Pufpaff, L. (2005). *The effects of a nonspeech response mode on phonological sensitivity assessment tasks*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, West Lafayette. Lyle L. Lloyd (Advisor): 161 pages of text, 182 references, 7 appendices, 23 tables, and 4 figures.

Phonological sensitivity skills measured in young children have repeatedly shown a strong relationship to later reading and spelling achievement. The cause and direction of this relationship has not been conclusively demonstrated, but the relationship itself has important implications for the literacy development of children with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) needs. Phonological sensitivity skills have traditionally been assessed via tasks requiring a spoken response. Validation of a nonspeech response mode must be conducted before it can be used to assess for existing or potential weaknesses in phonological sensitivity among young children with AAC needs.

The purpose of this study was to compare typically developing kindergartner's scores on phonological sensitivity assessment tasks administered under two response conditions. Eight assessment tasks were administered in both a traditional speech response mode where participants stated their answers aloud and in a nonspeech response mode where participants pointed to a picture on a response array to indicate their answers. A within subjects design was used wherein each participant received all eight assessment tasks in both response conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups within which the order of response condition (speech first or nonspeech first) in combination with two different, but equivalent sets of assessment items (List1, List 2) were counterbalanced. Participants were taught the spoken label for all pictures to criterion prior to being administered the assessment tasks. Results revealed no statistically significant differences in scores between the two response conditions for six of the eight assessment tasks. Two tasks, phoneme blending and initial phoneme deletion had significantly larger mean scores in the nonspeech response condition. No differences were found for group, age, or gender. The finding that six of the eight assessment tasks produced equivalent scores in both response conditions provides evidence that a nonspeech response mode is a valid approach to measuring some phonological sensitivity skills. These results have implications for the effective assessment of phonological sensitivity skills among children who have AAC needs, a population at risk for insufficient literacy development.