

**The Development and Teaching of a Multi-Sensory Sign Language
Curriculum for Young Children**

Faculty: Jean L. DesJardin, Assistant Professor, Education Department

Student: Rachel McSorley, 2016, Psychology - Early Childhood Education Teaching
Certification Sophomore Year

Start Date: May 27th, 2014 for 10-weeks

Description of the Project

This SOAR research project investigates how sign language supports developmental skills for young children, especially for children who are English Language Learners (ELLs). Public schools today are challenged by the increase of students widely varying learning abilities, language backgrounds, social diversity, and developmental skills in an inclusive classroom. Educators and administrators acknowledge a need for interactive learning that engages visual, auditory, linear, spatial, tactile, and kinetic learning styles. Students' styles for learning vary in combinations and intensity and teachers need to combine flexibility and creativity to present material and practices in a constructivist's way that will build enthusiasm for learning and retention of skills. This project investigates how adding sign language to a setting of heterogeneous learners that includes English language learners (ELLs) will aid in generating a positive learning environment, inclusive and interactive for varied learning needs and styles. The outcome of this project is to develop and execute a 4-week (2 1/2 day per week) curriculum that will incorporate sign language through movement, literacy, music, and the visual arts. After a thorough review of the literature and development of a curriculum, Rachel will teach a group of young children basic sign language through exciting hands-on activities within every day contexts at a local YMCA summer camp (July, 2014). This summer camp program is titled, "Multi-sensory Signing" and has been approved by the Director of Programming at the YMCA (Mrs. Tammy Stanley) under the direction of Dr. Jean DesJardin. This complete project (e.g., literature review, curriculum design, summer camp) will provide Rachel with first-hand experience with the process of teacher-action research. The process will engage Rachel in implementing theory-to-practice in a real world setting for young children (ages 6-9). Furthermore, the Multisensory Sign Language curriculum guide will provide as a resource for several ECE courses at Moravian College and to local community agencies who work with families of young children who are ELLs, such as the Reibman Hall Childcare Center located at Northampton Community College.

Faculty and Student Collaborative Roles

Ms. Rachel McSorley has been in four of my early childhood education classes over the past two years. I have the most confidence that she is well-prepared to work on library research, collaborative project – curriculum development, and be able to work with me on the execution of the new multi-sensory sign language program. Rachel demonstrates excitement for the project, initiative to seek out resources and literature, and is eager to work with the YMCA (in her home town area) on this exciting project!

For ten weeks, the student and I will meet 3 times weekly to (1) review weekly project goals and objectives, (2) oversee project and mentor as needed, (3) review and edit curriculum program development, and (4) establish new weekly goals and specific objectives (see Table 1 for specific student-faculty tasks). As shown in Table 1, the student will be engaged in the process of cutting-edge early childhood research; from literature review, curriculum development, execution of curriculum at YMCA – to final presentation(s) for her peers and college community.

Summary of Benefits to the Student: Discipline Appropriate Scholarly Research

The benefits of participation in this project for the student are numerous. This opportunity provides Rachel with very clear, specific, scholarly activities which align directly with the field of early childhood education. Twenty-first century teachers need to have the knowledge and skills to foster language and literacy development in order for the children to grow to their fullest potential. This project investigates ways that Sign Language can aid in children's learning. Throughout this project, Rachel will have the opportunity to learn theory and background knowledge of the field, current ways to support ELLs in the classroom, and to develop and execute a Multi-sensory Sign Language Curriculum for young children in the community. Rachel will have the opportunity to share her work this summer with the SOAR community on campus, with the Moravian community on Scholar's Day next Spring, 2015, and with teacher candidates within several education courses this fall (EDUC 370 - student teaching seminar; EDUC 210 Child Development; and EDUC 100.2 - Strategies to Support ELLs). It is crucial that students not only participate and collaborate with a faculty member on research to gather their own knowledge of the field, but to also learn ways to disseminate this valuable information to a larger audience that work directly with young children. Together, Rachel and I will also present the findings of this investigation to the teachers of young children at a local early childhood center for at-risk young children who are ELL through contacts I have made in the Bethlehem area.

Budget

Rachel will work 40 hours per week for 10 weeks; \$300 per week x 10 weeks = **\$3,000**. Rachel is not requesting on-campus housing. She is from the Nazareth area where the local YMCA is also located. She has transportation to the YMCA and to the college.

Related Pertinent Information

Last summer (2013) was my second opportunity with the SOAR program. Ms. Lindsay Galasso and Ms. Megan Davis worked closely with me on a longitudinal NIH investigation. They completed all goals with the highest quality. Both young ladies worked diligently on all aspects of the research process – from literature review to presentation/publication. With their unprecedented efforts, I was able to present the findings at a Keynote Address at the Indiana School of Medicine – where I recognized the contribution of the SOAR program and the wonderful support of Moravian College. Both ladies will also be presenting at Moravian College's Scholarship Days in April, 2014. The SOAR program would be a wonderful opportunity for me as an untenured faculty member to continue collaborating with students, instilling the love of continued learning and scholarship through this faculty-student relationship.

