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Elementary School Administrators as Instructional Leaders for Improving Student Reading

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Charmain L. Day-Heggie

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

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Abstract

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Reading

by

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EDS, Walden University, 2014

MSA, North Carolina Central University, 2010

MBA, Strayer University, 2004

BSBA, Longwood University, 1999

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2021

Abstract

School administrators not only lead and manage a school, but are also required to be strong instructional leaders. In the Sunnybrook Public School District [pseudonym], elementary administrators of Title I schools were challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to understand how elementary administrators in rural Title I school described the strategies they use to improve reading achievement for students. Data were collected using semistructured interviews from eight elementary school administrators; six were women, and two were men. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis using a priori, open, and axial codes and were informed by the conceptual framework. The finding of this study indicated a significant need for in-depth professional development to strengthen elementary school administrator's ability to become more effective instructional leaders regarding assisting teachers with instructional practices to increase student reading achievement. Implications for positive social change include elementary school administrators' increased instructional leadership abilities to impact reading achievement positively.

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Dedication

All of my work is dedicated to my husband, Shelton, and the two biggest blessings of my life, my sons, Savieon and Daylen. All that I do in life is meant to make your life better and your goals more attainable. Additionally, I would like to thank and dedicate my work to my parents, my sisters, niece, and my nephews. Mom, you are the best mother that any child could ever ask for. Dad, I know you are smiling down for heaven saying, "That's my girl"! To my sisters, thanks for the constant support and encouraging words. To my niece and nephews, I pray that I continue to be a positive influence in your lives. Remember that education is very important and that I am always here for you. To my dear cousin, Monica whose cancer returned after 26 years and whose battle was lost on May 13, 2017. I put all of my career goals and this research on hold, just to keep my promise to be there for you in your final months and days. I now promise to continue with my life and career goals, to take care of your children. Lastly, to my Aunt Linda who passed in June 2021. I thank GOD that you chose me to be there with you during your final months, days, and hours. Some of our final conversations, encouraged me to work around the clock to complete this doctoral journey. I promise to make each of you proud! I love you all!

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I would like to thank all of my family, friends, and colleagues who encouraged me for so many years to accomplish this goal. You will never know how much your words and motivation provided light to this path. Lastly, but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my committee chairs Dr. Mary Hallums, Dr. Donna Graham, my URR Dr. Crissie Jameison, and my previous chair, Dr. Andrea Thompson. Your feedback, guidance, and support made this journey attainable.

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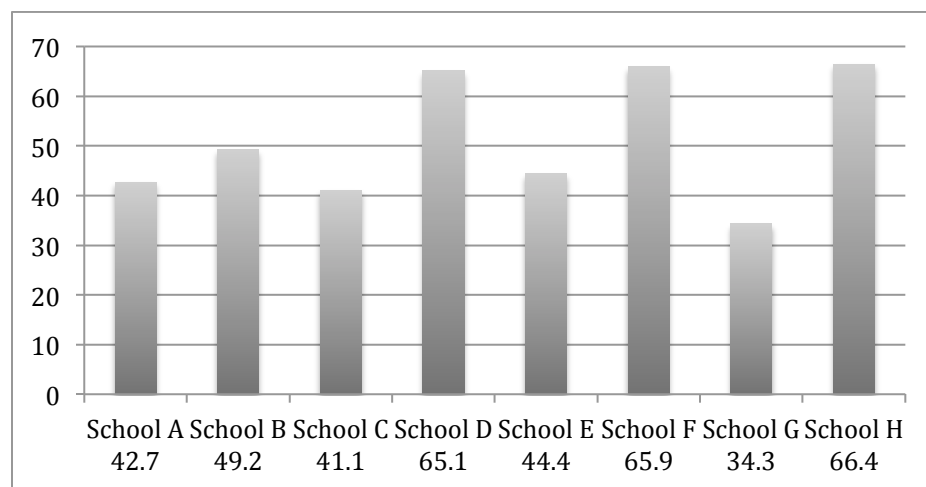
Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

In the Sunnybrook Public School District (pseudonym), elementary administrators of Title I schools were challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students. According to the superintendent of schools, to mitigate the low reading achievement of students enrolled in Title I schools, elementary school administrators were charged to provide more effective instructional leadership strategies to improve the reading achievement of students struggling to meet grade-level proficiency. At the end of 2018 – 2019, testing results showed that five out the eight elementary schools in the district had less than 50% of their students proficient in reading (State Report Card, 2019).

Figure 1

Sunnybrook School District 2018-2019 Reading Proficiency End-of-Year Data



Note. Each school's proficient percentages is not below each school

According to the elementary curriculum and instruction director, more instructional guidance and support were needed to assist teachers in implementing more

appropriate reading instructional strategies. According to the director of elementary education, this guidance will better assist in meeting the needs of struggling students in reading. The school reading specialist stated that there had been an annual increase in the number of students required to attend the summer reading camp due to below grade-level performance in reading. This research study was warranted to guide elementary school administrators on their role as instructional leaders in reading to support increased reading achievement in their schools. The ever-increasing expectations for improving student learning outcomes have expanded principals' roles in schools from managers to instructional leaders (Goddard et al., 2015; Lynch, 2016; Sherman, 2016).

School administrators manage a school and must be strong instructional leaders and concentrate more on assisting teachers in low-performing students (Dou et al., 2016). Rasinski and Young (2017) reported that educators often struggle to provide the most effective instructional strategies to improve reading achievement. Adlof et al. (2016) argued that learners continue to show low reading performance despite having adequate word recognition abilities.

Rationale

In 2020, the Sunnybrook Public School District adopted a new reading curriculum for elementary students after not having a specific one for several years. During a previous elementary principals meeting, the director of elementary curriculum and instruction stated that school administrators have an arduous task of learning the new curriculum with fidelity to be effective instructional leaders to teachers. Achieving the purpose of this study may provide a clear and precise understanding of what elementary

school administrators are doing to support teachers to improve reading achievement for students in the Sunnybrook Public School District.

There was no clear understanding of how elementary school administrators improved reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. The district reading assessment program for the 2019 – 2020 school year did not clearly indicate where my students were. According to a second grade teacher, students were required to use an iPad to read the assessment with no teacher guidance and without a book resulted in students not performing to their best abilities.

Mora-Whitehurst (2017) stated school leaders had been called upon to meet higher instructional leadership standards than school leaders in years past. As a result, they are required to concentrate more on assisting teachers in increasing the achievement of low-performing students. In this study, my goal was to address the role of the school administrator as the instructional leader in coaching teachers to become more effective instructional leaders and to understand and minimize the challenges that influence elementary school students' reading achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I schools described the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. The findings of this study led to an understanding of the instructional leadership strategies provided by elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District to improve reading achievement. In addition, the findings showed how the district is developing the school climate,

encouraging and implementing special programs, increasing stakeholder involvement, and providing the resources needed to improve student reading achievement levels.

Definition of Terms

I used the following key terms in this basic qualitative study:

Instructional leadership: The blending of tasks including but not limited to the supervision of classroom instruction, staff, and curriculum development (Blasé & Blasé, 1999).

Reading comprehension: The complex process of an individual understanding what they have read. Ecalles, Bouchafa, and Potocki (2015) defined reading comprehension as the product of word-level decoding and linguistic comprehension. Thus, reading comprehension is a person's ability to read, process, and understand (i.e., comprehend) the read text.

Significance of the Study

Kendeou et al. (2018) defined reading as the understanding, using, reflection, and engagement of texts to acquire knowledge to participate in society actively. Reading is a critical element of academic and lifelong success is an essential and fundamental skill needed by all learners. Shanahan et al. (2015) stated that solid reading skills are central to academic and professional success and a productive social and civic life; however, far too many students struggle with developing proficient reading skills. A large number of students have not mastered the crucial and fundamental skill of reading. It is an area of concern for individual schools and school districts, and state and national educational agencies (Harris et al., 2020). In this basic qualitative study, I addressed the gap in

practice regarding how elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District described the strategies they use to support teachers to improve reading achievement for students.

In this basic qualitative research study, I explored how elementary school administrators described the strategies they use to support teachers in improving students' reading achievement. This study's findings have led to an understanding of how instructional leadership was provided by elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District to improve reading achievement and an account of how they developed school climates while encouraging and implementing special programs. Such programs targeted increasing reading achievement, the impact or lack of their instructional leadership regarding reading achievement, and the resources needed to improve student reading achievement levels.

Research Question

There was no clear understanding of how elementary school administrators improved reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I school described the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. The research question that I used to guide this study was: How do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to understand how elementary administrators in rural, Title I schools described the strategies they used to improve reading achievement for students. Research demonstrated that the leadership style of the school principal strongly influenced various elements of the school environment, including teacher and staff attitudes, student learning, and academic achievement (Shatzer et al., 2019). In this literature review, I explored the conceptual framework of instructional leadership followed by a review of the broader reading comprehension problem, the importance of early literacy on reading comprehension, and principal leadership and elementary student reading achievement.

I retrieved literature through a comprehensive search of Walden University's Online Library. Databases and research tools that I employed included ERIC, Education Research Complete, Google Scholar, and SAGE. Keywords/phrases that I used in the search included but were not limited to: *instructional leadership, reading comprehension, the importance of early literacy on reading comprehension, influence of socioeconomic status on reading comprehension, school leadership, transformational leadership, shared vision, shared values, and collaboration*. In addition, I used peer-reviewed articles published within the last 5 years to ensure current scholarly articles were referenced in the study.

Conceptual Framework

Murphy et al.'s (1983) instructional leadership theory is the conceptual framework for this study. Murphy et al. (1983) found that instructional leadership

significantly impacts school effectiveness and success. Murphy et al. listed the 10 functions of instructional leadership as framing school goals and objectives, developing and promoting expectations, developing and promoting standards, assessing and monitoring student performance, protecting instructional time, possessing knowledge of curriculum and instruction, promoting curricular coordination, promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervision and evaluation of instruction, and creating a productive work environment. The authors stated that the instructional leadership conceptual framework model includes policies, practices, and behaviors. They reported that processes in this model have communication, conflict resolution, group processes, decision-making, change process, and environmental interaction. At the same time, the activities of this framework were designed to capture principal interaction. The functions of this framework were identified as categories of behaviors that define essential aspects of each leadership (Murphy et al., 1983).

