

**Responsive Shared Book Reading and Early Literacy Skills in Four-Year Olds:  
A Summer Reading Experience**

**Faculty:** Jean L. DesJardin, Associate Professor, Education Department

**Student:** Gabriella Nasta, 2019, Psychology -Early Childhood Teacher  
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**Start Date:** May 29, 2018 for 10 weeks; On Campus housing request

**Description of the SOAR Project**

This SOAR project will investigate early child and family factors (e.g., early intervention, home literacy environment, SES) and emergent literacy skills (e.g., language skills, phonological awareness) in a group of young four-year old children just before entering kindergarten. Current evidence suggests that children who enter kindergarten with Pre-K early literacy skills and experiences, such as strong oral language skills, book reading and printed materials in the home, have better kindergarten literacy outcomes than children who do not have those same experiences. This project will also explore how parents of four-year olds read with their children. Using a published coding sheet, the *Responsive Adult-Child Engagement During Shared Book Reading* (RACED – DesJardin, 2012), Ms. Nasta will code parent-child interactions of shared book reading interactions (previously collected by Dr. DesJardin). Understanding of the literacy and specific teaching strategies noted to support children’s oral language and early literacy skills will guide in the implementation of those strategies in Moravian College’s 4-week Summer Reading Experience Program. Ms. Nasta will implement the strategies with the children, share the strategies with the parents, and collect all data as she participates in the Summer Reading Program. Additionally, we would like to better understand the relationships between the home literacy environment (*Home Literacy Scale*, DesJardin, 2007) and children’s oral language and emergent literacy skills.

**SOAR Project: Faculty and Student Collaborative Roles**

Ms. Gabriella Nasta will (1) research and write a complete literature review of current research in the areas of the home literacy environment (e.g., frequency of book reading, specific strategies during shared book reading), summer literacy experiences for Pre-K children and the relationships with oral language and early literacy skills (2) write three research questions to investigate these relationships, (3) administer measures to assess

these constructs (*Home Literacy Scale*; DesJardin, 2007; RACED; DesJardin, 2012; *Preschool-Language Scale-5*), (4) collect data during the summer reading program (5) implement strategies during interactive book reading lessons with the children, and (6) create a user-friendly guide for classroom teachers and parents on the importance and application for responsive shared book reading (see Table 1 for a complete listing of student and faculty tasks).

Gabriella has been very successful in all of her Psychology and Education course work. I have the most confidence that she is well prepared to work on a prospective research project (i.e., library research creating a thorough literature review, research hypothesis to statistical summary and results), implementation of project (with her background in working with four year olds), and be able to create a useful guide for teachers and families. She demonstrates excitement for the project, initiative to seek out resources and literature, and is eager to work with Mrs. Colleen Donegan (Reading Specialist and William Penn Elementary – our Community School; Director of the Summer Reading Experience Program; and Professor for the graduate reading literacy summer course) and myself in the 4-week summer reading program at MC. I have obtained permission from Mrs. Colleen Donegan to work with Gabriella and myself in the reading program.

This is the first year that we are inviting four year olds to the summer reading program. BASD has a new initiative to “catch children at-risk for reading achievement as early as possible” in order to begin their school years with success. With this initiative in place, Mrs. Donegan has implemented monthly parent workshops at William Penn for parents of young children who are four years old this past school year. These same children will be invited to the summer reading program. It is with great excitement, that MC is offering a summer literacy experience for four year olds in the area for the first time. No other college offers this theory -to practice experience for the teachers, children, and for an undergraduate student in the Lehigh Valley. Gabriella will present these findings to the United Way this fall as I am on the Board for the new learning initiative, the Early Childhood Coalition. The initiative is titled, “*Let’s Talk About Early Literacy*”. Specifically, I am on the assessment team for this Coalition. Gabriella will also present her research findings to students in my EDUC 210 Child Development and Cognition course this fall. Furthermore, I wrote a proposal for this study for the Division of Early Childhood Conference in Orlando, FL for October, 2018. Upon acceptance, I would like to invite Gabriella to the conference with me to present a poster on *Responsive Shared Book Reading with Four Year Olds*. Findings from the parent-child shared book reading video interactions in which Gabriella will be coding will be presented. This videotaped data has already been collected and IRB approved by San Diego State University. This is

part of a larger NIH grant in which I am a research consultant investigating families of young children with and without hearing loss.

### **Summary of Benefits to the Student**

The benefits of participation in this project for the student are numerous. This opportunity provides Gabriella with very clear, specific, scholarly activities that align directly with the field of early childhood education. As Gabriella prepares for her pre-student teaching experience this fall, it is essential for her as an effective teacher, to identify students who are at-risk for significant reading delays in order to plan efficient and intentional intervention in a Response to Intervention and Instruction (RtII) model found in all elementary schools, including all kindergarten programs. The opportunity to conduct direct prospective research in the reading program at Moravian College is an incredible hands-on experience to truly understand how young children respond to an empirical-based reading intervention, such as shared book reading, in a classroom setting. Presentations to the summer SOAR students, undergraduate students this fall, and most importantly, to teachers and parents of the children, provides Gabriella with the opportunity to discuss her findings with the greater education audience who are invested in learning new innovative ways to support young children's oral language and early literacy process. I have had eight successful SOAR projects in the past at Moravian College and am very eager to continue collaborating with students, instilling the love of learning and scholarship through this faculty-student relationship.

