&L) concepts (i.e., PhAw and phonics) and strategies (i.e., performing arts) as well as teacher

motivation and student engagement in their classrooms. Additionally, crystalizing the primary

data set (i.e., ELEs' interviews) with The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones

(2010), and the ELEs' lesson plans integrated with the state early learning standards seemed to

really produce a holistic picture of the early learning environment. As an educator myself, I

deeply connected to the commentary, sentiments, experiences, and impressions of the educators, in one way or another. Although I might not have agreed with everything, I without a doubt respected, honored, and admired each and every one of the teachers for their service and dedication to growing our most precious resource we have as a human race—our children. In the next section, Discussion, I provide my interpretation of the data theme by theme, provide implications of the study, make suggestions for future research, display the studies limitations, and finally conclude the study.

**5 DISCUSSION**

Aristotelian mimesis paints art as an imitation of life, rendering art as a re-presentation of nature, a mirror of reality. But what of the inverse notion? What if life also imitates art—the anti-mimesis? While this research study did not address this philosophical conundrum directly, it is an interesting segue into the dichotomies of theory and practice in tandem with art and science, each in relation to the concepts and strategies of language and literacy (L&L) pedagogy, and in particular, the teaching of early learning language sounds in tandem with teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning classrooms. Because in the same way presented in mimesis, the theory & practice of most epistemological pursuits is similarly questioned, probing the magnitude of importance surrounding each element or the sequence of influences (e.g., Is theory more important than practice or is practice the more influential factor over theory?) The debate between theorists and practitioners will likely rage on infinitum, but I digress.

The research questions, and subsequently, interview questions and other data collected in this study (e.g., ELEs' lesson plans and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy) sought to illuminate the bridge between theory and practice by investigating the experiences and impressions of the participant early learning educators (ELEs) with regards to L&L concepts, such as phonological awareness (PhAw) in tandem with performing arts as pedagogical strategies to convey the L&L concepts. Based on the data presented, I believe that the research questions inquiring about the pedagogy L&L concepts and strategies, as well as teacher motivation and student engagement have been addressed. Next, I have analyzed my themes, finalized my position, and resolved many of my assertions.

I began this study with the problem of phonics and/or PhAw not being utilized or optimized in some early learning programs. Research suggests that while there are many programs

that are more than adequate in utilizing PhAw and phonics effectively, there also other programs that are not for a variety of reasons. For instance, some pre-service teachers are undereducated by their undergraduate or graduate programs, specifically in the area of PhAw (Moats, 1994). Likewise, instructional variation exists in some programs; therefore, there are some programs are more effective than others due to training and other factors (Beecher et al., 2017; Early et al., 2005; Greenwood et al., 2013; Justice et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2008). I believe that it boils down to the fact that theorists and practitioners could be standing on two different sides of the aisle because theory and practice are, at times, simply not in harmony or synergistic in their operations or transitions from one to the other. In addition, I also looked at the lack of research on the topics of teacher motivation and student engagement in early learning L&L classrooms. While researchers stated the importance of student engagement, there was a need for more research in this regard, specifically in conjunction with early learning literacy pedagogical practices (Bowman et al., 2001; National Reading Panel, 2000). Research is clear that exciting and engaging strategies must be utilized in order to engage students, and as a result, advanced their L&L development (Bowman et al., 2001; Culatta et al., 2013; National Reading Panel, 2000). With these things in mind, I have surmised several notions from the research of the early learning educators (ELEs) in this study. Below, I have provided an analysis of each theme.

**Theme 1 Analysis: PhAw, Phonics, and Rhyme as Important Pedagogical Content**

The ELEs in this study provide their students with an ample degree of L&L content, specifically related to PhAw, phonics, and rhyme. They prioritized these L&L concepts because their impressions were that these L&L concepts are important and their experiences operationalized their impressions with many instances of using PhAw, phonics, and rhyme. This coincides with early learning research that states L&L pedagogy should help develop students' PhAw and

phonics skills through activities such as syllable recognition, sound segmentation, and letter-to-letter sound matching (Conway, 2015; Cunningham, 2017; Hawken et al., 2005; Roskos et al., 2003; Skibbe et al., 2016; Tompkins, 2005). However, I was not always in agreement with some of the ELEs' sentiments or practices, such as one of the ELEs stating that they limit their students' exposure to vowel sounds. I have experienced in my own teaching the importance of exposing early learners to an array of vowels sounds, which is supported by research (Cabell & Tortorelli, 2013). From a balanced literacy framework, emphasizing PhAw and phonics are key to L&L development, along with vocabulary and comprehension (Cramer, 2004). The systematic and explicit instruction of phonics is a vital element of balanced literacy (Asselin, 1999). In this study, the ELEs were both systematic and explicit in their instruction of not only PhAw and phonics, but also rhyme. This is in line with research that states that instruction across the PhAw and phonics continua is highly impactful (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Flippo, 2012; Goswami, 2000; Pressley et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 2002; Saracho & Spodek, 2002). This theme also coincides with emergent literacy (EL) because it reflects how the ELEs' pedagogies focused on students' development of EL components, such as their knowledge of letters and letter sounds, as well as exposure to print, which are key to EL theory (Neumann et al., 2017). EL components such as students' knowledge and abilities with regards to PhAw, the alphabet, and other language related elements (Rodhe, 2015) were addressed by the ELEs in the study and reflected in this theme.

**Theme 2 Analysis: The Power of Using Students' Names**

In other areas of their pedagogical practices, ELEs were prudent in utilizing various strategies, such as using the power of their students' names to connect the students' identities to the pedagogical content. The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010) supported

this practice along with other research (Bloodgood, 1999; Ferguson, 1975; Tsvasman, 2003). The use of students' names has been accepted by researchers as an important first step to literacy (Bloodgood, 1999; Clay, 1975). When children write their names it helps to establish both their social and literate identities (Bloodgood, 1999). From a balanced literacy perspective, using students' names addresses the need for student-centered activities (Frey et al., 2005) because using their names focuses on developing their personal and cultural identities. Additionally, using student names can enhance modeling and scaffolding, thereby balancing the level of assistance teachers give to students with the aim of students becoming self-regulated learners, which is another key to balanced literacy (Frey et al., 2005; Metsala, 1997). From an EL perspective, the use of a student's name and the connections to identity satisfy the sociocultural context of a rich literacy environment (Justice & Pullen, 2003; Rodhe, 2015). According to EL research, students should have a deep connection with both the content and their personal and sociocultural backgrounds (Justice & Pullen, 2003), and using student names affords the opportunity for teachers to insert elements of students' personal and sociocultural lives directly into the learning content.

**Theme 3 Analysis: Confusion and Unsurety Regarding Language and Literacy Concepts**

I was very much impressed with some of PhAw and phonics activities that the ELEs employed in their pedagogy, which were exciting and engaging. Many of the activities sharply honed in on the L&L concepts at the center of this study. Even considering these things that I believe were done well, I believe there is still room for improvement regarding the knowledge base and practices for some of the ELEs in terms of L&L concepts and strategies. In light of this, there were two things that I had to consider: 1). the terminological inconsistency in the field of L&L, particularly with regards to PhAw, and 2). my role in contributing to any confusion or un-

surety because of my use of the term 'phonological continuum' rather than 'phonological aware-ness continuum'. Regarding the first consideration, the term PhAw has been used by researchers in a variety of ways to describe various phonological skills and this has caused come confusion in the field of L&L research (Anthony & Lonigan, 2004; Pufpaff, 2009). Regarding the second consideration, my use of the lesser used term 'phonological continuum' during the interviews could have contributed to some of the confusion among the participants because the term 'pho-nological awareness continuum' or some variant of the phrase 'phonological awareness as a con-tinuum' is more prevalent in the research and pedagogical materials. Although, most of the dif-ferences are nuanced, there is indeed a strong need for the field of L&L research to come to a consensus creating solid, universally recognized definitions of term PhAw and its continuum.

However, for the ELEs in this study, The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), which is the literacy curriculum used by the program, establishes terminological solidity by clarifying PhAw.

> Phonological awareness (sometimes referred to as phonological sensitivity) is hearing and understanding the different sounds and patterns of spoken language. It includes the differ-ent ways oral language can be broken down into individual parts, for instance, separate sounds and syllables (p. 543).

Additionally, the larger pedagogical issue was less about the ELEs' unsurety of the concept pho-nological (awareness) continuum and more about them confusing PhAw or a component thereof (i.e., phonemic awareness) with phonics. The distinction between PhAw and phonics is made clear in The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010).

> Phonological awareness lays the groundwork for phonics. After children have a good un-derstanding of the sounds of language, they begin to connect printed symbols with their

corresponding sounds, for example, M with /m/. Be aware that phonics is not the same as phonological awareness, which involves only auditory skills and not sound-symbol correspondence (p. 545).

Once you create a lesson that links the language sound with the letter (i.e., sound-symbol correlations), that lesson is no longer focusing on PhAw. It becomes a phonics lesson. This error was prevalent in the ELEs' understanding of these L&L concepts. Understanding L&L metalanguage (i.e., Linguistics jargon) and concepts is critical to successful instruction because teachers make decisions on what to teach and how to teach it, which affects their interpretation and response to student errors, the types of examples they choose for various L&L tasks, and how they organize and sequence information for instruction (Moats, 1994). This theme connects to both balanced literacy and emergent literacy because, if an educator is not well versed in L&L terminology nor has a solid understanding L&L concepts, the educator may not be as effective as possible in providing explicit phonics or PhAw instruction. Balanced literacy and EL necessitate that teachers have a strong understanding of both PhAw and phonics (Cramer, 2004; Neumann et al., 2017). These skills-based elements are critical for both balanced literacy and emergent literacy theories; therefore, this theme aligns with each of these theories by the same reasoning.

**Theme 4 Analysis: The Need for more Phonics and/or PhAw Training for Teachers**

Just as Seastrunk (2018) and two of the ELEs in the study stated, there is a need for more training in the areas of L&L, specifically regarding PhAw. In line with Hanford (2018), one of the ELEs did not feel adequately prepared through her teacher program and sought additional professional development years after becoming an ELE. Additionally, based on the confusion and unsurety regarding L&L concepts from theme 3, this suggestion for more phonics and/or PhAw training is supported. Furthermore, the decision on the type training (i.e., training on

teaching PhAw or phonics) is based on the pedagogical philosophy of an early learning program's leadership; however, all teachers should have a solid understanding of both PhAw and phonics without confusing the two. Initially, there was concern on my part about the ELEs' levels of awareness regarding early learning (EL) development and their knowledge about promoting PhAw much like Rodhe (2015) asserted, "some early learning educators still have limited awareness and knowledge of emergent literacy development". However, most of these initial concerns were put to rest after performing the interviews and then analyzing all of the data sources. Accordingly, the ELEs collectively seemed to be effectively supporting the EL development of their students, as well as continuing to expand their knowledge and experience by continuing to be students of pedagogy, which I find to be an extremely important mindset for teachers. We should forever be learners, and as one participant stated, we should forever "pour into" our learners. As a result of this and many other factors, I believe that, while there is a need for more training regarding phonics and/or PhAw, the data showed that ELEs in this study were adequately using theory based practices and resources, such as The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010). While slight variation existed between some of their classrooms, there was a sound bridge between theory and practice, as well as art and science, in the program as a whole. Finding this answer was one of the aims of this study. This theme connects to balance literacy and emergent literacy in a similar way to the last theme (i.e., theme 3 – confusion and unsurety regarding L&L concepts), in that, increasing teachers' understanding of skills-based elements and their implementation of explicit L&L instruction is the end result of being trained in phonics and/or PhAw. "It is imperative that teachers have such knowledge [phonics] to be successful with a range of learners…the informed teacher will be able to present linguistic concepts accurately and with appropriate examples" (Moats, 1994, p. 85). Therefore, when an

educator is trained and has a sound grasp on the L&L concepts at the center of this theme, they can better employ both balanced literacy and emergent literacy because phonics, and more especially, PhAw are vital to both balanced literacy and EL.