Murphy et al. (1983) found that a clearly defined school mission and highly coordinated objectives lead to an effective school and improved student achievement. School administrators that hold high expectations for students indirectly create and set high expectations for themselves and their staff leadership (Murphy et al., 1983); therefore, developing strategically designed standards is a critical component of effective instructional leadership. The monitoring, assessing, and evaluation of student performance aids in determining whether high levels of student achievement are being met must occur (Murphy et al., 1983). The authors found that school administrators' protection of instructional time is also vital in increasing student achievement.

Murphy et al. (1983) stated that school administrators lack substantial and robust knowledge of curriculum and instruction. They found that this weakness leads to school administrators being less effective with the following instructional leadership functions: promoting curricular coordination, promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervision and evaluation of instruction, and creating a productive work environment. School administrators promote curricular coordination by ensuring that instructional materials are used consistently, content standards are consistently used in instruction and assessments, and creating evaluation procedures to ensure that they occur regularly (Murphy et al., 1983). The authors stated that one of the most critical instructional leadership functions, the supervision, and evaluation of instruction, receives significant time and focus from school administrators. The last instructional leadership function that is difficult for school administrators is to sustain a productive work environment; consequently, Murphy et al. stated that the school administrator must be a motivator and a person of actions, not just words.

An effective school leader possesses the ability and desire to shape the vision of prosperous and attainable high academic standards, leading to an engaging instructional learning environment (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2019). Hsiu-Ling et al. found that this environment is cooperative, attractive, and safe and is a type that cultivates and formulates leadership styles within teachers that encourage them to become school visionaries. Hsiu-Ling et al. (2019) stated that an effective school leader helps to improve instruction while managing the processes, data, and people that enhance the school environment. Hoaglund et al. (2018) reported that school leadership practices to improve

instruction influence student achievement and that school leadership behaviors are interlinked to student achievement. Hsiu-Ling et al. (2019) stated that internal and external coherence should be developed to support learning and teaching to ensure that a foundation of trust and change amongst school leaders and teachers.

Instructional leadership affects student achievement, instructional practices, and overall school achievement. Mora-Whitehurst (2017) stated that instructional leadership could set the tone for effective schools and the power to influence students' social and learning environments. Mora-Whitehurst argued that The No Child Left Behind Act required school leaders to meet a higher standard of instructional leadership. As a result, school leaders must focus more on coaching and assisting teachers to become better instructional leaders in their classrooms to increase student growth and achievement.

Mora-Whitehurst (2017) found that leading in a manner that focuses on providing praise or punishment as a motivational tool, known as transactional leadership, is no longer needed to be an effective school leader. Instructional leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems. Mora-Whitehurst asserted that transformational leaders create visions that will lead to the transformation of their followers and societies. Today's school leaders are required to be more educated and knowledgeable of the current curriculum, current pedagogy in education, student and teacher learning practices, and interpersonal relationships (Mora-Whitehurst, 2017). Mora-Whitehurst asserted that school administrators must transform classroom teachers into instructional leaders through their instructional coaching.

According to Huang et al. (2018), very little is known about whether principals spend their time in an impactful way, whether their time use varies across different school contexts; or whether their time use is related to critical school conditions and school climate and student outcomes. School leaders are essential in the development of high-quality schools. Huang et al. stated that a small percentage of research directly links principals to student achievement. Still, a more significant portion directly connects them to school effectiveness and student outcome indirectly achieved through mechanisms such as articulating visions, setting goals, teaching and curriculum, leading professional development, teacher observations, monitoring student progress (i.e., data collection), and ensuring a safe or orderly learning environment (Huang et al. 2018).

Instructional leadership is the most common theme in the literature (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2019). An effective school leader sculpts the path to success for their school; in turn, this leads to effective teacher instruction and, ultimately, increased student achievement. Effective school leadership is the vision of success based on establishing high academic standards and creating an environment where cooperative spirit, safety, and other basics of meaningful interaction prevail (Hsiu-Ling et al., 2019). Hsiu-Ling et al. reported that effective school leadership also nurtures and shapes teacher leaders that embrace the school's vision.

Reading Comprehension

Reading is a critical element of academic and lifelong success, is an essential and fundamental skill needed by all learners. Kendeou et al. (2018) defined reading as understanding, using, reflecting, and engaging with texts to acquire knowledge to

participate in society actively. Shanahan et al. (2015) stated that solid reading skills are central to academic and professional success and a productive social and civic life; however, far too many students struggle with developing proficient reading skills.

Adlof et al. (2016) defined reading comprehension as a cognitive process when a reader builds one or more mental representations of a text. The authors reported that reading comprehension skills in the early years depend highly on the access and availability of a broad range of texts. According to McLaughlin (2017), reading comprehension is the “construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message in a particular communicative context” (p. 432). Thus, reading comprehension is a reader's ability to process and understand text that has been read.

Chang and Millett (2017) stated that word decoding and text accuracy is critical to reading comprehension development. They argued that effective reading fluency abilities lead to high levels of reading comprehension. Schwabe et al. (2015) stated that reading comprehension consists of extracting and constructing meaning from various text types. Reading behavior influences comprehension, which is affected by a person's reading motivation.

Basaraba et al. (2017) identified five critical components of reading: phonological awareness, alphabetic understanding, and fluency with connected text, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Basaraba et al. stated that the identified critical components work in conjunction with the additional skills of automaticity, higher-level language comprehension processes, background knowledge, schema construction, knowledge of

text structures, and the capacity of different memory structures to support general reading comprehension. The authors explained that prior knowledge influences text understanding and that learners must possess a solid knowledge of higher-level language processes, including but not limited to: semantic, syntactic, and referential relationships to construct meaning from text. Basaraba et al. (2017) stated that low and high-level lexical skills are essential to reading comprehension. Ecalte et al. (2015) defined reading comprehension as a task consisting of efficient word reading, vocabulary knowledge, sentence skills, inference generation, comprehension monitoring, and working memory capacity skills.

Shanahan et al. (2015) stated, “students who read with understanding at an early age gain access to a broader range of texts, knowledge, and educational opportunities, making early reading comprehension instruction particularly critical” (p. 5). In addition, the authors reported that there is substantial research focused on effective resources, programs, strategies, etc., that may influence the improvement of reading comprehension skills. Still, there is far less research available on teachers’ perceptions of how to teach and develop reading a comprehension skill effectively.

Teachers are not always allowed to decide which type of reading program to use for instruction. Akkakoson (2017) stated that strategy-based reading instruction effectively develops how readers conceive a reading task, gain meaning from the text, and learn what to do when reading comprehension breaks down. Leu et al. (2015) pointed out that despite educational policy implementations, a gap persists in reading comprehension due to income inequalities among students.

Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Reading Comprehension

Howard et al. (2016) stated that socioeconomic status is a predictor of cognitive and academic outcomes. The education level of parents, their occupational status, and income level determine socioeconomic status. Kaefer et al. (2015) found in their research study that advantaged children know 15,000+ words more than their less advantaged peers. Fuhs et al. (2015) argued that parents often have low educational levels themselves; therefore, appropriate and consistent literacy skills and activities are minimal in the home environment for their children. Children living in low-income homes are at a disadvantage when compared to peers higher on the socio-economic ladder. This group of learners has a lesser chance of developing age-appropriate reading comprehension skills (Hindman et al., 2017a).

Pillay (2017) argued that many factors affect school outcomes for children from low socioeconomic environments, including the amount of parental involvement. A family's socioeconomic status has a direct influence on literacy development and academic achievement (Pillay, 2017). This includes but is not limited to the level of parental involvement and the quality of schooling. Pillay found that a safe and healthy home learning environment is essential and conducive to learning. Poverty has a direct influence on children's emergent literacy development and academic success. This is not to suggest that poverty makes a childless intelligent or able to learn but simply less prepared to succeed in the learning environment.

Fuhs et al. (2015) explained that children who face an early literacy disadvantage due to family socioeconomic status are inclined to struggle in reading through elementary

and middle school. Fuhs et al. (2015) found that disadvantaged children come from environments of limited parental education and limited exposure to literacy resources and language in the home setting. Gonzalez et al. (2016) found that children faced with poverty are exposed to lower quality vocabulary and fewer print materials. In addition, reading comprehension is negatively affected by poverty. Poverty, reading comprehension skills, and weak/limited instructional strategies, when combined, decrease the educational development of poor students. Piper et al. (2015) stated in their study that children from low-income families are at risk of developing literacy difficulties.

Norwalk et al. (2018) stated that disadvantaged children are more inclined to start school below the age and grade-level literacy and language knowledge expectations than more affluent peers. These students start the educational experience on the path set for failure. A child's vocabulary attainment level, the ability to decode and encode, letter and word recognition, and comprehension are essential determinants in reading fluency (Hindman et al., 2017b). These disparities not only put children on the path to failure in the emergent literacy years but in later years as well. Fuhs et al. (2015) stated that letter recognition/knowledge and print concepts skills and abilities in a child's early years directly relate to phonemic awareness. The authors reported that letter recognition/knowledge combined with print concepts are perceived to be two of the most important domains in early literacy development.

Hindman and Morrison (2019) reported that Head Start and Pre-K participation is key to students living in poverty exposed to inadequate literacy skills in the home environment. Head Start is the country's longest-lasting early learner academic program

aimed at students living in poverty. The mission of Head Start is to increase and promote literacy and language interventions and instruction to better prepare and equip students for pre-k and kindergarten (Hindman & Morrison, 2019). Frequent exposure to reading is important for children to grow in letter recognition and sound knowledge. In addition, this exposure increases one's interest in the skill of reading. A life of poverty in one's early literacy development negatively affects a child's perceptive mental development and potential for academic success (Buyuktaskapu, 2017).

