

2023

## Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Instructional Strategies for Low SES Students

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Lesley LeGere

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Instructional Strategies for Low SES Students

by

Lesley LeGere

MA, Pace University, 2011

BS, Iona College, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2023

## Abstract

Low socioeconomic status (SES) students tend to have poorer academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. One of the biggest influences for the academic success of low SES students is the use of varying instructional strategies. This problem is important because all students should receive an equitable education regardless of status. The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which suggested that teachers are leaders who modify their instructional strategies based on the abilities and needs of their students. Research questions for the study included how the district supports teachers, what previous training or experience teachers have working with low SES students, and how teachers perceived they support low SES students in language arts and mathematics. A qualitative research design was used to collect data through semistructured, open-ended interviews with seven elementary school teachers. Data analysis included a narrative analysis of the transcribed interviews. The results of this study indicated that participants feel they have not been nor are currently being supported by the district when it comes to training or professional development for varying instructional strategies or how to work with low SES students. These teachers are using varying instructional strategies and are confident that they are effective, but welcome training from the district. This study may create positive social change by bringing awareness to the need of support and training for teachers using varying instructional strategies for low SES students.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Dave and my deceased mother, Carol. Throughout this whole process, Dave became very familiar with the words “I can’t” or “Go without me.” Even still, he supported me through my journey, knowing that it wouldn’t last forever and that it would only advance my career and open new and exciting career opportunities that would benefit our family.

My mother passed before I began this educational journey and before I even got married. I can only hope that she would be proud of the hard work and determination that I have had to further myself and my career.

## Acknowledgments

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Using effective teaching strategies when working with low socioeconomic status (SES) students can be challenging. Low SES students face many obstacles, both inside and outside of school (Hirn et al., 2018). While teachers cannot control all aspects of their low SES students' lives, they can do their best to assist them in their academic achievement. Odom et al. (2019) discussed that these students' needs and the instruction they receive do not always endorse high levels of academic success. The problem is that teachers nationwide are challenged to support the language arts and mathematics achievement of students from low SES backgrounds. Conducting this study was important because all students should receive an equitable education regardless of status. Awareness of what strategies work and ideas on proper training and professional development for teachers are pertinent to delivering the most effective strategies and instruction for low SES students.

The data that emerged from this study may create positive social change that supports the elementary school and teachers in South Carolina where the study occurred and other schools and staff in communities with similar demographics. I discovered teaching strategies that are being used among multiple staff members and uncovered the participants' descriptions and perceptions of how they contribute to the academic achievement of the low SES students in their classrooms. Uncovering this information can lead to new and updated practices for schools and staff that could include adding services such as professional development for staff on strategies for teacher use and background knowledge on servicing students of poverty.

In this chapter, I will state and explain the problem that was the focus of this study. I will further explain the purpose and research questions that guided the study. I will also define the study's framework and how the framework related to the study's approach. In this chapter, I will define key concepts and terms that supported the study, and provide information on the assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study.

### **Background**

According to research, teachers' lack of using quality instructional strategies for students of poverty continues to be a problem (Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua, 2019). Payne (2018) posited that there are differences between low SES and middle-class people. Those differences need to be understood by people, such as teachers, to help understand the individuals they are working alongside. When compared to their nonpoverty peers, low SES students tend to be less proficient in their academic achievement (Hirn et al., 2018). Stipek and Chiatovich (2017) argued that low-income students generally have lower academic achievement in reading and math than students who are not from low-income backgrounds. Hirn et al. (2018) found that low language arts and mathematics scores have been linked to students of poverty. They posited that low SES students are predicted to have lower academic achievement due to the circumstances of their poverty status. Low SES students are often underserved with a lack of received instructional strategies and teachers who are culturally incompetent (Byrd, 2020). Research has shown that teachers' strategies are among one of the biggest influences of student academic achievement (Banerjee & Lamb, 2016; Lewka, Reddy,

Dudek, & Hua, 2019). However, research has also suggested that students in high poverty areas are less likely to receive quality instructional strategies. Educators who used instructional strategies have been found to have higher student engagement and achievement (Lekwa, A. J., Reddy, L. A., & Shernoff, E. S., 2019). Reyes et al. (2018) suggested that it is the role of teachers to guarantee that students from low SES backgrounds are given the opportunities to address their educational needs. Without varying instructional strategies, low SES students tend to not only have lower academic achievement, but they often have behavior issues and lower engagement in the classroom (Archambault et al., 2020). This lack in academic achievement often continues throughout their educational years.