Moving away from the themes regarding L&L concepts, this research study has also provided a good degree of empirical data regarding performing arts, teacher motivation, and student engagement in early learning L&L classrooms, which was another aim of this study. Other research supports the notion that the level at which a teacher is motivated to teach affects their learning environment, from their interactions with their students to their interactions with co-workers (Wagner & French, 2010). The levels at which teachers are motivated to teach their students along with the levels at which the students are engaged in the lessons have direct correlations to the levels of overall success in the classroom (Culatta et al., 2013). In the following sections, I have presented the final set of themes related to performing arts, teacher motivation, and student engagement.

**Theme 5 Analysis: Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Lyricism, and Theater) as Pedagogical Strategies**

The ELEs classrooms were rife with elements of performing arts as conveyance strategies for L&L content, which is not only in line with The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010), and the state early learning standards (e.g., *Approaches to Play and Learning),* but several other research studies as well (Brown et al., 2010; Bryant et al., 1989; Catterall, 2003; Chapman, 2004; Cutler, 2007; Gulec & Macan, 2014; Hansen et al., 2014; Harper, 2011; Kenney, 2005; Kisida et al., 2018; Lobo & Winsler, 2006; Mages, 2008; Susman-Stillman & Englund, 2018; Tombak, 2014). Performing arts as strategies provides a holistic enhancement to the learning environment and because performing arts can help develop various aspects of human

intelligence (Brown et al., 2010), integrating these arts with literacy content can foster multiple domains of intelligence simultaneously. Additionally, many of the ELEs described engaging activities that were enhanced by performing arts. In fact, one of the ELEs, Halle, stated that she cannot imagine a class without one of the performing arts—music. Her impression of the importance of music in her classroom is just one example of how deeply engrained the arts are in the ELEs' learning environment. This is a part of what makes this particular research study unique, the focus on the use of various arts as central components of L&L pedagogy and their positive impact on the learning environment. The traditional reading sciences are typically rote and rigid, lacking artistry in the approach to L&L pedagogy. However, the use of the arts in L&L pedagogy is a disruption of those traditions with this research study severing as support by highlighting the wealth of various arts-based strategies that can be employed to enhance the L&L learning environment, and ultimately increase the L&L success of early learners.

This theme connects to balance literacy being that balanced literacy is an eclectic approach that utilizes components from various systems, sources, and styles (Cramer, 2004), where performing arts as pedagogical strategies are eclectic and use a variety of sources and styles as well. Because balanced literacy provides a highly dynamic model that gives educators opportunities to use the full cache of their professional knowledge and skills (Shaw & Hurst, 2012), using performing arts as pedagogical strategies aligns well with the balanced literacy approach allowing educators to use their multifaceted skill sets, like ELE, Toni, who has lots of experience in performing arts as both a performer and a curriculum designer. With regards to EL, PhAw, which is a central skill of EL, pairs well with performing arts, such as music, when used as strategies, where a music program could be used to train PhAw or complement existing PhAw programs (Degé & Schwarzer, 2011). The various skills and sociocultural aspects of EL connect

with performing arts as strategies across the developmental continuum because as children grow and their language facilities develop, so do their faculties for the arts. Therefore, performing arts integration in early L&L is in alignment with EL.

**Theme 6 Analysis: Multimodal, Comprehensive Literacy Experience**

The L&L practices of the ELEs were both multimodal and comprehensive as they provided various modes of learning from visual to kinesthetic, as well as a complete set of L&L content and practices from phonics to writing. Creating these rich L&L environments is greatly encouraged by researchers (Connor, 2006; Makin, 2003; Rodhe, 2015) and The Creative Curriculum – Literacy, Heroman and Jones (2010). The multimodal nature of L&L (Jewitt, 2008) and the arts (Kisida et al., 2018) affords a dynamic learning experience that I believe can create engaging and effective outcomes. The comprehensive nature of the ELEs activities created a learning environment that can help to develop an array of different L&L skills from PhAw to print awareness. This is in alignment with balanced literacy because balanced literacy supports the systematic instruction of skills-based approaches with literature-based experiences (Asselin, 1999). A balanced, comprehensive approach can accelerate achievement (Donat, 2006), while addressing individual needs of students (Donat, 2006; Frey et al., 2005). EL is supported in similar ways, in that both L&L skills and environmental context are addressed in this theme. The nature of EL is multidimensional (Connor, 2006) and a rich literacy environment that incorporates a variety of learning modalities and covers an array of literacy approaches is in alignment with EL (Rodhe, 2015), all of which is at the center of this theme.

**Theme 7 Analysis: Multi-Causal Catalyzation of Teacher Motivation**

The ELEs were motivated to teach students for a variety of reasons, from the levels of student engagement in the lesson through performing arts, to a desire to provide the best pedagogy to increase the success of their students. The evidence is clear that there are a variety of catalysts that motivated the ELEs of this study to teach. For me, two of the more telling catalysts were Toni's teacher motivation experience when she attended a professional development to learn new ways to teach her students PhAw, thereby adding to their L&L success and Alicia's teacher motivation experience with respect to her desire to be the exemplar teacher that she would want for her own daughter. In Toni's teacher motivation story, she had a full circle experience of being highly excited and engaged by strategies of the professional development and then taking those same strategies, relying them to co-workers and then to students. Conversely, in Alicia's teacher motivation experience, she strove to achieve a level of effectiveness as a teacher that she would want a teacher to have that was educating her own daughter. This drove her to make sure that every student that came in her care was properly prepared to go to the next academic level. My hope is that all educators would develop similar sentiments as these ELEs and take on the mantle of education in these ways. I was truly inspired by their experiences. Each of these experiences encapsulates very different, yet profound and unique factors that encourage educators in the operations of their profession. Other ELEs, like Anita mentioned simply working with children being the motivative factor, which research shows is one of the top factors of teacher motivation, along with intellectual fulfillment (Han & Yin, 2016). This theme ties indirectly to balanced literacy and emergent literacy because teacher motivation and student engagement are important to the effectiveness of the learning environment; a motivated teacher is more

effective in the classroom (Han & Yin, 2016) and engaged students have increased overall success in the classroom (Culatta et al., 2013). Therefore, the effectiveness of each of the approaches is subject to the educators' levels of motivation, which effects the levels of students' engagement. Motivated teachers from a lens of balanced literacy will employ the flexibility (Shaw & Hurst, 2012) and eclectic nature of the approach (Cramer, 2004), which requires that teachers maintain interest and enthusiasm, which will be reflected in the students' engagement (Morehouse, 2013). Motivated teachers from a lens of EL will be sure to create developmentally sound practices, ensuring students gain the preliminary skills and awareness that are necessary for successful emergent literacy development (Rohde, 2015) and producing rich learning environments reflective of the students' sociocultural backgrounds (Justice, 2004; Justice & Pullen, 2003).

To conclude, without a doubt, the learners within this childcare development program are in good hands with the ELE participants because the ELEs are truly dedicated to their craft. This means their pedagogy is focused on L&L concepts, they are motivated to teach, and they want their students to achieve at the highest levels possible. That dedication was evident throughout the research process from their interviews to my analysis of their experiences and impressions. The ELEs truly want the best for their students and I believe their dedication as educators will ultimately lead to the success of their students.

**Implications**

The findings in this study support the importance for language and literacy (L&L) concepts such as PhAw, which is also well noted in previous research (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Hawken et al., 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rodhe, 2015; Shapiro & Solity, 2008; Shaw & Hurst, 2012; Stahl, 2001). Additionally, the notions of

enjoyable experiences and excitement in pedagogy, specifically through performing arts, are also supported by the findings. Prior research has supported the arts as having great pedagogical potential in this regard (Brown et al., 2010; Catterall, 2003; Chapman, 2004). As excitement and engagement can lead to optimal learning (Bowman et al., 2001; Culatta et al., 2013; National Reading Panel, 2000), performing arts were shown to be powerful, dear I say, vital as tools to engage students as well as motivate teachers. The use of L&L concepts like PhAw and use of performing arts as strategies to teach L&L concepts, while also serving as elements of motivation and engagement, were evinced in the experiences of the ELEs.

However, the implications of the findings are a need for richer teaching programs and professional development for early learning educators, both with regards to L&L concepts and strategies, particularly in the areas of the PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. Just as two of the ELEs in the study, Alicia and Toni, stated the need for more training, specifically with regards to PhAw, the evidence from the theme–*Confusion and unsurety regarding L&L concepts*, also supported this implication. It is not enough for teachers to just be exposed to L&L ideas, they must have a strong grasp on the metalanguage, concepts, and practices (Moats, 1994). Curricula, teacher training programs, and professional development programs should focus on the metalanguage of Linguistics research, for example, the term phonemic awareness. This term should then be clearly conceptualized as the individual unit within a system of language sounds. Finally, this concept should be operationalized with many examples within instruction, preferability with performing arts elements, so that it is motivating for teachers, who in turn once motivated, are more likely to have high levels of engagement from their students in the lesson. This could entail the creation of lyrics that isolate individual sounds in unique and engaging ways or the creation of stories where each character is an individual sound that communicates through that single sound.

Using phonemic awareness is a good example to illustrate how curricula, teacher training programs, and professional development programs should address L&L concepts because this study found that the ELEs had a good deal of trouble with the basic knowledge of the term phonemic awareness along with confusing phonics with PhAw. The concept of the PhAw continuum should also be addressed. Each level of the continuum (i.e., lexical level, syllabic level, onset/rime level, and phonemic level) should be explicitly taught and integrated with performing arts to optimize teacher motivation and student engagement. With these recommendations in mind, a future L&L curriculum could incorporate the full of array of linguistics subjects (i.e., phonology, graphology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics) and holistically integrate performing arts, creating a comprehensive learning program. This program could have student-based instruction and professional development components that instructs students in the most developmentally appropriate Linguistics subjects based on their age (e.g., graphology and phonology for early learners), while providing ELEs with extensive training on all the Linguistics subjects. Unique theatrical characters could be created to instruct in specific L&L concepts, such as Fiona Phonics, who teaches all about phonics. A whole host of lyrics could be crafted to help optimize retention and convey an array of L&L content, and particularly linguistic metalanguage and other more difficult L&L concepts. Finally, technology could be used to take the program to digital spaces (e.g., online, mobile devices) and provide access to institutions of learning, educators, parents, and students.