Importance of Early Literacy on Reading Comprehension

Hammer et al. (2017) stated that the ability of ones' parents to provide these opportunities before beginning school might rely on a family socioeconomic status. Children learn best from their parents; an introduction to reading skills is best beneficial to eager young learners. The family and home reading behaviors young learners are exposed to greatly influence literacy development and achievement (Hammer et al., 2017).

An early introduction to literacy skills plays an important role in early literacy development. Harris et al. (2017) argued that oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and alphabet letter recognition are important to cognitive development. Harris et al. (2017) found that having the skills to recognize and distinguish letters are important in a learner's ability to acquire and retain basic literacy skills. These skills reaffirm the importance of alphabetic understanding/knowledge during the preschool years. Niklas and Schneider (2018) conducted a longitudinal study that suggested that letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and cognitive abilities are

essential to early literacy development in the home literacy environment. They stated that the home literacy environment directly influenced phonological awareness at the start of kindergarten.

Davidse et al. (2017) found that parental reading habits and the existence of storybook sharing time have the potential to foretell the future reading abilities of preschool students. Children should be in environments enriched with literacy, including vocabulary, print concepts, letters, and word recognition. Bracken and Fischel (2017) stated that children are first exposed to literacy in the home environment. This exposure includes but is not limited to library visits, exposure to print materials, parents' literacy beliefs and abilities, oral language acquisition, shared reading, letter development, and recognition.

Sukhram and Hsu (2016) stated that early reading exposure is important in setting a foundation for students to acquire the basic literacy skills that set them up for school and life success. Parental involvement at an early age is a critical component of reading skills development. Storybook time presents children with new vocabulary using informative and meaningful pictures (Hindman et al., 2017b).

Gonzalez et al. (2016) conducted a quasi-experimental study that emphasized that preschool years are when children have the best potential for development and increasing literacy skills and awareness. Fuhs et al. (2015) accentuated that oral language and code-related skills guide pre-reading skills and early literacy development. This is the time when children are best responsive to new knowledge and interventions. This study

explored the relationship between disadvantaged preschool students' temperament and pre-reading abilities.

Norwalk et al. (2018) stated that oral language skills directly impact reading development. Hindman et al. (2017a) suggested that high-quality and effective head start and pre-k programs set the foundation for language and literacy development. The authors suggested that high-quality and effective head start and pre-k programs set the foundation for language and literacy development. The research study noted that children living in poverty have minimal exposure to literacy-rich homes, minimal access to books, and fewer cognitive conversations with their parents (Hindman et al., 2017b). Their research study considered how Exceptional Coaching for Early Language and Literacy Language and literacy professional development intervention assisted in minimizing vocabulary disparities between early learners at the higher and lower knowledge levels. The structural and instructional methods of early learning programs such as Head Start and Pre-k are imperative to learning the children served in these programs. An effective head start program includes active parental support and participation in efforts to set and build children's literacy foundation (Hindman & Morrison, 2019).

Gonzalez et al. (2016) reported that highly effective preschool programs possess the necessary materials and resources to promote and encourage developing and increasing a child's vocabulary and abstract knowledge. Gonzalez et al. (2016) noted that structure (i.e., class size, teacher-student ratio, strategies to develop social and behavior skills, etc.) is equally important in effectively creating structured and high-quality preschool programs. Guo et al. (2016) reported that high-quality and effective preschool

programs focus on language and literacy development and improvement. The research study considered the relationship of preschool teachers' sense of community, instructional quality specific to L & L, and preschool children's gains in vocabulary and print concept knowledge (Guo et al., 2016).

Norwalk et al. (2018) reported that children who attend Head Start are in a position to receive early literacy interventions and literacy strategies to build upon already low vocabulary skills. Levitt and Owl (2016) reported that the teacher believes that reading ability development is influenced by exposure to early literacy in the home environment and school. Levitt and Owl (2016) noted that as one's reading ability improves or staggers, children formulate and regulate their own self-efficacy beliefs about reading.

Principal Leadership & Elementary Student Reading Achievement

As effective school leaders, school administrators must create and maintain crucial conversations with the teacher that focus on effective instructional practices that promote student learning and achievement. Gurr et al. (2019) stated that by conveying a clear and concise school vision, school administrators are indirectly impacting student learning which leads them to succeed in improving student achievement. Hausman & Goldring (2017) indicated that school administrators directly impact their school's effectiveness, although they are not in the classroom providing instruction. School administrators must commit to improving student achievement by focusing on positively influencing and maintaining teacher commitment, teacher efficacy, and teacher collaboration (Hausman & Goldring, 2017).

School administrators are accountable for student learning and achievement. Chenoweth and Theokas (2012) stated that principals are the catalyst to changing low-performing schools into high performing school status. In the present worldwide educational reform, school leadership has become a priority in educational policy. School administrators play an essential role in improving the school environment by influencing the motivation and capacity of teachers (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman, 2008).

Effective and knowledgeable school administrators are critical to the reading growth and achievement of elementary school students. “The ability to read contributes to success in education, employment, and citizenship, while the consequences of bad writing for businesses, professions, educators, consumers, and citizens are disastrous” (Clark, 2016, p. 3-4). Being a strong and proficient reader leads to students become an overall success in all academic areas. In 2018, The Department of Education and Training stated, “Students who developed strong literacy skills, are well placed to succeed in all areas of the curriculum” (p. 7).

Implications

Implications for positive social change include elementary school administrators increased instructional leadership abilities to impact reading achievement positively. Elementary school administrators must be aware of their leadership’s possible influence on the success of teacher instruction and student achievement. Remarkable school administrators understand that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among in-school influences that contribute to what students learn at school on student success” (Plaatjies, 2019).

The research provided an understanding of elementary school administrators' strategies to support teachers as instructional leaders to improve reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. The findings of this study led to an understanding of the instructional leadership strategies provided by elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District to improve reading achievement. In addition, these research findings lead to a professional development model for elementary school administrators to improve reading achievement. This professional development for elementary school administrators increased their ability to better support teachers in improving reading instruction, increasing reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I schools described the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. In Section I, I presented the problem statement, the research question, an introduction of the instructional leadership framework, and a review of the literature on reading comprehension. Section 2 will outline the basic qualitative research design and approach, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Section 2: The Methodology

There was no clear understanding of how elementary school administrators improved reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. Therefore, the purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I school describe the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. The research question for this study was:

How do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students?

Section 2 includes a discussion of the research design and approach, participants, data collection, data analysis procedures, and the overall limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

Merriam (2019) explained that qualitative research is used to understand how people interpret experiences and how researchers observe concepts in specific settings to understand them better. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I school describe the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. The basic qualitative research design best met the needs of this qualitative research study.

Creswell (2016) stated that qualitative and quantitative are the two major research designs. According to Creswell (2016), the quantitative research design is used when testing objective theories by examining variables and their relationships. However, the qualitative research design best met the needs of this research study because it posed general and broad questions to participants in a way that allowed them to share their

views relatively unconstrained by others' perspectives (Kozleski, 2017). Therefore, interviewing participants is included as a data collection method. In addition, questions are presented to participants that allow them to share their views and opinions in a way that is not restricted by the perspectives of others (Kozleski, 2017).

According to Creswell (2016), multiple data points describe and compare information used to understand the purpose of the research study. The basic qualitative research design was the most appropriate to determine whether elementary school administrators were providing instructional leadership to support teachers in meeting the needs of students struggling with reading achievement. In addition, qualitative research can provide information regarding the participant's perspectives and attitudes about educational issues (Gizir & Yildiz, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative research design was appropriate for an understanding of the instructional leadership skills needed to increase reading achievement. This research study consisted of gathering data via participant interviews. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) stated that interviews are a primary source of data in qualitative research. I used the basic qualitative study design to identify the perspectives and attitudes of the participants.

Creswell (2016) identified five qualitative approaches: case study, ethnography, narrative analysis, phenomenology, and grounded theory. He continued to state that the case study approach explores a program, event, activity, process, or one more individual in-depth. Considering that I did not seek to gather data for a substantial period, the case study method did not meet the needs of my study. The ethnography strategy involves

studying an entire cultural group in their ordinary and natural setting (Creswell, 2016). I did not focus on a cultural group; therefore, this method was not appropriate.

In narrative research, the researcher studies participants' lives and various aspects of their life (Creswell, 2016). The phenomenological research strategy requires the researcher to identify human experiences about a phenomenon described by participants (Creswell, 2016). Neither of these research strategies aligned with the purpose and research questions of this study. In grounded theory, the researcher originates a new theory, action, or interaction based on the participants' views (Creswell, 2016). This design was not appropriate for this research study because I was not seeking to develop a theory.

This research study consisted of gathering data via participant interviews. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) stated that interviews are a primary source of data in qualitative research. For this research study, I utilized the basic qualitative study design to identify perspectives of and attitudes of the participants.

Participants

The following section includes a discussion of the criteria used for the selection and justification of the number of research participants. I explained the procedures used to gain access to participants and the researcher-participant relationship. In addition, I described the ethical protections of the study participants.

In the Sunnybrook Public School District, there are eight elementary schools with two administrators in each school, including where I am the administrator. Therefore, I invited all elementary school administrators to participate in the study, excluding the

school I lead. Fourteen elementary school administrators (i.e., principals and assistant principals) from the district participated in the research study, excluding my school's assistant principal and me.

I used the purposeful sampling technique for this study. Purposeful sampling is a technique used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting participants that are knowledgeable and experienced in the area of study. Ravitch and Carl (2020) defined homogenous sampling as the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup with defining characteristics. This strategy requires the researcher to identify the characteristics and find individuals or sites that possess them (Creswell, 2016). However, homogenous sampling was not appropriate for this research study because, as the researcher, I did not seek to identify a subgroup.

Prior to the data collection, I requested permission from the school district under study and approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the interviews. The school district took approximately 1 week to approve the request for research. After receiving district and IRB approval (January 5, 2021), I contacted individual participants through email to consider participating in the study. The invitation requesting participation in the research study included my contact information (i.e., email, telephone number, and available dates and timeframes for face-to-face or Google Hangout interviews). In addition, the invitation provided participants with the purpose of their roles, a clear description of the research problem and purpose. I sent invitations via

the Sunnybrook Public Schools District's email system. Hardcopies of this information were available upon participant request.