Table 1. Proposed Timetable and Project Milestones (start date: May 27th, 2014):

Dates	Student Project(s) and Purpose	Faculty Role Descriptions
May/June, 2014	<p><u>Literature Review</u> – In order for Rachel to establish a strong foundation for the subsequent project, it will be valuable for her to read current literature in the field for ELL language acquisition, classroom strategies for ELLs, language and literacy development for ELLs, and universal Sign language programs. The student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a brief, yet thorough, literature review with each construct stated above; 2. Investigate current sign language programs 	<p>Dr. DesJardin will familiarize Rachel with the literature to support this project in order for her to write a complete and thorough literature review (e.g., sign language literature; philosophy of multi-sensory approach to language development; language acquisition for ELLs; established SL curriculum and programs).</p>
June, 2014	<p><u>Development of Multi-Sensory Sign Language Curriculum</u> Rachel will use the literature review above to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and write a curriculum guide for a 4-week summer camp at the YMCA (2 days per week for 4 hours each day) 	<p>Dr. DesJardin will collaborate with Rachel on the development of the new multi-sensory sign language program; collaborate on lesson unit design and daily plans; guide in construction of weekly/daily activities; guide in the construction of the pre-post child and parent survey.</p>
July, 2014	<p><u>Execution of Curriculum at the YMCA (4-weeks in July)</u> Rachel will execute the approved curriculum by;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparing daily lesson plans and activities; 2. Teaching the students on a weekly basis (2x week); and 3. Preparing a pre and post survey for children and their parents regarding their perceptions of learning sign language (e.g., extent that they know sign language; extent to using at home). 	<p>Dr. DesJardin will collaborate with Rachel on the execution of the curriculum at the YMCA –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with Rachel on T/Thursday at 9:00 am to go over the daily lesson plans; 2. Work with Rachel on the daily teaching/activities incorporating all the signs into the lesson designs. 3. Guide in the delivery of the pre-post survey for children and parents.

DesJardin SOAR Proposal – Summer 2014

End of July, 2014	<p>* Review pre-post survey data and assess program student outcomes with Dr. DesJardin.</p> <p>*Revise and edit curriculum guide accordingly for distribution to students in the ECE teacher certification program at Moravian College (e.g., EDUC 210; EDUC 100.2)</p> <p>Faculty and student submit a 1-2 page report to the SOAR director assessing the project.</p>	<p>*Review pre-post survey data and assess program delivery and student outcomes with Rachel.</p> <p>*Revise and edit curriculum guide accordingly for distribution to students in the ECE teacher certification program at Moravian College (e.g., EDUC 210; EDUC 100.2).</p>
October, 2014	<p>*Presentation of an overview of the summer project and distribution of the curriculum guide to students in EDUC 210 course (Child Development and Cognition I).</p> <p>*If possible, present the overview of the summer project and distribute curriculum guide to students in EDUC 100.2 – Strategies for English Language Learners</p>	<p>*Guide Rachel in the presentation of the summer project within my EDUC 210 course (Child Development and Cognition I).</p>
April, 2015	<p>Student participates in the Moravian College Scholar's Day.</p>	<p>Faculty and student participate in Moravian College Scholar's Day with other SOAR students.</p>

The Development and Teaching of a Multi-Sensory Sign Language Curriculum

Guide for Young Children

Student: Rachel McSorley, 2016, Psychology-Early Childhood Education Certification
Sophomore Year, email: strlm07@moravian.edu

Faculty: Jean L. DesJardin, Assistant Professor, Education Department

****NO on-campus housing requested.***

This project will be a great experience for me to delve deeper into my studies of children and come out with a better understanding of how they learn. I am very interested to find out how much of an impact sign language can have on a classroom environment, especially how it can help English Language Learners. Throughout my studies here at Moravian College, I have learned a lot about ELL students and the difficulties they face; it is important for teachers to help them adjust and acclimate to a setting filled with language and traditions that are foreign to them. This transition is crucial because it has an impact on their education as a whole. In order for them to succeed in the future, ELL students need to feel comfortable in an educational setting and have the drive to learn. Often times, ELL students struggle in the classroom because they have trouble communicating with their teachers and fellow classmates; I would like to see how much sign language can help facilitate communication.

I believe I can learn a lot from Dr. DesJardin about sign language and English Language Learners. In the classes I have had with her thus far, she has incorporated sign language throughout her lessons by teaching us how to sign some words and by signing during classroom discussions. I am looking forward to working with her and learning more about sign language, which I have always been very fascinated with. As a future early childhood educator this

experience will benefit me greatly. I would love to incorporate sign language into my future classrooms; communication is a powerful thing, and I feel that the more people you are able to connect and communicate with, the better. Research about English Language Learners will greatly benefit me, as I will surely have ELL students in the future and in my field experiences. The more research I do on ELL students, the more I will be able to understand them and the better able I will be to help them learn effectively.

Developing a curriculum guide will reward me with concepts and techniques that I can use in my future classrooms. I can use them for my student teaching that will be approaching soon and when I become an early childhood educator. The curriculum guide will be given to students in various education courses at Moravian College as well – impacting the larger early childhood community. This will help create stronger classrooms in the future where communication is strong between teachers and their diverse range of students. Working with students at the YMCA will be a great help to test out the curriculum guide and see how children respond to it. I will gain invaluable practice working with children to help me develop my own teaching style.

Overall I believe that this experience will be a great opportunity that I would be crazy not to take advantage of. I will learn a vast amount of instrumental information and understanding into the world of sign language and English Language Learners. This knowledge will coincide with my current and future studies at Moravian College as well as my future career as an early childhood educator. Dr. DesJardin has a lot of knowledge and experience with the world of early childhood education, and I would love nothing more than to learn what she has to teach me.