In addition, richer pedagogical provisions in the form of learning resources should be offered to early learning educators regarding the PhAw, phonics, performing arts. Educational facilities on all levels should also have access to supplemental education specialists in the areas of

PhAw, phonics, and performing arts. I envision edutainment (i.e., education entertainment) artists working in conjunction with various educational institutions to supplement the existing curricula. Educational policies should be formed to fund interventions, professional development programs, and teacher training programs that specifically target L&L in early learning and primary learning environments. I also believe there is a great deal of opportunity for the development of an expansive performing arts, educational network, where early learning L&L educators with a variety of goals and approaches unify with the aim of synergistically enlightening students on all levels and navigating along a bridge of both theory and practice. Many teachers have a wealth of talents and skill sets in the performing arts. This network could provide opportunities for teachers collaborate and formulate ways to utilize all of their talents and enhance their classroom experiences. For instance, among our ELEs, Toni with her experience with performing arts curriculum design could link up with Halle who has in affinity for music in her classroom. A network specific for ELE with a focus on L&L and performing arts integration could have profound effects on teacher collaboration and classroom effectiveness. With that said, I stand firm on the position of seeing education from a vantage of balance, harmony, unity, proliferation, and most importantly, enlightenment from all parties involved, both the teacher and the student.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

While I could propose several different studies based on this work, I will return to the pre-Covid pandemic research that I originally proposed. The study would be a quasi-mixed methods design with a dual strand quantitative component and a single strand qualitative component. The purpose of the first strand of the QUAN component (QUAN$_1$) would be to understand how teachers support and students enact phonological awareness (PhAw) and graphophonemic

awareness (GphA) (i.e., awareness of letter-to-letter sound correlations, which is the central focus of phonics instruction). The second QUAN strand (QUAN$_2$) would seek to understand the elements of motivation and engagement of both teachers and students in the PhAw activities and phonics lessons. The purpose of the QUAL strand would be to bring about comprehensive, crystalized understanding regarding the various elements of the PhAw and phonics lessons in early learning language and literacy classrooms.

With regards to data collection tools, QUAN$_1$ would utilize a statistical analysis tool to quantify the frequency of performing arts integration with PhAw activities and phonics lessons in early learning language and literacy classrooms. The second strand QUAN$_2$ would utilize a simple, customized survey with Likert-styled answer sections. These sections would serve to quantify the frequency of teachers' perceptions of their motivation to teach PhAw activities and phonics. Additionally, these sections would gather information about students' engagement during the PhAw activities and phonics following each lesson in the early learning language and literacy classroom.

With regards to analysis, each data set from both the QUAN$_1$ and QUAN$_2$ inquiries would be used for the purposes of descriptive statistical analysis by examining the frequencies of each element of the study and an ANOVA would be conducted to compare the significance of means between various variables of both data sets. The single QUAL strand would utilize several methods: observations, interviews, open-ended answer sections of the surveys, and the collection of various classroom artifacts. Both content and thematic analysis would be conducted to identify patterns within the QUAL data sets and the I would develop themes based on the data.

**Limitations**

This study was limited by the extent of the data collection opportunities. For instance, home environments are rich with these opportunities and this study was limited in its extension to these areas. Additionally, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic eliminating the opportunity for observations and other data collection methods, the original mixed-methods design for this study could not be conducted, which included two quantitative analytical strands that when taken together with the qualitative data could have really crystalized the results that followed. The current study, while sound in its design, can be seen as limited because I used a single research paradigm. However, not all researchers would agree that using a non-mixed, qualitative only design would constitute a limitation.

**Conclusion**

> *Balance is key. Balance is a virtue. Balance is next to godliness. Maybe, we should all aspire to better balance. Too much of what is said in this world is one-sided, and we need more balance - in our speech, in our music, in our art, in everything–CeeLo Green*

As CeeLo stated, balance is key, in all the notions of language and literacy (L&L) presented in this research, from theory and practice, to art and science. As a result, the fulcrum in each of these complementary dichotomous constructs is the knowledge related to the importance of each component and assigning equal value to each one, through a full and thorough understanding of both. This is to say that both theoretical notions of L&L and the everyday classroom practices thereof should be given equal importance. Language theorists that are developing pedagogical models and educators that are teaching L&L concepts must operate as complements with the understanding that success necessitates the synergy created through their union. The same is true for the scientific and artistic aspects of language, and the motivation to teach and engagement of

students. They are complements of one another that must each be balanced and nurtured, never at the expense of the other. This study supports seeking the balance, which rang true to me as an organic product of the research or maybe I subconsciously sought confirmation of my own preexisting sentiments. I have an affinity towards balance from my theoretical perspective on empirical research—eclectic pluralism to my theoretical perspective on literacy pedagogy—balanced literacy (Cramer, 2004). I have a natural affinity towards a balance, just as water finds its level and electricity takes the path of least resistance.

I truly attempted to come this research with an open mind. I did not want any of my own sentiments, thoughts, experiences, etc., to cloud my investigation or analysis of the topics at hand. On the one hand, years of experience can be an epistemic sword wielded in the name of investigative truth, and the other, an overly critical blade bludgeoning anything outside one's circle of familiarity. Having been a L&L educator and curriculum designer for over a decade and having observed many other classrooms, I have examined a variety of pedagogical content, strategies, and resources, and have seen various levels of overall pedagogical quality. I tried my very best to not impose my own ideas over what the data reveled. Some of my ideas were confirmed, such as the importance of language and literacy concepts like phonological awareness or strategies like performing arts. While, I have also gained new insights, such as the power of using students' names or teachers' motivation solely through their natural affinity towards children. In conclusion, it is my hope that this study provides viable knowledge to inform the reader about the sounds that emerge as early learners develop their language and literacy skills and knowledge, while painting a vivid picture of performing arts, teacher motivation, and student engagement in early learning language learning pedagogy.

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**APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A – Interview Questions

1. Please explain your formal training in the field of education.
2. How important is language skills in general to overall student learning? In other words, does a student's language skills affect their learning in other subjects?
3. As an early learning educator, what do you think are the most import things that you can do to help ensure the language and literacy development of your students?
4. I'm going to say a few terms related to linguistic development in young children. For each one, could you tell me about how you support children in the classroom to develop it?
   a. Phonological awareness/Phonological awareness continuum (General understanding of language sounds, ex: rhyming, syllables)
   b. Phonemic awareness (Understanding of individual language sounds, ex: /b/ sound in bat)
   c. Graphophonemic awareness/Phonics instruction (Understanding of language sounds related to letters, ex: the letter 'b' says /b/ )
5. Do you think teaching language arts is an art, a science, both, or neither? (How and why?)
6. I'm going to say a few terms related to performing arts. For each one, could you tell me how you have experienced them being integrated in language and literacy instruction?
   a. Music
   b. Dance
   c. Lyricism/Rhyme
   d. Theater/Acting/Play
   e. What are your thoughts on how they could be integrated in L&L instruction?
7. Tell me about an experience where you felt the most motivated to teach phonological awareness or phonics.
   a. What are some factors that you believe affect the level of motivation to teach PhAw?
8. Tell me about in experience where you saw your students the most engagement in a lesson that had phonological awareness or phonics.
   a. What are some factors that you believe affect student's engagement in the PhAw lessons?
9. If you had to create a metaphor for phonological awareness or phonics instruction, what would it be? For example, Phonics is like riding blindfolded in a van and being dropped off somewhere. You don't know where you've been, where you're at or where you're going.
10. In reviewing your own language and literacy teaching clip, what were some positives that you gleaned from your evaluation of yourself and what were some areas that you need to work on?

Thinking back on the review of the non-participant's PhAw continuum clip, do you have any additional thoughts after talking through L&L questions?

**Appendix B – Participant Lesson Plans**

**Lesson Plan 1**

|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Circle Time Large Group | Message: Good Morning song, Weather song, Calendar How was your weekend?<br><br>S: CLL1.3a, CLL4.3a | Message: Good Morning song, weather song, Calendar, My Favorite Color Chart<br><br>S: CLL3.2b, SED1.3e | Message: Good Morning, weather song, Calendar My Favorite Food is<br><br>S: CLL3.2b, SED1.3e | Message: Good Morning song, weather song, Calendar Transition Song to centers If your name starts with the letter E, B, S, A, L, D, N.<br><br>S: CLL3.2b | Message: Good Morning song, Weather song, Calendar<br><br>S: CLL3.2b |
| Verbal/ Linguistic | Book #1: Chrysanthemum Book #2: You Are Important<br><br>S: CLL5.3b, CLL5.3c | Book #1: Eyes, Noes, Fingers and Toes Book #2: Manner Time<br><br>S: CLL5.3b, | Book #1: The Family Book Book #2: Listening Time<br><br>S: CLL5.3b | Book #1: The Way I Feel Book #2: Calm- Down<br><br>S: CLL5.3b | Book #1: I Like Myself Book: #2: Weather and Seasons<br><br>S: CLL5.3b |
| Musical/ Rhythmic | Music with Movement: Animal Action 2<br><br>S: CR3.4a, PDM5.4b | Music with Movement: Bean Bag Boogie 1<br><br>S: CR3.4a, PDM5.4b | Music with Movement: Animal Action 1<br><br>S: CLL1.3b, CR3.4a | Music with Movement: The Body Rock<br><br>S: CR3.4a, PDM5.4b | Music with Movement: Get up and Go<br><br>S: CR3.4a, PDM5.4b |
| Language and Literacy | Phonological Awareness Letter Sound Chant A-F | Phonological Awareness Letter Sound Chant G-L | Phonological Awareness Letter Sound Chant M-R | Phonological Awareness Letter sound Chant S-Z | Phonological Awareness Letter sound Chant A-Z |

| | Students will sing re-peat and sing along to Letter Chant.<br><br>S: CLL6.4a | Students will sing re-peat and sing along to Letter Chant.<br><br>S: CLL6.4a | Students will sing re-peat and sing along to Letter Chant.<br><br>S: CLL6.4a | Students will sing re-peat and sing along to Letter Chant.<br><br>S: CLL6.4a | Students will sing re-peat and sing along to Letter Chant.<br><br>S: CLL6.4a |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| Logical/ Mathe-matics | Activity: Count/Iden-tify numbers 1-5 Materials: Bears<br><br>S: CD-MA1.3a | Activity: Count/Iden-tify numbers 1-5 Materials: Bears<br><br>S: CD-MA1.3a, MA1.3b | Activity: Count/Iden-tify numbers 1-5 Materials: Bears<br><br>S: CD-MA1.3b | Activity: Sorting by one Attribute (Colors) Materials: Keys<br><br>S: CD-MA4.3b | Activity: Sorting by one Attribute (Colors) Materials: Keys<br><br>S: CD-MA1.3b |
| Language and Liter-acy | Activity: Identify Let-ters Materials: Letter Tile Board<br><br>S: CLL7.3a | Activity: Identify Let-ters Materials: Letter Tile Board<br><br>S: CLL7.3a | Activity: Identify Let-ters Materials: Letter Tile Board<br><br>S: CLL7.3a | Activity: Find letters in your Name (First Name) Materials: Assorted Letters<br><br>S: CLL7.3a | Activity: Find letters in your Name (First Name) Materials: Assorted Letter<br><br>S: CLL7.3a |
| Cognitive Develop-ment | Activity: Build My Name Materials: Rhinestones and Glue<br><br>S: PDM6.3a | Activity: Build My Name Materials: Rhinestones and Glue<br><br>S: PDM6.3a | Activity: Build My Name Materials: Rhinestones and Glue<br><br>S: PDM6.3a | Activity: All About Me Books<br><br>S: CD-CR2.3a | Activity: All About Me Books<br><br>S: CD-CR2.3a |