In 2018, 11.9 million children, or 16.2%, were estimated to be living in poverty across the United States (Poverty USA, 2018). Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds tend to experience more academic problems in their education compared to others (Williams et al., 2017). They noted that these students' socioeconomic status was a factor in their performance and achievement and a factor in their behavior and attitudes, and their teachers' instructional strategies. Jensen (2009) stated that cognitive ability, achievement, retention rates, and literacy are directly connected to socioeconomic status. According to Boatwright and Midcalf (2019), it is a teacher's duty to understand that academic achievement is affected by poverty. Students living in poverty have a higher probability of academic failure and often experience a lack in skills in mathematics and language arts. Because students living in poverty tend to experience many challenges and stressors, it is important for teachers to assess the students to understand the skills they

need and utilize differentiated ways to teach them (Jensen, 2009). According to Payne (2018), to reach poverty students in the classroom, teachers need to have relevant instructional strategies. These differentiated strategies assist in targeting the varying and diverse needs of the different students in a teacher's class (Jones, 2019). Banerjee and Lamb (2016) conducted a systematic review that revealed contributing factors for why disadvantaged students underachieved in science and math. It was found that teachers who lacked a positive classroom environment and instructional strategies contributed significantly to the low academic achievement of disadvantaged students. This study was needed to bring awareness to the use of instructional strategies that support low SES students. This study may also potentially offer some ideas on instructional strategies that work and have success or instructional strategies that may need to be updated.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem that was studied was that students from low SES backgrounds, at the study site, have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. To assist in providing data about the problem, an elementary school in suburban South Carolina where the problem exists was used. In this K-5 school, many students from low SES backgrounds have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. In this elementary school, many low SES students receive low report card scores, low test scores, and require small group instruction (Principal, personal communication, August 27, 2020). According to an official budget report dated December 1, 2018, in 2018, student poverty levels at this study site were 56.3%. According to South Carolina (SC) School Report Card (2021), in 2018, 42.2% of students at this school site in Grades 3-5

were either approaching expectations or did not meet expectations in language arts. In 2019, 41.4% of students at this school site in Grades 3-5 were either approaching expectations or did not meet expectations in language arts. For both 2018 and 2019, these scores were less than the state average in both categories of approaching expectations and did not meet expectations in language arts. In mathematics, 28.2.% of students at this school site in Grades 3-5 were either approaching expectations or did not meet expectations in 2018 (SC School Report Card, 2021). In 2019, 33.7% of students at this school site in Grades 3-5 were either approaching expectations or did not meet expectations in mathematics. For both 2018 and 2019, these scores were less than the state average in both categories of approaching expectations and did not meet expectations for mathematics. In 2019, student performance was rated as below average. Of the below average student performance, 35.9% was economically disadvantaged students. These ratings indicated that many of the students in the group of 56.3% who were at the poverty level needed additional academic support as they were not meeting academic standards. In this elementary school, teacher observations have shown that teachers are lacking adequate teaching strategies to meet the needs of low SES students (Assistant principal, personal communication, September 29, 2020). According to the administration at the school site, the lower academic achievement of low SES students was a problem at the school and the principal believes that this problem could be due to the lack of differentiation and use of varying instructional strategies (Principal, personal communication, October 5, 2021).



### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. This study used a constructivist paradigm, which is subjective and uses the perspectives of personal experiences from participants (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This paradigm helped to understand the problem that students from low SES backgrounds tend to have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics.