Creswell (2016) stated that the informed consent form is for participants to sign before participating in the research. The form that Creswell (2016) suggest included the following language: “This form [informed consent] acknowledges that the participants' rights will be protected during data collection” (p. 89). After I obtained IRB approval, an invitation to participate and an informed letter of consent were sent to participants via the district email system. I asked participants to return the consent form via courier mail or a scanned emailed copy within ten days, one week before collecting data. This timeframe allowed participants time to contact me if they needed additional information about the study.

The researcher-participant relationship was of the utmost importance to this research study. I ensured that participants sensed a feeling of importance to the study. In the Sunnybrook Public School System, I do not work in the same school as any participants. I implemented all measures to ensure that participants understood the purpose of this study and their roles. More importantly, I provided confidentiality at all times. To prevent any biases, I remained objective with my opinions towards participant responses. I did not respond with any comments or questions that may have compared them or their school to other participants, and I assured participants that I would use all information provided for the sole purpose of this research study. I offered no data to third parties and confidentiality was ensured to protect the identity of participants.

All participants received an informed consent form that disclosed the purpose, the

potential benefits of the research study, and their possible levels of involvement, my role, the guarantee of confidentiality, and the assurance that they could withdraw from participation at any time. I assured participants I would not disclose to anyone. Numbers were assigned instead of using names for interviews. Collected data was placed in a lockbox in my home and will be kept for a minimum of 5 years beyond the research study. After this time, I will destroy all data and documents.

Data Collection

Creswell (2016) stated that qualitative research is not restricted to a specific number of data sources. He also said that general and broad questions are posed to participants, allowing participants to share their views relatively unconstrained by others' perspectives. I employed semistructured interviews for data collection. I conclude the data collection section by addressing the procedures for gaining access to participants and myself.

Semistructured Interviewing

I decided that the semistructured interview best fits the needs of this basic qualitative study. Merriam (2019) stated that the open-ended interview approach provides participants with the opportunity to share their thoughts about the situation at hand, their viewpoints, and new ideas on the topic of focus. In addition, semistructured interviewing meets five criteria not found in highly structure/standardized or unstructured/informal interviewing: interview questions are mixed and less structured, flexibility is used in wording, specific data is required from participants, there is no pre-determined wording

or order, and the interview is largely guided by a list of questions/issues to be explored (Merriam, 2019).

Highly structured interviews consist of predetermined and ordered questions. Unstructured/ informal interviewing is deployed when the researcher possesses enough knowledge of the study topic to formulate relevant questions (Merriam, 2019). My hopes are that this study will address what elementary school administrators are doing to improve reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. Merriam (2019) stated that qualitative research interview questions should include flexible questions, consisting of no pre-determined wording order and requiring specific data from respondents; thus making the semistructured interview method the best fit for this basic qualitative study.

I allocated 60 minutes for interviews and all participants were assigned a participant number. As the research for this study, I scheduled interviews to be held at locations and times chosen by myself and agreed upon by the participants. I interviewed participants via Google Meet. Only the interviewees and I participated and were in the rooms during the interview. To obtain descriptive responses, interview questions were open-ended and consisted of academic language known to participants. I recorded interviews via an iPad. While recording each interview, I took notes. I interviewed all participants once.

School administrator interview questions can be reviewed in Appendix C. During the study, I kept a research contact log of all communication with participants. The contact log includes the participant numbers, date, time, and the outcome of the

communications. In addition, there is an electronic copy and a hard copy of all communications. I saved communications to a flash drive and hard copies will be locked in a secure safe box. I am the only person with access to the safety box key.

I sent a letter via school email to the assistant superintendent of operations and human resources requesting permission to conduct this study, which follows the protocol of the Sunnybrook Public School district. The assistant superintendent of operations and human resources sent a letter of approval via school email; this approval notice, along with the application to conduct my study, was submitted to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval to research from Walden's IRB, I selected participants from the schools selected for the study. Participants were informed of their acceptance to participate in the research study via email.

Researcher's Role

I am in my ninth year as an administrator in the district. I was appointed to Principal of an elementary school in October 2020; previously, I was an elementary school assistant principal. I am not an administrator at any of the eight schools of focus for this research study. My relationship with all participants was strictly professional. Upon initial contact with the participants, they were informed that participation was voluntary and that all information will be used for the sole purpose of this study and will not be disclosed to a third party outside of Walden University and the Sunnybrook School District. I contacted potential participants, scheduled interview times, collected data, and analyzed data.

To reduce the possibility of any bias, Creswell (2016) stated that attention should be given to the language used with participants. I achieved this by using terms to identify accurate and clear participants, being sensitive to labels for individuals and groups, and acknowledging participants' participation in the study. In addition, I reminded participants to respond with feedback that would identify them or their students.

Data Analysis

Data analysis provides the researcher with a profound understanding of the data as it is examined for a deep understanding of the study at hand. Data was analyzed after it was collected through documentation, recording, and transcribing of the interviews. This section will address the evidence of quality, assurance of accuracy, and the credibility of findings. Lastly, I addressed the procedures employed to address discrepancies.

This basic qualitative study focused on understanding how elementary school administrators described the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students. Data that was obtained for this research study was derived from eight elementary school administrators. Two male administrators and six female administrators were interviewed and they provided the data for analysis. Before conducting interviews, I explained my role as a researcher and my current position as an elementary school principal within the district by invitation and verbally with all participants. Invitations and verbal conversations that I sent to participants reminded them of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

I reminded all participants that I would protect their identities and that they would identify as Participant #1, Participant #2, etc. I scheduled interviews for 60 minutes.

Interview times varied depending on participant responses and additionally questions asked by myself based on participant responses. The average time for interviews was twenty-one minutes.

During the interviews, I used the interview protocol (Appendix B) that I previously developed. I transcribed the audio recordings of the participant interviews into a Google Doc. Each recording were dated and labeled with the identification number assigned to each participant. I took additional notes during each interview so that I could note significant responses. I provided adequate time for participants to respond openly to the open-ended questions found in the interview protocol.

Transcript checking was employed. Criswell (2014) stated that transcript checking allows study participants to check the accuracy of their transcript. Participants stated whether or not they agreed that the transcript of their interview was accurate. Data provided by the participants was gathered and analyzed to discover emerging themes. Each participant was given 3 days for transcript checking; thus, allowing participants adequate time to review transcripts of their interviews to ensure accurate transcription of their responses.

Birt et al. (2016) described transcript checking, also known as participant validation, as a technique for credibility results. This process included the highlighting of terms, phrases, etc., that resulted in categories and themes that I reviewed, my biases, as well as coded and identified themes. In addition, careful analysis of participant responses revealed common similarities in responses to the interview questions.

Interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis (TA). A priori codes based on the frameworks and related literature and open and axial codes, which I derived from the data, were used to analyze the data. Braun et al. (2017) stated that the thematic analysis involves identifying themes or patterns within qualitative data and follows a six-phase process. This qualitative research study followed the six-phase process: (a) organize and prepare data for analysis, (b) form a generalization of data collected and its meaning, (c) begin a detailed analysis of the coding process and generate initial codes, (d) generate themes for analysis, (e) define themes, and (f) interpret the data with a write-up.

Phase 1: Becoming Familiar With the Qualitative Data Collected

Step one in this qualitative analysis consisted of taking a deep dive into reviewing and analyzing the data. I reviewed all eight transcripts a minimum of three times. Participants consisted of eight elementary school administrators with at least 3 years of experience. I highlighted keywords and phrases as they were repeated in different colors. Next, I reviewed transcripts and listened to audio recordings to confirm and reconfirm the accuracy of the transcriptions. I completed this process for all eight transcripts. For each transcript, I created a chart to document my thoughts and comprehension of the transcribed data.

Phase 2: Generation of Initial Codes

The generation of open codes consists of systematically and meaningfully organizing data in a manner and process in which the researcher reduces that data into small meaningful chunks (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Data from the elementary school administrators' interviews was analyzed, as were my thoughts and comprehension of the

data. The first codes considered were those informed from the framework constructs. Next, each code has to give meaning to the coded data by searching the raw data for repeated words and phrases, then labeling the code to provide the code with meaning. This step completes open coding.

After the initial coding was complete, I conducted axial coding. Axial coding consisted of grouping open codes to form categories by examining the relationships' raw and open coded data. During this time, I created a chart to compare and reveal commonalities amongst the initial codes. Thus, I formed temporary themes based on the relationships among the initial codes. Temporary themes were then designated (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Phase 3: Theme Search

There are two approaches to coding and theme development, the inductive or deductive approach. The inductive approach is the process coding the data without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Theme development is based on axial coding. I reviewed and examined data and codes for patterns that ultimately lead to emerging themes. In addition, I analyzed the data and coded for patterns among the temporary themes of each school administrator. Patterns, axial codes, and temporary themes were organized into broad themes; thus, answering the research question of this qualitative research study.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Braun and Clarke (2017) stated that data themes should directly answer the research questions while aligning with the conceptual framework. Phase four consisted of

additional reviews of the initial themes to ensure that the data supported them before documenting them. Data must support the documented themes. The themes must address the research question to guide the study effectively, as Creswell (2016) cited.

Phase 5: Definition of Themes

This study aims to understand how elementary school administrators are supporting teachers to improve the reading achievement of students. Therefore, themes were analyzed to answer the research question of this study (Braun & Clarke, 2017).

Phase 6: Write-Up

Ultimately, the thematic analysis provided an answer to what elementary school administrators are doing to improve reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. This write-up stated the elementary school administrator's perspectives. The write-up phase concluded with a summarized research study description (Braun & Clarke, 2017).

Priori, open and axial coding was employed for this research study to analyze the elementary school administrator and elementary school teacher responses. Open coding allowed for the organization of information into categories, once priori coding was completed. Open coding allowed me to break data into discrete parts. First, I used the constructs from the framework to inform the initial codes. I also analyzed any other emerging codes. Axial coding is used to find categories among the open coded data and raw data (Merriam, 2019). Axial coding involves the realization and organization of connections between codes.