**Lesson Plan 2**

| Day | Phonological Awareness | Naturalistic | Logical/Mathematics | Interpersonal/ Intrapersonal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mon | Activity: Bippity Bop-pity Brew<br>Students will pass letters around in a pot and when the pot stops. The teacher will give the sound of the letter the student is holding<br><br><br>SS: CLL6.4c | What's the Weather?<br>Students will draw picture of what the weather was like today.<br><br><br><br>SS: CD-SC3.4c | Activity: Sorting Pompom Small Medium and Large<br><br>Students will sort pom-pom by sizes.<br>You can use items you have at home that be sorted like buttons, coins, etc.;<br><br>SS: CD-MA3.3b | Students will interact with each other and participate in role play in the Blocks and Home living center.<br><br><br><br>S: SED5.4b, APL4.3a |
| Tues | Activity: Down by the Bay<br>Students will sing along as we create rhyming words<br><br><br><br>SS: CLL6.4b | Students will draw picture of what the weather was like today<br><br><br><br>SS: CD-SC3.4c | Activity: Put me in order<br><br>The students will take strips of paper and glue them in order from short-est to longest<br><br><br>SS: CD-MA3.3b | Students will interact with each other and participate in role play in the Blocks and Home living center.<br><br><br><br>S: SED5.4b, APL4.3a |
| Wed | Activity: What's the first sound that you hear in the word.<br>Broccoli<br>Potato<br>Spinach<br>Brussel sprouts<br>Carrots | Students will draw picture of what the weather was like today | Activity: Roll some Dice<br><br>Students will roll two dice and count both to see how many dots they have in all. | Students will interact with each other and participate in role play in the Blocks and Home living center. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | What was the same about these words?<br><br>SS:? | SS: SC2.3b | SS: CD-MA1.3b | S: SED5.4b, APL4.3a |
| Thurs | Activity: What is the same about these words?<br>Dog-Donut<br>Hungry- Happy<br>Zipper-Zoo<br>Purple- Pizza<br>You can keep it going with other pair of words<br><br><br>SS: CR2.3a | Students will draw picture of what the weather was like today<br><br>SS: SC1.4c | Activity: How Tall am I? Children will watch while being measured using Un-fix cubes and Measuring Tape<br>We will graph measure-ments during circle time.<br><br>SS: MA1.3d | Students will interact with each other and participate in role play in the Blocks and Home living center.<br><br>S: SED5.4b, APL4.3a |
| Fri | Activity:  Down by the Bay<br>Students will sing along as we create rhyming words<br><br>SS: CLL6.4b | Students will draw picture of what the weather was like today<br><br>SS: SC1.4c | Activity: Comparing Cu-bes<br>Children will make com-parison. Which one has more or less?<br><br>SS: CD-MA1.3d | Students will interact with each other and participate in role play in the Blocks and Home living center.<br><br>S: SED5.4b, APL4.3a |

**Lesson Plan 3**

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Large Group/ Circle Time 8:30 – 8:45 9:00 – 9:20 | Activity: Gather & Greet / Good Morning Song Message: What did you do over the weekend? S: CLL4.3b, APL5.4b | Activity: Good Morning Song/ Days of the Week Song Message: What day of week is it? What does the green card say? S: CLL1.4a | Activity: Days of the Week Song/ Message: What does the weather look like today? S: CLL2.4a, CLL1.4a | Activity: Gather & Greet/ What's the Weather Song Message: Discuss the Treasure Box S: CLL1.4a | Activity: Good Morning Song/ Looking for a Friend Message: What is something that you would like to share with the class? S: SED2.4a, CLL1.4a |
| | Book #1: *Starting School* How did you feel when you came to Pre-K? Sad, Mad, Happy, Shy? S: CLL1.4a, CLL5.4d | Book #1: *Feet are not for Kicking* Who can name some of the other ways we can use our feet? S: CLL1.4a, SED2.4a | Book #1: *Interrupting Chicken* What does the word interrupt mean? S: CLL5.4d | Book #1: *Please and Thank You* When should you say please and thank you? S: CLL1.4c | Book #1: *The Pout Pout Fish* What was wrong with the Pout Pout Fish? S: CLL5.4b |
| | Music with Movement: Friends Song S: CLL1.4a, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Marc D Pencil CLL1.4a, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Count to 100 S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Freeze Dance Song S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Shake Sillies Out S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a |

**Lesson Plan 4**

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Large Group/ Circle Time 8:30 – 8:45 9:00 – 9:20 | Activity: Good Morning/Give out Classroom Jobs<br>Message: Discuss what you did over the weekend.<br><br>S: CLL1.4a, CD -SS4.4a | Activity: Good Morning Song/ Tattle Monster<br>Message: What is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?<br><br>S: CLL4.3b, APL.4b | Activity: Gather & Greet/Days of the Week<br>Message: How do you feel this morning?<br><br>S: SED1.4b, APL.4b | Activity: Gather & Greet/ Months of the Year<br>Message: What is the last thing you do before you go to sleep?<br><br>S: CLL1.4a, APL2.4a | Activity: Good Morning Song/ Weather<br>Message: How many gems do you think are in the gem jar with the treasure box on it?<br><br>S: CD-MA7.4a |
| | Book #1: Little Cliff's First Day of School<br>What do you think this story is going to be about? What do you see?<br><br>S: CLL5.4a | Book #1: I Want It<br>Can you think of a time when you really wanted something? What was it?<br><br>S: CLL1.4c, SED2.4a | Book #1: I Am Human<br>What did you like about this story?<br><br><br>S: CLL4.4a | Book#1: I Can Stay Calm<br>What are some ways that you can stay calm?<br><br><br>S: CLL4.4a, CLL1.4c | Book#1: I Can Follow the Rules<br>Who remembers the outside rules? Can you name them?<br><br>S: CLL1.4a, CD-SS2.4a |
| | Music with Movement: I Get Loose (Go Noodle)<br><br>S: CLL2.4a, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Chicken Dance (iPod)<br><br>CLL1.4a, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: Go Bananas (Go Noodle)<br><br>S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement:<br>Shake It Like a Duck<br><br>S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a | Music with Movement: (Party Line)<br><br>S: CLL1.4b, PDM5.4a |
| | Phonological Awareness:<br>Where is A- I Chant<br><br>S: CLL3.4a, CLL6.4a | Phonological Awareness:<br>Where is J – Q Chant<br><br>S: CLL3.4a, CLL6.4a | Phonological Awareness:<br>Where is R – Z Chant<br><br>S: CLL3.4a, CLL6.4a | Phonological Awareness:<br>Where is A-Z Chant<br><br>S: CLL3.4a, CLL6.4a | Phonological Awareness:<br>See It, Say it, Sign It<br><br>S: CLL3.4a, CLL6.4a |
| 10:20 – 11:15   Centers (1st signal light off, children shout, '5 more minutes," 2nd signal light off, children shout "clean up time.") | | | | | |

| 11:20 – 11:30 | Large Group Literacy: Discuss Story Symbols: Star, Globe, Heart, Magnifying Glass, Toolbox | Large Group Literacy: Tattling Vs. Telling (Act it Out) Using the Tattle Monster, Students will take turns acting out scenarios that will help them discover the difference between tattling and telling. | Large Group Literacy: Shared Reading using Story Symbols: Pete the Cat and the Missing Cupcakes using pom pom balls and unifix cubes. | Large Group Literacy: How to make a Book: Discuss Front Cover, Back Cover, Title, Author, Illustrator, Spine, Words. Materials: Construction paper, computer paper, marker, stapler, markers | Large Group Literacy: Literacy Box: Using the literacy box ask each child a question and get them to respond using sentences. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S: CLL2.4a, CLL8.4d | S: CLL1.4a, CLL2.4a | S: CD-MA7.4b | S: CLL8.4c | S: CLL1.4a |
| 11:30 – 12:15 | Outside Time | | | | |

| | Book #2: My Grandpa is Great Why is your grandpa great? | Book #2: I Love School What do you think the title of this story is, by looking at the front cover? What do you think this story is about? | Book #2: Child Choice Day: Choose a book or story that they would like to share with the class online. | Book #2: My Grandma is Great What makes your grandma great? | Book #2: If the Dinosaurs Came Back What would you do if the dinosaurs came back? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S: CLL1.4a, SED1.4b | S: CLL5.4a | S: CLL5.4d | S: CLL1.4a, SED1.4b | S: CLL5.4d |

**Appendix C – State Early Learning Standard**

**Communication, Language, and Literacy (CLL)**

**1. RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE**

*Standard: CLL1 - The child will listen to conversations and demonstrate comprehension.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL1.0a* Reacts to environmental sounds and verbal communication.
*CLL1.0b* Responds to simple directions.
*CLL1.0c* Responds to repeated words and phrases.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL1.1a* Responds to a language during conversations, songs, stories or other experiences.
*CLL1.1b* Listens to and follows simple directions.
*CLL1.1c* Responds to adult questions with answers.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL1.2a* Listens to and responds to brief conversations and group discussions.
*CLL1.2b* Listens to and follows one-step directions.
*CLL1.2c* Responds to questions with appropriate answers.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL1.3a* Listens and responds to conversations and group discussions.
*CLL1.3b* Listens to and follows multi-step directions with support.
*CLL1.3c* Responds to more complex questions with appropriate answers.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL1.4a* Listens and responds on topic to conversations and group discussions for an extended period.
*CLL1.4b* Listens to and follows multi-step directions.
*CLL1.4c* Extends/expands thoughts or ideas expressed.

*Standard: CLL2 - The child will acquire vocabulary introduced in conversations, activities, stories, and/or books.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL2.0a* Responds to the names of familiar people and objects.
*CLL2.0b* Responds to talking, singing or reading.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL2.1a* Demonstrates understanding of simple words through his/her actions.
*CLL2.1b* Listens to simple stories.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL2.2a* Demonstrates understanding of words through actions and/or conversations.
*CLL2.2b* Listens and understands familiar vocabulary from activities, stories and books.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL2.3a* Demonstrates understanding of vocabulary through everyday conversations.
*CLL2.3b* Listens and understands new vocabulary from activities, stories and books.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL2.4a* Demonstrates understanding of more complex vocabulary through everyday conversations.
*CLL2.4b* Connects new vocabulary from activities, stories and books with prior experiences and conversations.

## 2. EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

*Standard: CLL3 - The child will use nonverbal communication for a variety of purposes.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL3.0a* Communicates needs and wants through non-verbal gestures and facial expressions.
*CLL3.0b* Communicates feelings through facial expressions.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL3.1a* Communicates needs and wants through non-verbal gestures and actions.
*CLL3.1b* Uses some non-verbal gestures and actions used by others to express feelings.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL3.2a* Communicates needs and wants through non-verbal gestures and actions, in addition to verbal communication.
*CLL3.2b* Gains awareness of how to communicate feelings using non-verbal gestures and actions.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL3.3a* Uses gestures and actions to enhance verbal communication of needs and wants.
*CLL3.3b* Communicates feelings using non-verbal gestures and actions.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL3.4a* Uses more complex gestures and actions to enhance verbal communication of needs and wants.
*CLL3.4b* Communicates feelings using appropriate non-verbal gestures, body language and actions.

*Standard: CLL4 - The child will use increasingly complex spoken language.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL4.0a* Engages in back-and-forth vocal play with adult.

*CLL4.0b* Uses crying and other vocal signals to communicate.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL4.1a* Experiments with spontaneous vocal play.
*CLL4.1b* Uses one- to two-word phrases to communicate.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL4.2a* Strings sounds and/or words together with voice inflections.
*CLL4.2b* Uses three to four word phrases and includes describing words.
*CLL4.2c* Describes experiences.
*CLL4.2d* Demonstrates an expanding vocabulary.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL4.3a* Speaks clearly enough to be understood.
*CLL4.3b* Demonstrates use of expanded sentences and sentence structures.
*CLL4.3c* Describes activities and experiences using details.
*CLL4.3d* Uses expanded vocabulary in a variety of situations.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL4.4a* Uses spoken language that can be understood with ease.
*CLL4.4b* Demonstrates use of expanded sentences and sentence structures to ask questions and/or respond verbally.
*CLL4.4c* Describes activities, experiences, and stories with more detail.
*CLL4.4d* Uses new and expanded vocabulary in a variety of situations.