### **Budget**

N/A

DesJardin SOAR Proposal – Summer 2018

Table 1. Proposed Timetable and Project Milestones (start date: May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018):

Dates	Student Project(s) and Purpose	Faculty Role Descriptions
June, 2018	<p><b><u>Literature Review and Development</u></b> – In order for Gabriella to establish a strong foundation for the subsequent project, it will be valuable for her to read current literature in the field regarding the home literacy environment, especially the wealth of current information related to shared book reading with preschoolers, and emergent literacy skills in young children. <u>Gabriella will:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>1.</u> Write a brief, yet thorough, literature review (3-5 pages);</li> <li><u>2.</u> Write three research questions for summer inquiry.</li> <li><u>3.</u> Design lesson plans for shared book reading interactions with four year olds, using empirically - based strategies.</li> </ol>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will familiarize Gabby with current research and literature in the field to support this project in order for her to write a complete and thorough literature review with at least three research questions. She will guide her in writing read aloud lesson plans and train her on the empirically-based strategies. The selection of the storybooks are very intentional that support areas of emergent literacy (e.g., oral language, print awareness, phonological awareness).</p>
June, 2018	<p><b><u>Implementation of Project</u></b> - Gabriella will submit the appropriate protocol to HSIRB at Moravian College; Meet with Dr. DesJardin and Mrs. Colleen Donegan to review and familiarize herself with all summer reading program protocol and language and emergent literacy assessments. She will also be trained with all literacy measures and the Responsive Adult-Child Engagement during Shared Book Reading coding scheme (RACED; DesJardin, 2011).</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will assist in the writing of the HSIRB protocol; Set up meeting with Mrs. Donegan (Director of reading program); and go over all reading program protocol (i.e., classroom set up, schedules, parent contacts). Dr. DesJardin will train Gabriella on language and emergent literacy measures (Preschool Language Scales and Phonological Awareness Test); as well as the RACED coding scheme (DesJardin, 2011).</p>
July, 2018	<p><b><u>Four-Week Summer Reading Program and Presentation</u></b> – Upon approval of HSIRB, Gabriella will conduct shared book reading lessons in the model classroom (PPHAC 302) with small groups of four –to five year old children; administer language and literacy measures, and input data into SPSS-20; work with Dr. Jean DesJardin on statistical analyses and summary of findings; and present project to the summer SOAR students.</p>	<p>Dr. DesJardin will mentor Gabriella during data collection process and data analysis in SPSS on a weekly basis and guide statistical summary. She will guide Gabriella with her presentation for SOAR.</p>



# Responsive Shared Book Reading and Early Literacy Skills in Four-Year Olds: A Summer Reading Experience

Gabriella Nasta, Psychology and Early Childhood Education, May 2019  
Dr. Jean DesJardin, Associate Professor and Director of EC, Education  
On-campus Housing Requested

## **Rationale:**

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the effects of the use of teacher strategies during shared book readings and how those strategies impact young children's language and early literacy skills. This research project will examine the home literacy environment, and specifically, how parents utilize strategies during shared book reading. Research on responsive shared book reading will be conducted prior to implementation in the summer reading program with a group of young four-year old children. Throughout this research process, I will learn more about how to code shared book interactions. This insight will give me the ability to implement these evidence-based strategies. Students will be assessed at the beginning of the study to evaluate their oral language and early literacy skills and then again at the summation of the study to measure their level of skill. The subjects of this study will be a group of four year olds who are involved in the Summer Reading Experience, formally known as the Summer Reading Clinic, at Moravian College.

Children who participate in this research project will be involved in frequent group reading sessions aimed at improving their early literacy skills. Various activities will be implemented along with these shared book readings. Through the responsive shared book readings these four year olds will be exposed to stimulation in a group setting, which allows for more interaction between the children. Furthermore, this will foster an environment that will allow for parents to actively participate in their children's learning. Instruction will be based on what knowledge the baseline test scores and the informal assessments provides. Throughout the duration of this research project formal and informal language and early literacy skill assessments will be used for data collection. This data collected from the Summer Reading Experience will be compared to the students' original language and literacy skill pre and post assessments. This will investigate the relationship between the use of teacher strategies during shared book readings on the students' oral language and early literacy skill achievement and growth.

The area of childhood education, specifically early literacy skills and language development is something I have much passion. Particularly, I am interested in identifying the most effective way to improve language and early literacy skills in young children. In my first field experience, I worked at a Head Start Program - a pre-school with young children ages three to five. Many of these children struggled with early literacy skills and basic oral language vocabulary due to their lower SES status and home literacy experiences. They all qualified for the Head Start program based on being at-risk for later academic skills. It is important for young children to have a strong base in oral language and literacy skills prior to beginning lower elementary school. Reading aloud to children helps them develop in various aspects. It allows for young children to learn the skill of listening, it promotes oral language development, communication skills, and problem solving. Furthermore, read aloud interactions provide opportunities for children to learn phonological skills and early literacy concepts. My interest for all children to be as prepared as possible when entering formal schooling drives me to research the affects of the use of teacher strategies during shared book readings and what is most critical in helping young children develop oral language and early literacy skills. Through this research project, I hope to learn more about the specific strategies that can help four year olds with their language and literacy skills. I expect to learn the ways in which responsive shared book readings and teacher strategies guide children's literacy skills. I am enthusiastic to apply the knowledge this research will provide me with in my future classroom as an Early Childhood Teacher. I am eager to share our findings with others participating in the SOAR Program, in a Child Development course this fall, and at the United Way Coalition meeting with D. DesJardin. Moreover, I am excited to share the findings in an informative way through a brochure or guideline for parents.