I spent time reviewing data and handwritten notes with fidelity effectively. I followed by organizing the emerging themes for analysis and then generating meanings of the emerging themes. Next, using the themes that resulted from participant interviews, initial codes were developed, followed by the analysis and defining of themes that lead to the interpretation of data for the final results of this research study.

Evidence of Quality

Several measures were put in place to ensure the accuracy and credibility of this research study. As quoted by Shenton (2020), both are critical practices in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness to achieve the validity of the data. Careful consideration was given to only elementary school administrators with at least three years of administrative experience. I did this to ensure their responses would be directly related to the purpose of the study. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of all findings, thorough re-checking and reviewing codes and transcripts occurred. After each interview, reviewing my records and notes assisted in ensuring accuracy and credibility for each interview session. I provided participants with the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure that I had accurately transcribed a deep and rich account of their responses.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

During the analysis phase, no potential cases of discrepancies presented themselves. Thus, ensuring validity is vital in qualitative research. Anderson and Aydin (2019) stated that validity could be addressed by identifying discrepancies that do not fit well.

Data Analysis Results

This basic qualitative study focused on understanding how elementary school administrators described their strategies to support teachers' reading instruction for students. I organized the following data analysis subsections to recap important approaches that guide the process of the study. The subsections include data collection, demographics, and thematic analysis, followed by explaining findings for the study's research question.

Data Collection

In guidance with the semistructured interview process, this opened-ended approach allowed the study participants to share their thoughts about the situation at hand and their viewpoints and allowed for new ideas on the topic of focus (Merriam, 2019). Purposefully sampling was employed with eight elementary school administrators from the Sunnybrook Public School District. The study adopted a basic qualitative research design to ensure that the data collected reflected the participants' thoughts, viewpoints, and opinions. The basic qualitative research design best fits the problem of this study. The instructional leadership conceptual framework supported this basic qualitative research study. Murphy et al. (1983) found that instructional leadership significantly impacts school effectiveness and success.

According to Merriam and Tisdale (2016), interviews are a primary data source in qualitative research. The basic qualitative study design allowed study participants to identify their perspectives and attitudes toward the research study phenomenon. To ensure the quality of data collected, the research included re-checking and reviewing

transcripts and codes. Records and notes were created and reviewed after each interview, and I followed ethical considerations. I respected all necessary ethical considerations during the research process.

Review of Procedures for Quality Assurance

I followed all needed measures for quality assurance as outlined to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the data collected. I gave all potential study participants the option to deny participation to protect the data collection, ensuring that only those who were genuinely willing to offer data freely participated. Each participant was encouraged to be open and honest from the onset of our interaction. I was allowing for a rapport where rich and accurate data were collected. I informed participants of my roles as the researcher for my doctoral degree. I guaranteed them that they could share openly with no fear or worries of repercussions. Participants understood their right to withdraw from the study at any point without the need to provide any rationale. I also informed them that they could skip a question if they felt the need.

Potential study participants were initially contacted via email requesting their participation. The context of this email included the problem leading to the research study and the purpose. Also included was my role as the researcher and the semistructured interview process. The context was in a language understood by all participants, had the approved consent form, and included a detailed scope of the study. When participants responded that they agreed to participate, I responded with two possible meeting times for acceptance.

Transcript checking was successfully employed. In no more than three days of completing each of the eight interviews, I provided a word-for-word transcription of the participant's interview via telephone or email, depending on the participant's preference. Participants reported no inaccuracies; therefore, there were no follow-up meetings needed.

Demographics

There were eight participants in this research study. Six participants were female, and two were male. Based on the results summarized in Table 1, 75% of the participants in this study were female, while 25% were male. Each participant's years of school administrator experience is noted.

Table 1

Study Participants by Gender

Participant ID	Gender	Years of Experience	Highest Degree
PT #1	Female	10	Masters
PT #2	Female	8	Masters
PT #3	Male	3	Masters
PT #4	Female	9	Masters
PT #5	Female	7	Masters
PT#6	Female	6	Masters
PT #7	Female	3	Masters
PT #8	Male	8	Masters

Note. Participants are identified numerically based on the order of their interviews.

Thematic Analysis of Interviewees' Responses

The thematic analysis process used in this study involved identifying themes or patterns within qualitative data (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2017). This analysis involved identifying essential themes in the cultural setting. Braun and Clarke (2017) stated that thematic

analysis follows a six-phase process. This qualitative research study followed the six-phase process: (a) organize and prepare data for analysis, (b) form a generalization of data collected and its meaning, (c) begin a detailed analysis of the coding process and generate initial codes, (d) generate themes for analysis, (e) define themes, and (f) interpret the data with a write-up. Table 2 summarizes themes based on participant responses.

Table 2

Codes and Triangulation

Codes	PT#1	PT#2	PT#3	PT#4	PT#5	PT#6	PT#7	PT#8
Communication	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review & analyze data	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instructional coaching	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mentoring/Scaffolding of teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. Under each participant number, the 'X' represents participant responses relating to the codes.

Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to understand how elementary administrators in rural, Title I schools described the strategies they use to improve reading achievement for students. The research question for this study was: How do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students?

The research findings from the data analysis process produced four themes that aligned with the research question and the conceptual framework of instructional leadership for this study. The four themes are: communication, review and analyze data,

instructional coaching, and mentoring/scaffolding of teacher. Theme statements that included theme of communication included: daily conversations with teachers, coaching meetings, continuous interactions with staff, students, and parents, being visible in the school, embedded in the goals of the school improvement plan, shared in weekly school meetings with parents, weaved into teacher individual goals, embedded in schools and the school pledge.

The theme of review and analyze data resulted in the following theme statements: study data to identify gaps and trends, locate resources to assist in re-teaching in efforts to close gaps shown in data, analyze multiple data points and regroup as needed, use data for interventions, and focus on early interventions. Instructional coaching resulted in the following theme statements: use PLC time to ensure that lesson plans, instructional strategies, and activities are rigorous and aligned to the standards; provide opportunities to reviewing videos of highly effective teaching, increase focus on Foundations and phonemic awareness, demonstrate effective use of the new HMH district curriculum, and ensure that instruction follows HMH pacing guide. Mentoring and scaffolding of teachers had the following theme statements: demonstrate effective instructional practices to teachers, teacher teachers the way that you want them to teach students; demonstrate how to dig deeper into student skill gaps and develop a plan to close the gaps, ensure that teachers know the expectations, and provide opportunities for teachers to shadow peers to see various methods of whole groups, small groups, and one-on-one instruction.

Theory of Instructional Leadership

The theory of instructional leadership explains how school administrators meet with their staff regularly to discuss school success, collaborate to solve problems, reflect on instructional practices, and take responsibility for student growth and proficiency. There are 10 functions of instructional leadership as framing school goals and objectives; developing and promoting expectations; developing and promoting standards; assessing and monitoring student performance; protecting instructional time; possessing knowledge of curriculum and instruction; promoting curricular coordination; promoting and supporting instructional improvement; supervision, and evaluation on instruction; and creating a productive work environment. The four themes identified in this study relate to the components of instructional. All eight participants communicated examples of (a) school goals and objectives, (b) assessing and monitoring student performance and data, (c) possessing knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and (d) promoting and supporting instructional improvement.

Theme 1: Communication

All eight participants identified the theme of communication when sharing how they articulate their school's vision and mission. Participants #1, #5, #7, and #8 stated that their vision and school goals are referenced in all communications to staff, embedded in the school's goals, the student pledge, and all communications with all stakeholders. Participant #8 said he creates a visual to help people to understand. He narrowed it down to three big ideas: achievement, safety, and communication. All communications and goal setting relates back to his three big ideas.

Working as a leadership team is of high importance to Participant #2. The school's vision and goals are evident in all meetings and throughout the school day. At every meeting we go back to the goals, they remind staff of why we are here and keeps us focused and more positive because so many things can push us away. I really do try to so it everyday to teachers; whether it's in a coaching minute, or when I am walking by or if they are having a hard time. I back to why we are here and what our vision is for kids.

Participant #3 said that “everything begins with the leadership team and that should reflect the vision and mission of the entire school”. Participant #4 ensures that the vision and goals are crafted around the specific needs of the school and students. Finally, participant #6 shared that the school's vision and goal setting is largely communicated through the school improvement plan and weaved into teachers' individual professional development goals.

When ask question #8, participants responses related back to communication and articulating and supporting their school's vision and mission. Participant #1 stated that she is “very transparent and has an open-door policy”. She continued to share that openly invites push back. “This question goes back to number 1 of articulating my mission and vision was stated by participant #2”. She continued to state that they talk about data for one reason only and that is student growth. “We stay student focused and data driven”.

In responding to question #8, participant #6 stated that cultivating school culture comes over time and that she has honest conversations. “I agree to disagree and I

apologize when I am wrong. We are a family and we understand that families are not always pretty”.

Participant #7 and #8 also has an open-door policy like participant #1. Participant #7 stated that she allows teams to be expressive with no hard feelings towards the leader and each other. “I let them find the cohesiveness with the team”. Participant #8 stated that he allows staff to share anything as long as they are respectful. “I simply have conversations on a regular basis and I am visible. I demonstrate that we are in this together. I support my staff in front of parents and the public. I correct them in private”.

Theme 2: Review and Analyze Data

All eight participants identified the theme of "review and analyze data." This is a practice that they each do with fidelity. Data that is reviewed and analyzed consists of informal and formal classroom assessments, districts and state assessments, iReady, and EVAAS. Participant #2 stated that she constantly spends time reviewing HMH modules to match them to the districts pacing guides. She focuses on identify where the modules are the most effective. All participants strongly felt that constantly reviewing and analyzing data is critical to the school's success by addressing the challenges that teachers meet regarding increasing reading achievement.