**3. EARLY READING**

*Standard: CLL5 - The child will acquire meaning from a variety of materials read to him/her.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL5.0a* Shows interest in shared reading experiences and looking at books.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL5.1a* With prompting and support, makes sounds that relate to pictures in books.
*CLL5.1b* Shows preference for familiar stories.
*CLL5.1c* With prompting and support, responds to simple questions about a story.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL5.2a* Uses words to describe or name pictures when reading.
*CLL5.2b* Shows preference for familiar stories and can repeat phrases.
*CLL5.2c* Answers simple questions about a story.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL5.3a* Prior to reading, uses pictures to predict story content.
*CLL5.3b* With prompting and support, retells a simple story using pictures.
*CLL5.3c* Answers questions about a story.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL5.4a* Prior to reading, uses prior knowledge, story title and pictures to make predictions about story content.
*CLL5.4b* Retells familiar stories.
*CLL5.4c* Discusses books or stories read aloud and can identify characters and setting in a story.
*CLL5.4d* Makes real-world connections between stories and real-life experiences.
*CLL5.4e* Develops an alternate ending for a story.

*Standard: CLL6 - The child will develop early phonological awareness (awareness of the units of sound).*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL6.0a* Listens to simple nursery rhymes, songs and chants.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL6.1a* Listens to and participates in familiar nursery rhymes, songs and chants.
*CLL6.1b* Participates in rhyming activities.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL6.2a* Listens to and imitates sounds in familiar nursery rhymes, songs and chants.
*CLL6.2b* Experiments with rhyming words.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL6.3a* Listens and matches rhythm, volume and pitch of rhymes, songs, and chants.
*CLL6.3b* Identifies and produces rhyming words with adult guidance.
*CLL6.3d* Segments sentences into individual words with adult guidance.
*CLL6.3e* Segments words into syllables with adult guidance.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL6.4a* Listens and differentiates between sounds that are the same and different.
*CLL6.4b* Identifies and produces rhyming words.
*CLL6.4c* Isolates the initial (beginning) sounds in words with adult guidance.
*CLL6.4d* Segments sentences into individual words.
*CLL6.4e* Segments words into syllables.
*CLL6.4f* Manipulates and blends sounds (phonemes) with adult guidance.

*Standard: CLL7 - The child will demonstrate increasing knowledge of the alphabet.*

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL7.2a* Recognizes that the letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL7.3a* With prompting and support, can identify some alphabet letter names.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL7.4a* With prompting and support, recognizes and names some upper/lowercase letters of the alphabet.

*Standard: CLL8 - The child will demonstrate awareness of print concepts.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CLL8.0a* Shows interest in books by reaching for books and explores books through touch.
*CLL8.0b* Imitates adults by pointing to pictures.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL8.1a* Asks to have books read to him/her.
*CLL8.1b* Touches or identifies pictures when prompted.
*CLL8.1c* With assistance, holds book upright and helps turn pages one at a time.
*CLL8.1d* With adult guidance, recognizes some familiar logos in the environment.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL8.2a* Recognizes and self-selects familiar books to mimic independent reading.
*CLL8.2b* With prompting and support, discriminates words from pictures.
*CLL8.2c* Holds book with two hands and turns the pages.
*CLL8.2d* With adult guidance, recognizes some environmental print.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL8.3a* Shares self-selected familiar books and engages in pretend reading with others.
*CLL8.3b* Discriminates words from pictures independently.
*CLL8.3c* Independently holds a book right side up and turns pages from right to left.
*CLL8.3d* Recognizes environmental print.
*CLL8.3e* With adult guidance, points to the title of familiar books or stories and where to begin reading a story.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL8.4a* Demonstrates interest in different kinds of literature, such as fiction and non-fiction books and poetry, on a range of topics.
*CLL8.4b* Understands that letters form words. Understands that words are separated by spaces in print.
*CLL8.4c* With prompting and support, tracks words from left to right, top to bottom and page to page.
*CLL8.4d* Recognizes and reads environmental print.
*CLL8.4e* Identifies the front, back, top and bottom of a book. Points to the title of familiar books or stories and where to begin reading a story.

## 4. EARLY WRITING

*Standard: CLL9 - The child will use writing for a variety of purposes.*

**0 - 12 Months**

*CLL9.0a* Makes some random marks.
*CLL9.0b* Holds simple writing tools with adult help and supervision.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CLL9.1a* Makes random marks and scribbles.
*CLL9.1b* Uses simple tools to mark on paper.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CLL9.2a* Makes more controlled scribbling.
*CLL9.2b* Experiments with a variety of writing tools, materials and surfaces.
*CLL9.2c* Occasionally, draws and scribbles with a purpose.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CLL9.3a* Creates letter-like symbols - May use invented spelling to label drawings.
*CLL9.3b* Uses writing tools with adult guidance.
*CLL9.3c* Shows emerging awareness that writing can be used for a variety of purposes.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CLL9.4a* Draws pictures and copies letters and/or numbers to communicate.
*CLL9.4b* Uses writing tools.
*CLL9.4c* Uses writing for a variety of purposes.
*CLL9.4d* Writes some letters of the alphabet.

**Approaches to Play and Learning (APL)**

## 1. INITIATIVE AND EXPLORATION

*Standard: APL1 - The child will demonstrate initiative and self-direction.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*APL1.0a* Exhibits interest in people and things in their surroundings .
*APL1.0b* Occasionally demonstrates desire to complete simple tasks by self.
*APL1.0c* Selects an item of interest by pointing and/or reaching for object.

**12 - 24 Months**
*APL1.1a* Uses available senses to learn and explore their environment.
*APL1.1b* Demonstrates desire to complete more complex tasks by self.
*APL1.1c* Selects book or toy from several options.

**24 - 36 Months**
*APL1.2a* Tries inventive or new ways of using materials or completing tasks.
*APL1.2b* Verbally expresses desire to complete tasks by self.
*APL1.2c* Independently selects materials and utilizes those materials.

**36 - 48 Months**
*APL1.3a* Initiates new tasks by him/herself.
*APL1.3b* Makes choices and complete some independent activities.
*APL1.3c* Makes plans and follows through on intentions.

**48 - 60 Months**
*APL1.4a* Takes initiative to learn new concepts and try new experiences - Initiates and completes new tasks by himself/herself.
*APL1.4b* Selects and carries out activities without adult prompting.
*APL1.4c* Sets goals and develops and follows through on plans.

*Standard: APL2 - The child will demonstrate interest and curiosity.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*APL2.0a* Shows eagerness and delight in self, others and surroundings.
*APL2.0b* Shows curiosity/interest in his or her surroundings.

**12 - 24 Months**
*APL2.1a* Shows interest in what others are doing.
*APL2.1b* Begins to show curiosity/interest in new objects, experiences and people.

**24 - 36 Months**
*APL2.2a* Seeks information from others.
*APL2.2b* Asks questions about familiar objects, people and experiences.
*APL2.2c* Explores and manipulates familiar objects in the environment.

**36 - 48 Months**
*APL2.3a* Demonstrates an increased willingness to participate in both familiar and new experiences.
*APL2.3b* Asks questions about unfamiliar objects, people and experiences.
*APL2.3c* Explores and manipulates both familiar and unfamiliar objects in the environment.

**48 - 60 Months**
*APL2.4a* Demonstrates eagerness to learn about and discuss new topics, ideas and tasks.
*APL2.4b* Asks questions and seeks new information With assistance, looks for new information and wants to know more.
*APL2.4c* Increasingly seeks out and explores unfamiliar objects in the environment.

**2. ATTENTIVENESS AND PERSISTENCE**

*Standard: APL3 - The child will sustain attention to a specific activity and demonstrate persistence.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*APL3.0a* Examines a toy, rattle or face for a brief period of time.
*APL3.0b* Explorers a person or object for a minimum of 1-3 minutes.
*APL3.0c* Continues to express distress when needs are not met.
*APL3.0d* Repeats actions to make something happen again.

**12 - 24 Months**
*APL3.1a* Engages and persists with an activity, toy or object.
*APL3.1b* Demonstrates focus on a specific task or activity.
*APL3.1c* Tries a variety of approaches to getting what he/she wants.
*APL3.1d* Repeats interesting actions over and over to gain skills and confidence.

**24 - 36 Months**
*APL3.2a* Engages in teacher-directed activity for short periods of time.
*APL3.2b* Demonstrates focus on a teacher-directed activity for a short period of time.
*APL3.2c* Shows persistence in activities of interest despite interruptions.
*APL3.2d* Repeats successful actions and experiences.

**36 - 48 Months**
*APL3.3a* Engages in an activity for sustained periods of time to achieve a goal.
*APL3.3b* Wants to complete activities and do them well.
*APL3.3c* Begins to work cooperatively with others to achieve a goal or accomplish a task.
*APL3.3d* Keeps working on activity even after setbacks.

**48 - 60 Months**
*APL3.4a* Engages in independent activities and continues tasks over a period of time.
*APL3.4b* Practices to improve skills that have been accomplished.
*APL3.4c* Works cooperatively with others to successfully achieve a goal or accomplish a task.
*APL3.4d* Persists in trying to complete a task after previous attempts have failed.

## 3. PLAY

*Standard: APL4 - The child will engage in a progression of imaginative play.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*APL4.0a* Manipulates objects and imitates actions observed.

**12 - 24 Months**
*APL4.1a* Uses objects for a real or imagined purpose.

**24 - 36 Months**
*APL4.2a* Substitutes one object for another in pretend play or pretends with objects that may or may not be present.

**36 - 48 Months**
*APL4.3a* Uses imagination to create a variety of ideas, role-plays and fantasy situations.

**48 - 60 Months**
*APL4.4a* Engages in elaborate and sustained imagined play, and can distinguish between real life and fantasy.

*Standard: APL5 - The child will demonstrate a cooperative and flexible approach to play and learning.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*APL5.0a* Engages in solitary play around other children.

**12 - 24 Months**
*APL5.1a* Plays independently with some interaction with other children.

**24 - 36 Months**
*APL5.2a* Participates in play and learning activities with a small group of children for short periods of time.
*APL5.2b* Helps and shares in a social setting with adult guidance.
*APL5.2c* Shows creativity, inventiveness and flexibility in his/her approach to play with adult guidance.

**36 - 48 Months**
*APL5.3a* Occasionally joins in cooperative play and learning in a group setting.
*APL5.3b* Plans, initiates and completes cooperative activities with adult guidance.
*APL5.3c* Finds a creative, inventive way of doing a familiar task or solving a problem with adult guidance.
*APL5.3d* Demonstrates emerging flexibility in his/her approach to play and learning.

**48 - 60 Months**

***APL5.4a*** Willingly joins in sustained cooperative play and learning with others to complete a task.

***APL5.4b*** Demonstrates flexibility in taking on various roles in a group setting.

***APL5.4c*** Demonstrates inventiveness, imagination and creativity to solve a problem.

***APL5.4d*** Considers a variety of possible solutions and exhibits flexibility if an alternative approach is suggested by a peer or adult.