I examined the teachers' perceptions of how they support these low SES students in their language arts and mathematics instruction. Based on the results of this study, I hoped to make recommendations that can assist staff in using instructional strategies to help their students from low SES backgrounds achieve higher academic performance and possibly increase student motivation and engagement. By interviewing teachers regarding language arts and mathematics instructional strategies, I was able to discover what instructional strategies are being used for language arts and mathematics. By researching the instructional strategies being used by teachers, instructional coaches and district level personnel may be able to develop programs and professional development that will assist, support, and educate teachers in the use of different instructional strategies for their diversified students. These potential programs and professional development can assist teachers with providing classroom instruction that offers a variety of different instructional strategies that may work best for their low SES students. The research study's results will be provided to district level personnel and instructional coaches for their review.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this qualitative study were as follows:

RQ1: How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?

RQ2: What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Students from low SES backgrounds tend to have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics compared to their peers (Hirn et al., 2018). Understanding the use of differing teaching strategies may help to improve the academic achievement of low SES students. Examining teachers' perceptions of how they support low SES students in their language arts and mathematics instruction can provide insight into the instructional strategies that are being used for low SES students and can suggest a possible need for different strategies to be used.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) life cycle theory, which they later changed the name to situational leadership theory. This situational leadership theory suggests that leaders modify their styles based on different situations, their followers, and the abilities of their followers (Raza &

Sikandar, 2018). When this theory is applied to the classroom, the situational leader is the teacher and the followers are the students. The teacher must modify and differentiate the instructional strategies to support students based on the different levels and abilities of the students. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1969), the leader, or the teacher, when applied to a classroom setting, should determine the abilities, limitations, and readiness of their followers, the students, and adjust their teaching methods according to those characteristics. Under their situational leadership theory, the leader focuses on the different tasks and activities that are to be used that will enable improvements and outcomes for their followers (Blanchard & Hersey, 1970, 1996).

Using Hersey and Blanchard's theory, I investigated teachers' perceptions about how they supported low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics through the use of different instructional strategies based on their different levels and abilities. In Chapter 2, a more thorough explanation of the framework and supporting research that informed this study is further described.

Using Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership theory as the framework, I created interview questions for the study that focused on the teachers' strategies that they use when modifying and choosing their instructional strategies for low SES students. These questions included probes on how teachers support low SES students using different instructional strategies and how the success of the strategies was assessed.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study used a basic qualitative method. Qualitative research

includes using inquiry and data collection methods to study social reality through the actions of people in their everyday lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Qualitative research is used for understanding the views, perceptions, and experiences of a sample of participants, such as teachers, which are the focus of this doctoral study. This qualitative approach focused on teachers and their individual experiences with low SES students, as well as their instructional strategies that helped to support the students from low SES backgrounds and poverty.

For this study, semistructured, open-ended interviews with teachers were used to collect qualitative data. Participants had the option to conduct the interviews by phone or by video conferencing. I used purposeful sampling by inviting the 50 teachers who work at the school. Teachers in this school teach all subject areas for their grade level. I wanted to use a minimum of 10 voluntary participants; however, I was only able to obtain seven participants. Rubin and Rubin (2005) discuss that having large amounts of participants does not mean that a researcher will obtain credible findings. It is the variety of perspectives that helps build credibility. Interview transcripts were used to analyze the data collected in the interviews. The transcripts were used to first code the data, then the coded data was put into categories, and lastly, themes were determined.

### **Definitions**

The following terms are related to this study:

*Cooperative learning*: An instructional technique that uses small, collaborative groups of students who work together to complete learning activities where all students are accountable (Van Ryzin et al, 2020).

*Differentiated instruction:* When teachers modify curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of diverse students (Jones, 2019). According to Tomlinson (2014), differentiated instruction is when teachers engage students through the use of different approaches or strategies using connections to students' interests, varied difficulty, and different rates of instruction.

*Effective questioning:* A strategy used by teachers that includes discussion and questioning that gets students to reflect on their learning and think critically (Lee, 2013)

*Graphic organizers:* Instructional tools that can be scaffolded to help support student learning (Green & Dillard, 2021).

*Instructional strategies:* The specific techniques and methods used by teachers to help students learn (Gentile, 2021). According to Moen et al. (2019), instructional strategies are a necessary component to support the positive academic achievement for low SES students.

*Low SES students:* Low SES students, for the purpose of this study, were defined as students who receive free or reduced lunch.