Murphy et al. (1983) remind us that the practice of monitoring, assessing, and evaluating student performance is critical in determining whether high levels of student achievement are must occur. Participants #1, #4, and #8 shared once reading gaps in the data are identified they then identify additional resources to assist teachers with instructional strategies and interventions. All eight participants shared that the focus on

problem solving with their classroom teacher, the expert. Data conversations are held with teachers, reading specialists, and with the school improvement team. These conversations include the review of informal and formal teacher assessments, district, and state assessment data. Per district guidelines data conversations are held weekly during grade level PLCs. Participants shared that knowing and understanding data assists them in being effective instructional leaders to their teachers. This support directly impacts student reading achievement.

Participant #2 added that reviewing data trends in monthly assessments, after-school tutoring, interventions, and checkpoints provided to students on the Multi-Tier Student Support (MTSS) program is critical to provide students with the needed instructional support effectively. Participants #3, #5, #6, and #7 stated to ensure effective data analysis, multiple data points should be considered and analyzed. They each have critical conversations with teachers and their reading specialists on whom to effectively use the data to lead effective instruction to increase student reading achievement. In addition, they employ the suggestions and feedback of the classroom teacher and those of reading specialists, interventions, and coaches to address the deficits in an organized way. Digging deep into skill gaps helps to develop strategic plans to close the reading achievement gaps.

Theme 3: Instructional Coaching

All eight participants identified the theme of "instructional coaching" when asked how they plan to continue focusing on reading achievement at their schools. Each participant mentioned their commitment and dedication to ensuring that their supervision

and evaluations (formal and informal) would end with crucial conversations with their teachers throughout their interviews. The most critical function of instructional leadership is to be effective and dedicated to the supervision and evaluation of instruction in their buildings (Murphy et al., 1983).

Participant #1 said that she plans to continue focusing on Foundations and phonemic awareness with her reading teachers. This will be accomplished with in-house professional development as well as through staff participation in district and out of district professional development focused on Foundations and phonemic development. Participant #2 intends to continue learning how to use two new literacy resources purchased by the district (HMH Into Reading Curriculum) and iReady recently purchased by the state with fidelity. Her school's master schedule specifies time daily for all grade levels for students to be work in the iReady Pathway.

Participants #3, #7, and #8 believe that to assist students in understanding and to increase their love of reading, they must continue to ensure that all of their students have books at home. Responses from participants #3, #7, and #8 lead to the generation of an additional subtheme within the instructional coaching category: Providing resources to students. This includes in school: tutoring and small group work and at home: a library of books and communication with parents. These three specific participants mentioned the before mentioned subthemes when responding to the bigger them of instructional coaching. Participants #4 and #5 believe that continuing what they are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic is very important. Their responses relate to the sub-themes generated by participants #3, #7, and #8 previously. The participants plan to continue

with tutoring, small group instructional, and keeping open lines of communication with the parents of virtual students.

Theme 4: Mentor/Scaffolding of Teachers

All research participants identified the theme of "lesson planning" during PLC time consisting of school administrations, teachers, reading specialist, and instructional coaches. Murphy et al. (1983) stated that the function of possessing knowledge of curriculum and instruction is a weak area for school administrators. Participant #1 said that she provides lots of resources to teachers to develop engaging, differentiated, and rigorous lesson planning. Participant #2 ensures that lesson plans align with the district's pacing guides. Modeling, instructional rounds, and a mutual understanding are important to Participant #3 for lesson planning. He stated that it is important for the administration to teach teachers what they expect them to teach students.

Participant # 4 stated the PLCs are a priority. This lead to the generation of the subthemes of: pacing guides and modeling with effective implementation of PLCs. She said that she always looks at the standards referencing the cognitive matrix and compares it to the standard to ensure that teacher instructional practices meet the standard's needs. Participants #5 and #7 communicated that they rely heavily on PLCs for crucial conversations and lesson plan development. Participant #6 includes specialists in lesson planning but still considers the classroom teacher the expert. This collaboration allows everyone to bounce ideas off each other, leading to crucial conversations. Participant #8 assesses lesson plans and informs teachers of changes that need to be made. He uses PLC time problem solve instructional challenges with teachers.

Summary of Outcomes

I employed the instructional leadership conceptual framework during the data collection process. This qualitative research study addressed the problem that in the Sunnybrook Public School District [pseudonym], elementary administrators in Title I schools are challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study is to understand how elementary administrators in rural, Title I schools described the strategies they use to improve reading achievement for students.

In interpreting the findings for the research question, how do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students, data suggests that elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District possess the knowledge and the understanding of the ten functions of instructional leadership. Therefore, they have the needed skills to be impactful and support their teachers to increase reading achievement. The results of this research study corroborated the research problem. Findings indicated a significant need for in-depth professional development to strengthen elementary school administrator's ability to become more effective instructional leaders in regards to assisting teachers with instructional practices to increase student reading achievement. This need proved extremely obvious with all participants as they mentioned how the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in most students regressing one to two grade levels in reading.

All participants communicated their concerns about the dire importance of leadership and the school improvement plan. In addition, they reflected the importance of

reading instruction and the increase in student reading achievement levels, the need to constantly and consistently review and analyze data, the need to focus on reading achievement, and the importance of effective lesson planning.

Project Deliverable

The project deliverable is a professional development offering designed to address the data collected during the participant interviews. This project deliverable encourages an understanding of elementary school administrators' strategies to support teachers' reading instruction for students. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I school describe the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. This experience provided a clear understanding of how elementary school administrators can be effective instructional leaders to their teachers to improve reading achievement for the students.

Summary

Section 2 presented details about the basic qualitative design and approach employed for the study, the participants involved, the types of data collected and the procedures for collecting data, my role as the researcher, and the data analysis procedures applied in the study. Then, using the methodologies described in the previous subsections, I analyzed data that assist in designing reading professional development opportunities and instructional practices to better prepare elementary school administrations with leading the improvement of reading achievement in the Sunnybrook Public School District. Section 3 will further address the design and rationale for forming

professional development and instructional practices to resolve the problem of this research study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This qualitative research study was conducted to develop an in-depth understanding of how elementary administrators in Title I schools were challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students, Sunnybrook Public School District. The study focused on the following research question: How do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students?

The study's findings suggested that elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District possessed the knowledge and the understanding of the ten functions of instructional leadership. They have the needed skills to be impactful and support their teachers to increase reading achievement. Moreover, findings indicated a significant need for in-depth professional development to strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders in assisting teachers with instructional strategies to increase reading achievement.

The redesigning and continuous improvement of professional development is critical to instructional leadership effectiveness possessed by elementary school administrators to support teachers reading instruction abilities to impact student reading achievement. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education, there needs to be a concerted effort to empower elementary school administrators with professional development to improve and continue developing their abilities. Thus, they will become stronger and more effective instructional leaders to assist teachers with the significant

impact of declining reading achievement levels of students. In addition, elementary school administrators coach and lead teachers into becoming more effective instructional classroom experts. Therefore, elementary school administrators and teachers must improve students reading achievement abilities by providing rigorous and effective instructional practices.

By revamping professional development focused on improving instructional leadership and increasing reading achievement, I will help ensure that elementary school administrators and teachers invest the same student growth mindset in reading. Professional development is vital to the continued success of elementary school administrators and ultimately to their schools and overall student achievement (Miller et al., 2020). Additionally, professional development must be strategically structured so that elementary school administrators can effectively use the new strategies learned to be effective instructional leaders to facilitate improved instructional practices and increased student achievement (LaPointe & Davis, 2021).

Findings suggest that elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District need professional development offerings, the project, to strengthen their ability to become more effective instructional leaders to assist teachers with instructional practices to increase reading achievement. My goal of this project is to better prepare elementary school administrators with the instructional leadership strategies needed to coach and lead their teachers into becoming stronger instructional leaders in their classrooms to impact reading achievement significantly.

Rationale

Miller et al. (2020) stated that professional development is vital to the continued success of elementary school administrators and ultimately to their schools and overall student achievement. Leadership determines the success and significance of an organization and is a key component of school improvement (McBrayer et al., 2020). The authors continued to state that while educational reforms focused on school accountability, principals must attend to tasks that lead to school improvement. These tasks include but are not limited to identifying instructional leadership practices and gaining a more comprehensive understanding of instructional leadership practices through leadership self-efficacy that may contribute to school improvement.

According to *Eğitim Bilim Dergisi* (2020), school administrators should continuously participate in professional development as lifelong learners to support the instructional needs of their teachers in the ever-changing state of education. They continue to suggest that school principals have an effective leadership structure, support teachers and help them create space to apply what they have learned, meaning that students and teachers have the opportunity to experience new experiences with the exchange of information and ideas. Thus, this project is deemed necessary for elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District. In my professional development project, I focused on what professional is needed to provide elementary school principals with the best research-based instructional strategies to assist teachers with the effective delivery of reading instructional practices to increase student reading achievement.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This section contains a discussion of the conceptual framework that guided the formation of the project was designed. During the literature review, I focused on professional development for elementary school administrators, its potential, and effectiveness in changing instructional leadership practices the impact student reading achievement. The possession of effective instructional leadership skills by school administrators is grounded in high-quality and intentional professional development that is ongoing, job-embedded, and focuses on the improvement of student learning (Miller et al., 2020).

Detail was given to researching professional development focused on the instructional leadership of elementary school administrators. The Walden University Library sites used for research included ERIC and EBSCO. I also employed Google Scholar. Keywords searched included: *professional development, self-efficacy, school-district support for elementary school administrators, professional development for elementary school administrators, effective elementary school administrators, driving and sustaining transformation, and instructional leadership learning and development*. This scholarly research consisted of locating peer-reviewed articles from 2016 – 2021.

Professional Development

As Levin et al. (2020) stated, high-quality professional learning can equip principals with the knowledge, mindset, and skills needed to support effective teaching and lead across their complete range of responsibilities. Strategically planned and

designed professional development assists in leading school administrators to become continuous life-long learners. Being a life-long learner strengthens their professional knowledge of current trends in education and their ability to be effective instructional leaders. Levin et al. (2020) communicated that high-quality professional development for principals addresses the following: managing change, creating collegial environments, and improving instruction with whole child education and equitable opportunities.