***APL5.4e*** Recovers quickly from setbacks and differences in opinion in a group setting.

**Physical Development and Motor Skills (PDM)**

## 1. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

*Standard: PDM1 - The child will practice healthy and safe habits.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*PDM1.0a* Sleeps well and shows alertness during waking periods .
*PDM1.0b* Initiates active play and engages in some physical activity.
*PDM1.0c* Responds to verbal or physical signals of danger.
*PDM1.0d* Reacts to simple directions to support safety.
*PDM1.0e* Shows beginning awareness of personal health needs and self-care needs.

**12 - 24 Months**
*PDM1.1a* Sleeps well and wakes rested.
*PDM1.1b* Actively participates in physical activity for three to five minutes at a time.
*PDM1.1c* Identifies and tries to avoid dangers with assistance.
*PDM1.1d* Communicates beginning understanding of dangerous situations.
*PDM1.1e* Makes adult aware of personal and health needs and seeks assistance.

**24 - 36 Months**
*PDM1.2a* Sleeps well, wakes rested and ready for daily activities.
*PDM1.2b* Actively participates in games, outdoor play, and other forms of physical activity for sustained periods of time.
*PDM1.2c* Pays attention to simple safety instructions and avoids dangers with assistance.
*PDM1.2d* Verbalizes simple safety rules.
*PDM1.2e* Attends to personal health routines and self-care needs with some assistance from an adult.

**36 - 48 Months**
*PDM1.3a* Stays awake except during nap time.
*PDM1.3b* Actively participates in a variety of both structured and unstructured indoor and outdoor physical activities for a sustained period of time.
*PDM1.3c* Independently shows awareness of dangerous situations and responds with some knowledge of safety instructions.
*PDM1.3d* Communicates to peers and adults when dangerous situations are observed.
*PDM1.3e* Attends to personal health needs and self-care needs independently.

**48 - 60 Months**
*PDM1.4a* Stays awake and alert except during voluntary nap time.
*PDM1.4b* Actively participates in a variety of both structured and unstructured indoor and outdoor activities for a sustained period of time that increase strength, endurance, and flexibility.
*PDM1.4c* Consistently follows basic safety rules and anticipates consequences of not following safety rules.
*PDM1.4d* Communicates the importance of safety rules.

**PDM1.4e** Identifies the importance of and participates in activities related to health and self-care needs.
**PDM1.4f** Can name people who keep them safe and healthy.

*Standard: PDM2 - The child will participate in activities related to nutrition.*

**0 - 12 Months**
**PDM2.0a** Explores food with fingers.
**PDM2.0b** Shows preference for food choices.

**12 - 24 Months**
**PDM2.1a** Distinguishes between food and non-food items.
**PDM2.1b** Shows interest in and tries new foods.

**24 - 36 Months**
**PDM2.2a** Prepares nutritious snacks with adult assistance.
**PDM2.2b** Eats a variety of nutritious foods and recognizes healthy foods.

**36 - 48 Months**
**PDM2.3a** Helps prepare nutritious snacks.
**PDM2.3b** Distinguishes healthy food choices from less healthy food choices.

**48 - 60 Months**
**PDM2.4a** Helps prepare nutritious snacks and meals.
**PDM2.4b** Sorts foods into food groups and communicates the benefits of healthy foods.

**2. USE OF SENSES**

*Standard: PDM3 - The child will demonstrate an awareness of the body in space and child's relationship to objects in space.*

**0 - 12 Months**
**PDM3.0a** Moves body through space.
**PDM3.0b** Exhibits body awareness and starts to move intentionally.

**12 - 24 Months**
**PDM3.1a** Acts and moves with intention and purpose with some adult assistance.
**PDM3.1b** Uses trial and error to discover how the body fits and moves through space.

**24 - 36 Months**
**PDM3.2a** Acts and moves with intention and purpose.
**PDM3.2b** Demonstrates awareness of his/her own body in space.

**36 - 48 Months**
**PDM3.3a** Acts and moves with purpose and recognizes differences in direction, distance, and location with some adult assistance.

*PDM3.3b* Demonstrates awareness of his/her own body in relation to others.

**48 - 60 Months**
*PDM3.4a* Acts and moves with purpose and independently recognizes differences in direction, distance, and location.
*PDM3.4b* Demonstrates spatial awareness through play activities.

*Standard: PDM4 - The child will use senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste) to explore the environment and process information.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*PDM4.0a* Responds to what he/she sees, hears, touches, tastes, and smells.
*PDM4.0b* Manipulates objects to see what will happen.

**12 - 24 Months**
*PDM4.1a* Engages in some sensory experiences.
*PDM4.1b* Tries a new action with a familiar object.

**24 - 36 Months**
*PDM4.2a* Participates in a variety of sensory experiences and differentiates between the senses.
*PDM4.2b* Tests objects to determine their purpose.

**36 - 48 Months**
*PDM4.3a* Uses senses purposefully to learn about objects.
*PDM4.3b* Takes things apart and attempts to put them back together.

**48 - 60 Months**
*PDM4.4a* Discriminates between and identifies a variety of sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes.
*PDM4.4b* Takes things apart and invents new structures using the parts.

**3. MOTOR SKILLS**

*Standard: PDM5 - The child will demonstrate gross motor skills.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*PDM5.0a* Develops control of head and back, progressing to arms and legs.
*PDM5.0b* Develops emerging coordination and balance, often with support.

**12 - 24 Months**
*PDM5.1a* Gains control and coordination of body movements.
*PDM5.1b* Develops emerging coordination and balance.

**24 - 36 Months**
*PDM5.2a* Develops gross motor control for a range of physical activities.
*PDM5.2b* Develops coordination and balance.

**36 - 48 Months**
*PDM5.3a* Coordinates movements to perform a task.
*PDM5.3b* Demonstrates coordination and balance.

**48 - 60 Months**
*PDM5.4a* Coordinates movements to perform more complex tasks.
*PDM5.4b* Demonstrates coordination and balance in a variety of activities.

*Standard: PDM6 - The child will demonstrate fine motor skills.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*PDM6.0a* Develops grasp reflex.
*PDM6.0b* Coordinates motions using eyes and hands.

**12 - 24 Months**
*PDM6.1a* Gains control of hands and fingers.
*PDM6.1b* Demonstrates hand-eye coordination and participates in a variety of activities to en-hance coordination.

**24 - 36 Months**
*PDM6.2a* Coordinates the use of hands and fingers.
*PDM6.2b* Performs simple fine motor skills.

**36 - 48 Months**
*PDM6.3a* Refines grasp to manipulate tools and objects.
*PDM6.3b* Uses hand-eye coordination to manipulate smaller objects with increasing control.

**48 - 60 Months**
*PDM6.4a* Performs fine-motor tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.
*PDM6.4b* Uses hand-eye coordination to manipulate small objects with ease.
*PDM6.4c* Able to perform more complex fine motor tasks with accuracy 50% of the time.

**Creative Development (CD-CR) ~ Cognitive Development & General Knowledge (CD)**

**1. CREATIVE MOVEMENT AND DANCE**

*Standard: CD-CR1 - The child will participate in dance to express creativity.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CR1.0a* Responds to music.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CR1.1a* Moves body to music.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CR1.2a* Dances to and becomes engaged in music and movement.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CR1.3a* Repeats choreographed movements and begins to express creativity in movements.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CR1.4a* Uses dance to express thoughts, feelings and energy. Uses dance as an outlet for creativity.

**2. VISUAL ARTS**

*Standard: CD-CR2 - The child will create and explore visual art forms to develop artistic expression.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CR2.0a* Explores simple art materials.
*CD-CR2.0b* Attends to bright or contrasting colors.
*CD-CR2.0c* Shows preference for particular visual stimuli.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CR2.1a* Expresses self creatively with simple art materials.
*CD-CR2.1b* Looks at pictures, photographs and mirror images.
*CD-CR2.1c* Communicates what he/she likes about a picture.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CR2.2a* Experiments with a variety of materials to express individual creativity.
*CD-CR2.2b* Describes what he/she sees when looking at pictures, photos, and art work.
*CD-CR2.2c* Communicates preferences for one piece of art over another and tells why.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CR2.3a* Uses a variety of tools and art media to express individual creativity.
*CD-CR2.3b* Observes and discusses visual art forms.
*CD-CR2.3c* Shares ideas about personal creative work.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CR2.4a* Uses materials to create original work for self-expression and to express individual creativity.
*CD-CR2.4b* Observes and discusses visual art forms and compares their similarities and differences.
*CD-CR2.4c* Shows appreciation for different types of art and the creative work of others.

## 3. MUSIC

*Standard: CD-CR3 - The child will use his/her voice, instruments, and objects express creativity.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CR3.0a* Experiments with vocalization and sounds.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CR3.1a* Imitates sounds using his/her voice or objects.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CR3.2a* Experiments with vocalization, sounds and musical instruments.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CR3.3a* Participates in classroom activities with musical instruments and singing to express creativity.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CR3.4a* Uses familiar rhymes, songs or chants, and musical instruments to express creativity.

## 4. DRAMA

*Standard: CD-CR4 - The child will use dramatic play to express creativity.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CR4.0a* Shows interest in rhymes, finger plays and stories with props.
*CD-CR4.0b* Participates in finger plays.
*CD-CR4.0c* Responds to volume in tones and inflection.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CR4.1a* Listens to rhymes, finger plays and stories with props.
*CD-CR4.1b* When prompted, pretends to take on the characteristics of a character or animal as part of a group.
*CD-CR4.1c* Experiments with voice inflection.
*CD-CR4.1d* Role plays real behaviors during play.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CR4.2a* Listens and shows interest when an adult tells a story with props.
*CD-CR4.2b* Spontaneously pretends to take on the characteristics of a person, character or animal.
*CD-CR4.2c* Imitates and repeats voice inflections to entertain others.
*CD-CR4.2d* Explores new situations through dramatic play.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CR4.3a* Participates in dramatic play presentations with adult guidance.
*CD-CR4.3b* Re-creates a familiar story using action and objects (props) individually or cooperatively.
*CD-CR4.3c* Creates various voice inflections and facial expressions in play.
*CD-CR4.3d* Identifies real and make-believe situations through dramatic play.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CR4.4a* Participates in dramatic play presentations.
*CD-CR4.4b* Uses dialogue, actions, objects and imagination to tell a creative story.
*CD-CR4.4c* Represents a character by using voice inflections and facial expressions.
*CD-CR4.4d* Participates in dramatic play to express thoughts, feelings and creativity.


**Cognitive Processes (CD-CP) ~ Cognitive Development & General Knowledge (CD)**


**1. THINKING SKILLS**

***Standard: CD-CP1 - The child will demonstrate awareness of cause and effect.***

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CP1.0a* Acts on an object to make a pleasing sight, sound or motion .

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CP1.1a* Repeats actions many times to cause desired effect.
*CD-CP1.1b* Asks simple questions.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CP1.2a* Explores the effects that simple actions may have on objects.
*CD-CP1.2b* Asks simple questions to try to understand.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CP1.3a* Intentionally carries out an action with an understanding of the effect it will cause.
*CD-CP1.3b* Expresses beginning understanding of reasoning skills.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CP1.4a* Recognizes cause-and-effect relationships.
*CD-CP1.4b* Explains why simple events occur using reasoning skills.
*CD-CP1.4c* Draws conclusions based on facts and evidence.