According to Cunningham et al. (2020), professional development offerings should be intentional for school principals to be effective and generate positive outcomes for instructional leaders. They include three types of knowledge: declarative, procedural, and contextual. They continue to state that each constructs the foundation for the next type.

For professional development to be effective, one must give consideration and time to principal self-efficacy, reflection, critical thinking, and the ability of the principal to transfer the knowledge of their teachers; thus, leading to effective teacher instructional practices and ultimately, student growth and achievement. Evans and Mohr (2020) emphasized that professional development opportunities for principals must be intentional, intellectually rigorous, and thought provoking. Participants should be motivated to question their practice as instructional leaders. Evans and Mohr (2020) believe seven beliefs should exist during professional development: (a) learning for principals is personal and is most effective when working in small groups, (b) principals foster more powerful faculty and student learning by focusing on their learning, (c) principals should be pushed beyond their assumptions, (d) time for focused reflection is essential, (e) strong leadership is necessary for strong democratic learning, (f) rigorous

planning is needed for flexible and responsive implementation, and (g) new learning is dependent on protected dissonance. Metcalf (2021) stated that for professional development to be effective and of high quality that it must include the seven principles in the design and implementation: saturated with data, content-specific, job-embedded, has collaboration, sustained, provides time for feedback, and is reflective.

School Administrator Self-Efficacy

An effective school administrator is a leader who focuses on guiding the direction of their school with fidelity. This is accomplished through their thinking, practices, and positive relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2020). School administrators must be known and understand how they impact instructional practices in their buildings. More importantly, they must be self-reflective of their instructional practices. Mulford and Silins (2020) stated that high core values and beliefs are vital to school administrators' ability to impact student success positively. This success is grounded in academic achievement, social development, and student empowerment influenced by effective leadership.

According to Hallinger (2021), to be an effective instructional leader, one succeeds at aligning the school's guides to improve and implement the school curriculum and has a positive and significant influence on teachers, students, and parents to improve the school's goals. School administrators as effective instructional leaders are highly flavored leaders, leading their schools to success. School administrators must understand and reflect on their self-efficacy and how their transformational leadership can improve school climate and, more importantly, teacher self-efficacy (Francisco, 2021). Each of the before mentioned impacts the overall success of the school.

Schrik & Wasonga (2019) stated that principals with greater self-efficacy beliefs were more steadfast in pursuing their goals, more adaptable to their environments, and did not waste time dating unsuccessful courses of action. Bandura (2020) described self-efficacy as a person's estimate or expectation of their ability to execute behavior needed to produce the desired outcomes, influence decisions, or persist with a behavior. Schrick & Wasonga (2019) communicated that principals can be seen as a point of reference explaining self-efficacy as "judgment of his or her capabilities to structure a particular course of action to produce desired outcomes in the school he or she leads." Research according to Versland (2020) has shown the connection between school leadership and self-efficacy:

Self-efficacy was a necessary component of successful school leadership because it affects choices principals make about what activities in which to engage as well as the coping strategies they employ as challenges emerge. They concluded that principals' sense of efficacy and their ability to influence others was vital to accomplishing instructional leadership practices associated with setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (p. 14).

Mesterova et al. (2015) suggested that effective leaders are set apart by what is likely their high levels of self-efficacy or belief in their capacity to perform the job or task; the assumption being that effective leaders are "better equipped to handle various situations and may transfer their efficacy to their followers, resulting in superior group

performance." Transformational school administrators that possess a strong self-efficacy focused on instructional leadership and the success of their school.

Project Description

Based on my research, I developed a 3-day professional development course. This professional development will serve as the basis for creating a continuous, high-quality professional development setting conducive to the critical need to mold elementary school administrators into strong instructional leaders. In addition, the professional development will equip the elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School district with the resources and strategies needed to support teachers in reading instruction. All schools within the Sunnybrook Public School District are unique in their ways. However, a commonality is that each administrator needs continuous support and professional development to address reading growth and proficiency, which has increased due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

Resources and Existing Supports

Resources needed for the 3-day professional development include buy-in from the Sunnybrook Public School District, including financial support and instructional materials. As the researcher, I will seek, meet with, and secure a professional development company that offers instructional leadership sessions for elementary school administrators. Additionally, a meeting location will need to be confirmed. This location will need to provide smaller rooms for breakout groups. Funding would assist in covering refreshments and securing instructional resources/materials.

A staff member from the district's instructional technology support staff will need to ensure secure and strong internet connection, ensure that projectors are functioning appropriately, and be available if participants need individual technical support. In addition, each of the three sessions would occur on a required workday. Thus, eliminating the need for school administrators to be off-campus and unavailable on a student's school day.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Potential barriers include possible conflicts with the district's calendar and possible vacation days schedule by school administrators. To minimize possible calendar conflicts, I will provide two different dates to the school district calendar committee before October 2021. The calendar committee will take the 2022–2023 school year's potential calendar to the school board for approval in January 2022. Once placed on the school district's calendar, this prior notice will ensure that school district events and requested days by school administrators will not conflict with the professional development dates. In addition, the event will take place at a location within the district, eliminating the costs of paying for a venue and will also be free to school administrators.

Proposal for Implementation

Each professional development session will provide a solution(s) to the problem of this study. In the Sunnybrook Public School District, elementary administrators of rural, Title I schools have been challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students. Ultimately, the goal is to promote positive social change that includes increased instructional leadership abilities for elementary school administrators to impact reading

achievement positively. Each day will begin with a specific focus topic, including a why or what focus for school administrators. For example, why is it important to be a strong instructional leader and what is needed for you to grow from a great instructional leader to an excellent instructional leader?

After this professional development, the intent is that elementary school administrators will have acquired the needed skills and strategies to pivot from great to excellent instructional leaders in their schools. As a result, they will become positive agents of change in their schools, evident by increased student reading achievement. In addition, their growth in instructional leaders will positively impact the instructional leadership of their teachers.

As previously stated, this is a 3-day professional development. Each session will last a total of 4 hours daily. This allocated time also includes breaks. Participants will be able to enter the venue 30 minutes before each session beginning. This time will allow participants to partake in a light breakfast and hold conversations with other participants.

Roles and Responsibilities

As the organizer for this professional development, I dedicated significant time and effort to ensure that all activities stated on the agenda were purposeful and engaging. Additionally, my role and responsibilities included but were not limited to informing and engaging all the school district and participants. I will secure adequate funding, ensure that the venue has the needed setting, including breakout rooms, and procure the required instructional materials and resources suggested by the company to lead professional development.

Participant roles will be to come with an open mind, be ready to learn, and be engaged in the presentations and activities stated on the agenda. In addition, they must be willing to communicate and share honestly with the other education professionals attending. Finally, all participants must understand and accept that this is a 3-day professional development opportunity and their attendance and participation is essential.

Project Evaluation Plan

I intent that my proposed project will strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders in assisting teachers with instructional strategies to increase student reading achievement. This project will produce excellent and numerous outcomes for the participants, their teachers, and their students. Elementary school administrators will become more confident in their profession, increase/improve their self-efficacy, and improve their ability to be effective instructional leaders for their teachers. Teachers will be able to implement the instructional strategies shared by their school administrators to provide more effective instruction in their classrooms, ultimately leading to increased student reading achievement.

I will use the following questions to evaluate if the professional development met the goals and the anticipated outcomes: Has your knowledge level of the importance of self-efficacy? As an elementary school administrator, have you learned how to become a more effective instructional leader in your school? Are you better prepared to provide and hold effective PLCs, coaching sessions, etc., with your teachers in the area of reading?

Project Implications

The expectation is that this project will accomplish the stated goal to strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders in assisting teachers with instructional strategies to increase reading achievement. In addition, this project will result in numerous implementable recommendations for elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School District.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

My goal for this project was to strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders to assist teachers with instructional strategies to increase reading achievement. This project was valuable considering how elementary school administrators have a positive influence and critical role in the instructional success of teachers and student learning outcomes. According to Levin et al. (2020) "...high-quality professional learning opportunities for principals—including preparation programs, induction supports for early-career principals, ongoing training, one-on-one support through coaching and mentoring, and peer networks—can build leadership capacity" (p. 1). Therefore, I focused on the importance of high-quality professional development for elementary school administrators and their strategies to improve students' reading achievement and its potential to positively influence student achievement and social change beyond the local level.

Limitations

It is important to involve school leaders and teachers in professional development to improve student academic outcomes and maximize success (Holloway, 2020). A potential limitation of this project was that participants only consisted of elementary school administrations. Suppose school administrators do not transfer, share, or implement new learning and strategies from the 3-day session with fidelity with their teachers. In that case, this may negatively impact teacher instructional processes and

student achievement. In addition, a limitation of this professional development project was the availability and willingness of elementary school administrators to engage in this research experience that would lead to their professional growth.

Most participants struggled to remain focused on the need for elementary school administrator professional growth during the interview process. Still, they would revert to conversations on the additional workload and constant program changes implemented by the school district during the COVID-19 pandemic. A further limitation is that elementary school administrators must realize that the changes brought about by school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the percentage of students not proficient in reading. Thus, increasing the need for elementary school administrators to become more effective instructional leaders for their teachers.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The local problem of this study was that elementary administrators of rural, Title I schools had been challenged to support teachers' reading instruction for students. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary administrators of Title I schools described the strategies they use to support teachers' instruction of reading for students. By creating a professional development offering for elementary school administrators, instructional resources and tools are provided for them to become more effective instructional leaders to their teachers.

Upon careful review, there are opportunities for refining the project. For example, this study could have included teachers and reading specialists as participants in the interview process. This inclusion would have allowed for more feedback and

understanding of the support need by teachers and reading specialists. In addition, this inclusion would only strengthen the sustainability of the school administrators, teachers, and reading specialists to become more effective instructional leaders, leading to increased student achievement.