*Standard: CD-CP2 - The child will use prior knowledge to build new knowledge.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CP2.0a* Experiments with objects.
*CD-CP2.0b* Imitates sounds and movements.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CP2.1a* Uses objects as intended.
*CD-CP2.1b* Imitates simple actions, gestures, sounds and words.
*CD-CP2.1c* Realizes that people or objects will still exist even when out of view.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CP2.2a* Makes connections between objects and ideas.
*CD-CP2.2b* Demonstrates imitation skills, including imitation of peers.
*CD-CP2.2c* Understands that familiar objects and people do not change when child is separated from them.
*CD-CP2.2d* With adult prompting, uses clues to make predictions.
*CD-CP2.2e* Discusses why things occur.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CP2.3a* Uses objects as intended in new activities.
*CD-CP2.3b* Uses observation and imitation to acquire knowledge.
*CD-CP2.3c* Identifies familiar objects and people in new situations.
*CD-CP2.3d* Uses clues and sequence of events to infer and predict what will happen next.
*CD-CP2.3e* Discusses how new learning related to concrete objects is based on prior knowledge.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CP2.4a* Explains how to use objects in new situations.
*CD-CP2.4b* Uses observation and imitation to transfer knowledge to new experiences.
*CD-CP2.4c* Uses information gained about familiar objects and people, and can apply to a new situation.
*CD-CP2.4d* Makes, checks and verifies predictions.
*CD-CP2.4e* Explains how an activity is built on or uses past knowledge.

## 2. PROBLEM SOLVING

*Standard: CD-CP3 - The child will demonstrate problem solving skills.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*CD-CP3.0a* Interacts with a toy or object to understand it.

**12 - 24 Months**
*CD-CP3.1a* Interacts with a toy or object to solve a problem.
*CD-CP3.1b* Solves a simple problem successfully with adult assistance.

**24 - 36 Months**
*CD-CP3.2a* Experiments with familiar objects to solve problems.
*CD-CP3.2b* Tries several methods to solve a problem before asking for assistance.

**36 - 48 Months**
*CD-CP3.3a* Demonstrates multiple uses for objects to solve problems.
*CD-CP3.3b* Tests different possibilities to determine the best solution to a problem.

**48 - 60 Months**
*CD-CP3.4a* Makes statements and appropriately answers questions about how objects/materials can be used to solve problems.
*CD-CP3.4b* Uses both familiar and new strategies to solve a problem.
*CD-CP3.4c* With adult guidance and questioning, determines and evaluates solutions prior to attempting to solve a problem.

**Social and Emotional Development (SED)**


**1. DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF**

*Standard: SED1 - The child will develop self-awareness.*


**0 - 12 Months**
*SED1.0a* Responds to an image of self .
*SED1.0b* Responds to his/her name.
*SED1.0c* Aware of his/her own abilities/preferences.


**12 - 24 Months**
*SED1.1a* Identifies image of self.
*SED1.1b* Says his/her name.
*SED1.1c* Shows knowledge of his/her own abilities/preferences.


**24 - 36 Months**
*SED1.2a* Uses gestures and actions to reference self when interacting with others.
*SED1.2b* Uses pronouns such as I, me and mine.
*SED1.2c* Shows sense of satisfaction in his/her own abilities/preferences.
*SED1.2d* Shows emerging independence by occasionally resisting adult control.


**36 - 48 Months**
*SED1.3a* Recognizes self as a unique individual.
*SED1.3b* Demonstrates knowledge of personal information.
*SED1.3c* Shows sense of satisfaction in his/her own abilities, preferences and accomplishments.
*SED1.3d* Shows emerging sense of independence in his/her own choices.


**48 - 60 Months**
*SED1.4a* Identifies self as a unique member of a specific group or demographic that fits into a larger world picture.
*SED1.4b* Identifies personal characteristics, preferences, thoughts and feelings.
*SED1.4c* Shows confidence in a range of abilities and the capacity to take on and accomplish new tasks.
*SED1.4d* Shows independence in his/her own choices.

*Standard: SED2 - The child will engage in self-expression.*


**0 - 12 Months**
*SED2.0a* Makes sounds, facial expressions or body movements to express needs and feelings of comfort or discomfort.
*SED2.0b* Uses sounds, facial expressions or body movements to express simple emotions of contentment or discontent.


**12 - 24 Months**
*SED2.1a* Uses sounds, facial expressions or gestures to express needs and preferences.

*SED2.1b* Displays a range of basic emotions such as happiness, sadness and fear.

**24 - 36 Months**
*SED2.2a* Uses verbal expressions and gestures to communicate needs, opinions, ideas and preferences.
*SED2.2b* Uses verbal and non-verbal expressions to demonstrate basic emotions such as anger, happiness and sadness.

**36 - 48 Months**
*SED2.3a* Uses a combination of words, phrases and actions to communicate needs, ideas, opinions and preferences.
*SED2.3b* With adult guidance, uses verbal and non-verbal expressions to demonstrate a larger range of emotions such as frustration, jealousy and enthusiasm.

**48 - 60 Months**
*SED2.4a* Effectively uses words, sentences and actions to communicate needs, ideas, opinions and preferences.
*SED2.4b* With adult guidance, uses verbal and non-verbal expressions to describe and explain a full range of emotions.
*SED2.4c* Uses pretend-play to show emotions of self and others.
*SED2.4d* With adult guidance, distinguishes between positive and negative emotions, and the conditions that evoke each.

## 2. SELF-REGULATION

*Standard: SED3 - The child will begin to demonstrate self-control.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*SED3.0a* Depends on simple routines provided by adults.
*SED3.0b* Self-soothes when held, rocked or talked to by teacher.
*SED3.0c* Responds to negative and positive reactions.
*SED3.0d* Develops an awareness of transitions and schedule/routines with adult prompts.

**12 - 24 Months**
*SED3.1a* Follows simple routines in a group setting with adult support, such as eating, napping or playing.
*SED3.1b* Self-soothes with minimal adult support.
*SED3.1c* Demonstrates the beginnings of impulse control with adult guidance.
*SED3.1d* Accepts transitions and changes to schedules/routines with adult support.

**24 - 36 Months**
*SED3.2a* Displays understanding of engaging in routines, rules and appropriate social behavior.
*SED3.2b* Self-soothes independently.
*SED3.2c* Regulates some impulses with adult guidance.
*SED3.2d* Responds to transitions and changes to schedules/routines.

**36 - 48 Months**
*SED3.3a* Remembers and follows simple group rules and displays appropriate social behavior.
*SED3.3b* Regulates own emotions and behaviors with adult support when needed.
*SED3.3c* Regulates a range of impulses with adult guidance.
*SED3.3d* Manages transitions and adapts to changes in schedules and routines with adult support.

**48 - 60 Months**
*SED3.4a* Independently follows rules and routines.
*SED3.4b* Regulates own emotions and behaviors, and seeks out adult support when needed.
*SED3.4c* Regulates a range of impulses.
*SED3.4d* Manages transitions and adapts to changes in schedules and routines independently.

## 3. DEVELOPING A SENSE OF SELF WITH OTHERS

*Standard: SED4 - The child will develop relationships and social skills with adults.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*SED4.0a* Responds differently to familiar and unfamiliar adults.
*SED4.0b* Develops trust and attachment toward significant adults.
*SED4.0c* Imitates examples of affection with familiar adults.

**12 - 24 Months**
*SED4.1a* Engages in interactions with familiar adults and responds to unfamiliar adults cautiously.
*SED4.1b* Shows feelings of security with familiar adults.
*SED4.1c* Shows beginning signs of affection with familiar adults.

**24 - 36 Months**
*SED4.2a* Stays connected with familiar adults using gestures, glances and verbal interaction.
*SED4.2b* Looks to familiar adults for reassurance when trying new tasks.
*SED4.2c* Shows nonverbal affection to familiar adults.
*SED4.2d* Occasionally seeks out adult for help.

**36 - 48 Months**
*SED4.3a* Shows signs of security and trust when separated from familiar adults.
*SED4.3b* Uses a familiar adult's facial expression to decide how to respond.
*SED4.3c* Shows affection to familiar adults by using words and actions.
*SED4.3d* Seeks out adult for help.

**48 - 60 Months**
*SED4.4a* Transitions well into new, unfamiliar settings.
*SED4.4b* Uses a familiar adult's suggestions to decide how to respond to a specific situation.
*SED4.4c* Shows affection to familiar adults by using more complex words and actions.
*SED4.4d* Seeks out adults as a resource for help and assistance.

*Standard: SED5 - The child will develop relationships and social skills with peers.*

**0 - 12 Months**
*SED5.0a* Demonstrates interest/excitement when other students enter the room.
*SED5.0b* Engages in solitary play around other children.
*SED5.0c* Shows awareness of possible conflicts by crying, turning away or showing distress.
*SED5.0d* Observes peers who are experiencing a need or discomfort.

**12 - 24 Months**
*SED5.1a* Begins to relate to and show enjoyment in interactions with other children.
*SED5.1b* Engages in mostly solitary play with some parallel play.
*SED5.1c* Engages in conflicts with peers regarding possession of items.
*SED5.1d* Shows awareness of feelings displayed by peers.

**24 - 36 Months**
*SED5.2a* At times, shows a preference to play with a familiar child.
*SED5.2b* Plays alongside other children for short periods Observes and imitates other children.
*SED5.2c* Occasionally resolves peer conflicts with adult support.
*SED5.2d* Recognizes and names the feelings of peers with adult support.
*SED5.2e* Shows awareness of peers' personal space and belongings.

**36 - 48 Months**
*SED5.3a* Initiates play with one or two other children.
*SED5.3b* Engages in mutual/cooperative play.
*SED5.3c* Seeks adult support to resolve some peer conflicts.
*SED5.3d* Recognizes and names the feelings of peers with adult support.
*SED5.3e* Shows emerging respect for peers' personal space and belongings.

**48 - 60 Months**
*SED5.4a* Develops and maintains friendships with other children.
*SED5.4b* Plays cooperatively with a few peers for a sustained period of time.
*SED5.4c* Attempts to resolve peer conflicts using appropriate strategies.
*SED5.4d* Shows emerging empathy and understanding of peers by attempting to comfort and help.
*SED5.4e* Shows respect for peers' personal space and belongings.

**Appendix D – SOE Coding List**

Note: Subcodes (b) are second cycle coding Provisional codes from (B) & Focus codes (c) are second cycle coding from Initial/Open codes (C). Pattern codes (d) thematize the codes from data sets (b) and (c).

| Name | Files | References |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Cycle | | |
| (A) Structural codes [4] | 6 | 196 |
| RQ1.1 - Experience w/ PhAw, phonics, PA | 6 | 116 |
| RQ1.2 - Impressions PhAw, phonics, PA | 6 | 48 |
| RQ2.1 - Experiences w/ motivation to teach and student engagement | 6 | 27 |
| RQ2.2 - Impressions of teacher motivation and student engagement | 3 | 5 |
| (B) Provisional codes [17] | 6 | 263 |
| Acting | 6 | 16 |
| Alphabet | 5 | 8 |
| Dance | 4 | 7 |
| Excitement | 5 | 17 |
| Language skills | 6 | 23 |
| Language sounds | 6 | 48 |
| Lyricism | 2 | 2 |
| Music | 6 | 19 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| phonemic awareness | 2 | 5 |
| Phonics | 5 | 20 |
| Phonological awareness | 6 | 30 |
| Phonological awareness continuum | 3 | 5 |
| Rhyme | 6 | 32 |
| Student engagement | 5 | 13 |
| Teacher engagement | 3 | 4 |
| Teacher motivation | 5 | 10 |
| Theater | 2 | 3 |
| (C) Initial/Open codes [209] | 12 | 507 |
| Acting and theater for language and literacy | 3 | 5 |
| Alliteration in L&L | 2 | 2 |
| Art & literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Art and graphemic awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Arts & PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Arts and comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Arts and PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Arts and phonemic awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Balance Content Difficulty | 1 | 6 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Balance literacy opportunity | 1 | 2 |
| Blending skills as an essential learning outcome | 1 | 1 |
| Call and response | 1 | 1 |
| Calling a lesson audible | 1 | 1 |
| Child literacy from adult language | 1 | 1 |
| Cognitive ability leading to comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Collaborating with Co-Teachers | 2 | 5 |
| Comprehension on literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Comprehension skills | 2 | 2 |
| Confusion over linguistics pedagogy terms | 3 | 7 |
| Consistency and repetition on comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Consistency in literacy experience | 2 | 2 |
| Contrasting American vs. international teaching environments | 1 | 17 |
| Contrast oral skills to print awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Converse on student's level | 1 | 1 |
| Culture reflected in pedagogy | 2 | 3 |
| Daily PhAw | 2 | 3 |
| Dance and movement in language and literacy lessons | 6 | 6 |
| Dance and rhyme integrated activities | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dance to help student focus | 1 | 1 |
| Differences btw early learning and levels of primary learning | 1 | 1 |
| Education and or training experience | 6 | 23 |
| Eliciting comprehension level | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent comprehension | 2 | 2 |
| Emergent literacy level as literacy predictor | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent literacy opportunity | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent print awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent print literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent rhyme awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent rhyme detection | 1 | 1 |
| Emergent vocabulary acquisition | 1 | 1 |
| Encourage inquisitiveness | 1 | 1 |
| Encourage multi-temporal reflection | 1 | 1 |
| Encourage storytelling | 1 | 1 |
| Encouraging inquiry | 1 | 1 |
| Encouraging sounding out | 1 | 1 |
| Engagement in language and literacy lessons | 4 | 6 |
| Engagement in PhAw and Phonics Lessons | 3 | 5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Equitable skill groupings | 1 | 2 |
| Essential Elements of PreK Literacy | 1 | 2 |
| Expanding children's knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Exploring with PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Focus on syllables in PhAw activities | 1 | 2 |
| From grouped to individualized learning | 1 | 1 |
| Funds of knowledge | 2 | 6 |
| Graphemes in context | 1 | 1 |
| Graphemic awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Graphemic awareness foundation to literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Graphemic composition | 1 | 3 |
| Graphemic foundation to phonemic level | 1 | 1 |
| Grapho-phonemic bridge | 1 | 1 |
| Group greeting for comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Home language | 1 | 1 |
| Home literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Images as literacy tools | 1 | 1 |
| Impact of language skills on other areas of learning | 4 | 8 |
| Implicit language knowledge | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Importance of letter name | 2 | 2 |
| Importance of onset & rime | 1 | 1 |
| Importance of repetition on language development | 1 | 2 |
| Importance of scaffolding | 1 | 1 |
| Importance of student names | 3 | 6 |
| Importance of students understanding oral apparatus | 1 | 1 |
| Improv or freestyle components of language and literacy lessons | 2 | 2 |
| Incidental PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Independency of oral literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Innate language capacity | 1 | 1 |
| Inquiry as catalyst to lexical development | 1 | 1 |
| Instructor attentiveness and patience | 2 | 2 |
| Instrumentation in music integration with L&L | 1 | 1 |
| Integration of all Performing | 1 | 1 |
| Integration of Dance in L&L Instruction | 1 | 5 |
| Integration of Lyricism/Rhyme in L&L Instruction | 4 | 7 |
| Integration of Music in L&L Instruction | 2 | 6 |
| Integration of Theater/Acting in L&L Instruction | 3 | 9 |
| Lack of focus on vowel sounds in L&L pedagogy | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Language and literacy components | 1 | 2 |
| Language as a system | 1 | 1 |
| Language as Art and/or Science | 1 | 4 |
| Language development | 1 | 1 |
| Language Skills Effect on Overall Learning | 1 | 5 |
| Levels of communication based on student grade level | 2 | 2 |
| Lexical variety | 1 | 1 |
| Lexical awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Lexical awareness and literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Lexical awareness to PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Lexical exposure | 1 | 2 |
| Lexical improvement from adult literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Linguistic epiphany | 1 | 2 |
| Literacy and oral language | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy and oral skill | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy Confidence | 2 | 2 |
| Literacy exposure | 4 | 5 |
| Literacy games | 2 | 2 |
| Literacy groups | 4 | 4 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Literacy in use | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy interest to success | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy modeling | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy passion | 1 | 6 |
| Literacy skills | 1 | 1 |
| Literacy toys | 1 | 1 |
| Low funds of knowledge low achievement | 1 | 1 |
| Lyric in language and literacy | 2 | 4 |
| Metaphor for Phonics | 6 | 14 |
| Modeling language and literacy | 4 | 4 |
| More props for theater integration | 1 | 2 |
| Motivation through fun | 2 | 5 |
| Motivation to Teach | 2 | 2 |
| Motivation to Teach language and literacy | 5 | 9 |
| Music through song for L&L lessons | 4 | 5 |
| Multimodality | 3 | 3 |
| Music in language and literacy instruction | 4 | 5 |
| Need for more PhAw continuum/Phonics in Anitaducation Training | 1 | 8 |
| No bad kids | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Nursery rhymes | 2 | 3 |
| Observing student graphemic & lexical awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Old School vs. New School Education | 1 | 1 |
| Onset and Rime awareness in emergent literacy development process | 1 | 1 |
| Open ended expression | 1 | 1 |
| Oral engagement | 1 | 1 |
| Peer learning | 1 | 2 |
| Performing arts pedagogy background | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw & Phonics | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw and vocabulary | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw as literacy predictor | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw at home | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw defined | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw games | 3 | 4 |
| PhAw Genesis | 1 | 1 |
| PhAw pedagogy | 9 | 10 |
| PhAw skills | 2 | 3 |
| Phonemic awareness | 2 | 3 |
| Phonemic awareness acquisition | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Phonemic awareness as literacy predictor | 1 | 1 |
| Phonemic awareness not stressed in preschool | 1 | 2 |
| Phonemic awareness to literacy | 1 | 1 |
| Phonics games | 1 | 1 |
| Phonics pedagogy | 4 | 4 |
| Phonics to literacy | 2 | 2 |
| Picture books and comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Print and Rhyme in L&L instruction | 1 | 1 |
| Print at home | 1 | 1 |
| Print awareness | 3 | 5 |
| Print awareness sources | 4 | 6 |
| Print to literacy | 5 | 7 |
| Professional development for PhAw | 1 | 1 |
| Professionalism | 2 | 4 |
| Promote conversation | 1 | 1 |
| Promote phonics | 1 | 1 |
| Promoting balance of expressive and receptive language skills | 1 | 1 |
| Promoting strong literacy environment | 1 | 1 |
| Providing consistent communicative opportunities with students | 2 | 3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Quick retention of song lyrics | 1 | 1 |
| Reinforce vocabulary | 1 | 1 |
| Rhyme in phonics activities | 1 | 1 |
| Rhyming for PhAw | 2 | 5 |
| Rhyming to literacy | 3 | 3 |
| Rhyming to phonemic awareness | 2 | 2 |
| Scaffolding | 1 | 1 |
| Scarcity of print with rhyme | 1 | 1 |
| Science and Art of language arts | 4 | 6 |
| Semantic awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Song in PhAw | 3 | 4 |
| Spark personal experience expression | 1 | 1 |
| Stressing rime families | 2 | 2 |
| Student agency | 1 | 1 |
| Student challenges with syllables | 1 | 2 |
| Student desire to learn impacting teacher motivation | 2 | 2 |
| Student excitement eliciting teacher excitement | 1 | 1 |
| Student Levels | 1 | 2 |
| Student literacy attitude | 1 | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Subject Love Hate | 1 | 2 |
| Supporting GphA/Phonics | 1 | 3 |
| Supporting PhAw | 2 | 8 |
| Supporting Phonemic Awareness | 2 | 6 |
| Syllabication base in emergent literacy development process | 1 | 1 |
| Teach directions | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher excitement but student apathy | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher Self-Reliance | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher student bond | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher student connection impact on motivation | 1 | 2 |
| Teacher use of storytelling | 4 | 6 |
| Teaching Self-Assessment | 1 | 2 |
| Technology in language and literacy lessons | 2 | 2 |
| Tongue twisters for phonics instruction | 1 | 1 |
| Types of print | 1 | 1 |
| Use of graphemic and lexical awareness | 1 | 1 |
| Use of puppets in L&L instruction | 1 | 2 |
| Use of theater terminology | 1 | 1 |
| Using books | 1 | 1 |

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|---|---|---|
| Using funds of knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Using student names in pedagogy | 5 | 8 |
| Utilizing passions | 1 | 1 |
| Vocabulary acquisition | 1 | 1 |
| Vocabulary bank creation | 1 | 1 |
| Vocabulary development | 1 | 1 |
| Vocabulary introduction | 1 | 1 |
| Vocabulary to comprehension | 1 | 1 |
| Working through mistakes | 1 | 1 |
| Yoga in early learning | 1 | 1 |
| 2nd Cycle | | |
| (b) Subcodes [8] | 6 | 260 |
| Agency | 3 | 10 |
| Concept confusion, conflation or unsurety | 4 | 15 |
| Confidence | 4 | 13 |
| Language and literacy skills and activities | 6 | 112 |
| Modelling and scaffolding language and literacy | 5 | 7 |
| Motivation and engagement | 6 | 27 |
| Passion | 1 | 5 |

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|---|---|---|
| Performing arts integration | 6 | 71 |
| (c) Focused codes [16] | 11 | 233 |
| Comprehensive pedagogical literacy experience | 4 | 8 |
| Dictating student language | 3 | 3 |
| Focus on fun and happiness to elicit engagement and motivation | 6 | 15 |
| Innate language ability | 1 | 1 |
| Language as both art and science | 6 | 11 |
| Multimodality | 9 | 29 |
| PhAw, Phonemic awareness, and Phonics focus | 11 | 68 |
| Positive metaphors for Phonics | 6 | 9 |
| Rhyme as pedagogical staple for phonological activities | 7 | 34 |
| Song as medium of engagement | 2 | 4 |
| Storytelling and character connection as a catalyst to content retention & student engagement | 9 | 24 |
| Teacher engagement as a catalyst to student engagement and vice versa | 4 | 8 |
| Teacher invigoration through student success | 3 | 5 |
| Teacher programs need dedicated PhAw continuum/PhAw courses | 1 | 4 |
| Teacher student connection as catalyst to motivation | 2 | 3 |
| Use of common experience as bridge to academic content | 4 | 7 |

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|---|---|---|
| (d) Pattern codes [7] | 11 | 284 |
| Need more Phonics and/or PhAw training for teachers | 2 | 5 |
| The power of using student names | 3 | 4 |
| Confusion and Unsurety regarding language and literacy pedagogical concepts | 4 | 15 |
| Multi-Causal Catalyzation of Teacher Motivation | 7 | 40 |
| Multimodal, comprehensive literacy experience | 9 | 36 |
| Performing arts (music, dance, lyricism, and theater) as pedagogical strategies | 7 | 73 |
| PhAw, phonics, and rhyme as important pedagogical content | 11 | 92 |