In hindsight, the sample size of the study could have been larger. Due to time constraints and the hectic workplace set by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing participants with an electronic questionnaire should have been utilized. This electronic questionnaire could lead to an increase in participants. In addition, I could restate to include and focus on teacher and reading specialist's thoughts on strategies needed to improve reading achievement for students. If this had occurred, I would then allow the study to focus on the best strategies needed to increase student reading achievement via the eyes and thoughts of elementary school administrators, teachers, and reading specialists.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

This research study has challenged me mentally and professionally. First, I had to acquire and perfect the knowledge and research skills needed to succeed at the prospectus level. Second, my writing ability at the academic level was constantly challenged and rejected until it reached the appropriate required levels. Finally, the most challenging stage was perfecting my literature reviews. At times, it proved demanding and time-consuming to ensure that I had reviewed adequate peer-reviewed articles to ensure the appropriate saturation requirements of the study.

This research process on professional development and school administrators has opened my mind that research shows that continuous professional development needs to be provided to school administrators to ensure that they are equipped with the best practices to lead their schools. In addition, there need to be more professional development offerings from school districts for their school administrators. As a new elementary school administrator, my research has ignited an inspiration for me. I have a new passion for constantly reading scholarly articles focused on specific research-based strategies needed that will assist in grooming me into becoming an effective instructional leader.

As a result of this research study, I can confidently say that I am better equipped to meet the district's and my school's number one goal: student achievement and growth in reading. This entire process converted my thought process from simply being an elementary school administrator to a scholar and practitioner in education leadership. More importantly, I have the needed confidence, skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities to facilitate and lead professional development projects to develop elementary school administrators into strong, knowledgeable, and excellent instructional leaders.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

I expect that my research will significantly contribute to the existing literature on understanding how elementary administrators in rural Title I schools describe the strategies they use to improve reading achievement for students. Expectations are that research and project findings will be a resource for elementary school administrators to employ when supporting teachers' reading instruction for students. I anticipate the project

will have a lasting influence on how elementary administrators in a rural, Title I school describe the strategies they use to improve reading achievement for students and instructional practices that teachers will provide in the classroom setting.

I am a transformational leader. A transformation is what occurred throughout the years of completing this research study. My mindset has grown from an assistant principal to the elementary school principal to an educational practitioner. I consider myself an agent of change, leading positive change in my school and now at the district, state, and national arenas. More importantly, I now understand and desire that needed and required professional development to perfect my instructional leadership abilities.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

During this research study, my purpose was to understand how elementary school administrators could be effective instructional leaders for their teachers to improve reading achievement for the students. Findings indicated a significant need for in-depth professional development to strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders in assisting teachers with instructional strategies to increase reading achievement. Thus, an opportunity to promote social change is evident and includes elementary school administrators' increased instructional leadership abilities to impact reading achievement positively.

Conclusion

During this qualitative research study, I aimed to understand how elementary school administrators could be effective instructional leaders to their teachers to improve reading achievement for the students. Data collection resulted in findings indicating a

significant need for in-depth professional development to strengthen elementary school administrators' ability to become more effective instructional leaders in assisting teachers with instructional strategies to increase reading achievement.

Research suggested that more professional development is needed for elementary school administration to assist them in being strong and effective instructional leaders. Study participants felt that additional training and resources were required for them to be excellent instructional leaders, especially due to the impact of COVID-19 on student achievement. Learning is constant and continuous. This continuous growth will equip elementary school administrators with instructional strategies to be effective instructional leaders for their teachers. This empowerment will ultimately lead to increased student achievement in reading.

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Appendix A: The Project

Purpose

The Pathway to Effective Instructional Leadership Professional Development will serve as the basis for creating a continuous high-quality professional development setting that is conducive to the critical need of molding elementary school administrators into strong instructional leaders. The professional development will equip the elementary school administrators in the Sunnybrook Public School district with the resources and strategies needed to support teachers in the area of reading instruction. Principals will be subjected to collaborate and converse with peers in regards to instructional leadership and reading achievement and each participant will develop an “action plan” tailored around the needs of their individual schools.

Design & Structure

This will be a 3-day professional development opportunity. All sessions will last four hours. Each session will have a clearly defined purpose, include breakout sessions that will allow engaging collaboration time for participants. District reading specialist and elementary directors of curriculum and instruction will facilitate each session.

Agenda

Participants will be provided a light breakfast daily and snacks during schedule 10-minute breaks. A new agenda will be provided daily and each session will end with participants sharing “take-a-ways”. Day #1 will include a slideshow to guide and lead the day.

Agenda for Day #1 Professional Development Project

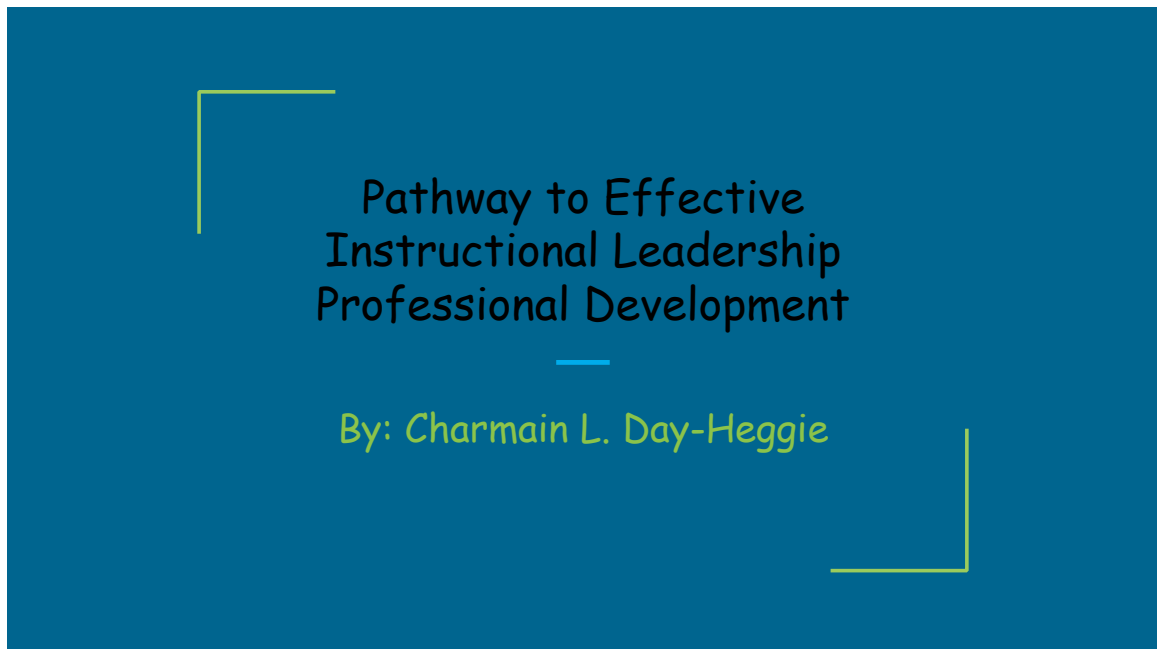
8:00-8:30 - Meet & Greet (light breakfast)

8:30-9:30 – Slide presentation & discussion

9:30-9:40 - Break

9:40-11:30 – Brainstorming: Are you an effective instructional leader? Do you really know and understand the needs of your school and teachers? What resources do you have to be an effective instructional leader? What resources do you need to be an effective instructional leader and agent of change in your school?

11:30-12:00 – What is an action plan?



Research Question

How do elementary school administrators describe the strategies they use to support teachers' reading instruction for students?

What is effective instructional leadership?

Purpose: What is instructional leadership? How does it benefit teachers? How does it impact student growth?

Connect: What "action planned" is needed to meet the needs of your school?

Learn: What needs to be changed/modified with your current instructional leadership practices? How has your mindset changed in regards to effective instructional leadership?



Instructional Leadership

What do you believe are your strengths and weaknesses as an instructional leader?



The Characteristics of Instructional Leadership

- A continuous learner
- Effective working with adult learners
- An effective communicator
- Collaborative
- Knowledge of content and pedagogy
- Knowledge of assessment and data
- A systems thinker

How does instructional leadership improving the quality of teaching & student learning?

- Instructional leaders know what is happening in their classrooms
- Instructional leaders develop the capacity for their staff by building upon their strengths and minimizing their weaknesses

Agenda for Day #2 Professional Development Project

8:00-8:30 - Meet & Greet (light breakfast)

8:30-9:30 – Recap of presentation from Day #1

9:30-9:40 - Break

9:40-11:30 –What is principal self-efficacy and how does it impact their reflection, critical thinking, and their ability to transfer knowledge of their teachers?

11:30-12:00 – Collaborate with table partners to generate action plans



Pathway to Effective Instructional Leadership Professional Development

By: Charmain L. Day-Heggie



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Agenda for Day #3 Professional Development Project

8:00-8:30 – Light breakfast & table collaboration activity

8:30-8:40 – Recap of Day#2

8:40-9:00 - What is your new definition and goal as an effective instructional leader?

9:00-9:10 – Break

9:10-10:10 – What barriers hinder continuous professional learning for elementary school administrators?

10:10-11:45 - Collaborative planning to create action plans based on school needs

11:45-12:00 – Debrief and sharing of session “take-aways”

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

School Administrator

1. Introductions
2. Clarify the purpose of my study
3. Ask if participants have questions about the consent form
4. Ask permission to record the interview
5. Record the time, place and date of the interview
6. Conduct the interview
7. Identify the participant with a code while conducting the interview
8. Turn off recording at the end of the interview
9. Thank the participant for being part of my study

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. As a school administrator, how do you articulate your school's vision and goal setting?
2. As an instructional leader, how do you facilitate teacher understanding of reading achievement instructional strategies?
3. As school administrator, how do you address the challenges teachers meet in increasing reading achievement?
4. How do you support your teachers in the area of reading achievement (i.e. coordinating teaching, professional development)?
5. What challenges influence your ability to effectively lead teachers in improving their instructional methods to increase reading achievement?
6. As the school administrator, how do you engage in crucial conversations with teachers to initiate change to improve instructional practices?
7. How does your school try to improve reading achievement beyond just looking at the state and district criterion referenced test data?
8. How do you create a school climate of trust with teachers?
9. What future plans do you plan to implement to improve reading achievement at your school?