*Question stems:* Question stems, for the purpose of this study, was defined as questions asked by the teacher that prompts student thinking and understanding. The questions asked may be adjusted in complexity to meet different student levels and abilities. Hirn et al. (2018) and Odom et al. (2019) discussed a need for this type of teaching strategy for low SES students.

### **Assumptions**

Certain aspects of the study were assumed but cannot be demonstrated to be true.

It was assumed that the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study were honest and accurate when responding to interview questions. It is their responses and their perceptions and experiences shared that created meaningfulness and validity to the context of this study. It was also assumed that teachers at the study site may not have been using a variety of different instructional strategies to meet the needs of low SES students. Therefore, the study may contribute evidence to the literature that those instructional strategies are needed for low SES students.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of the study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding how they support the academic achievement of low SES students in language arts and mathematics through the use of varying instructional strategies. Teachers provided this information by participating in semistructured interviews that included open-ended questions. The questions focused on teachers and their experiences using differentiated instructional strategies with low SES students. This focus was chosen because low SES students in this school are not meeting expectations and are exhibiting poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics.

For this study, I only used general education teachers as voluntary participants. I decided that I would limit the participants to general education teachers because their classes include a variety of student demographics and abilities, including low SES students. General education teachers teach all core subject areas, including language arts and mathematics, which was the focus of this study. I also limited the participants in this study to general education teachers that were at least in their second year of teaching, but

no less, as experience working with low SES students was needed for the study. Special areas teachers were not included as they teach physical education, music, library, STEM, or art. I did not include any special education teachers as their classrooms and teaching methods are already modified specifically for special needs students. Although these certain types of teachers were excluded, the study provides rich context that may be transferable to other schools and institutions.

### **Limitations**

A few limitations of this study may have existed. First, I chose to conduct this study at the school where I currently teach. Conducting the study where I currently work may have caused me to have some potential biases. It was essential for me to understand the biases that I may have so that I could be reflective and manage them throughout my research study. I needed to ensure that my perceptions of the participants and the experiences with the participants that I interviewed remained neutral and nonjudgmental. I remained objective and dealt strictly with the facts without including any personal feelings towards the participants or their answers. One way to manage and alleviate my bias and its effect on the credibility and validity of my study was to document the responses of the participants, document my experiences throughout the study, including what codes and conclusions were made from the data, and how the data was interpreted. To document these experiences, I used analytic memos that included detailed accounts of the procedures, methods, and data collected, which helped to establish dependability.

Second, the possible apprehension that teachers may have had when answering my semistructured, open-ended interview questions was considered. I am hopeful that the

teachers who volunteered to be participants were honest and forthcoming with their thoughts and perceptions when answering the interview questions. To help alleviate this potential limitation, it was important for me to build rapport and trust with participants when conducting the interviews. I used enthusiasm and active listening during the interviews.

Although there may have been limitations, I believe that creating a thick description of the research context allows readers to see how the research study's findings and conclusions can be applied to other situations, settings, and groups, creating and establishing transferability (see Shenton, 2004). Providing the evidence from the research helps the readers to understand how the study can be applicable.

### **Significance**

Through the data collection from participant interviews, this study has the potential to contribute to advance knowledge regarding strategies that can increase the academic achievement of low SES students. According to research, effective teaching strategies positively impact low SES students and may reduce gaps in academic achievement (Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua, 2019). Awareness of what strategies are currently being used and which strategies work for low SES students can help contribute to the practices being used in other institutions. The study has the potential to contribute to advance knowledge of practices and policies through the implementation and use of training and professional development. This possible implementation of training and professional development can help assist, support, and educate teachers in using a variety of instructional strategies to teach the strategies to low SES students. Professional



development advancements could also include providing teachers with background knowledge on servicing and understanding low SES students. According to Banerjee and Lamb (2016), understanding factors that contribute to the lack of academic success for disadvantaged students can benefit institutions in ensuring awareness and implementing things such as training, encouragement, and intervention.

The data derived from this study may create positive social change that supports the elementary school in South Carolina where the study will occur and may also assist teachers in communities with similar demographics. Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua (2019) found that teachers who used lower quality teaching and instructional strategies had fewer academic gains among high poverty students. This qualitative research study could lead to social change by bringing awareness to the instructional strategies that are being implemented in classrooms with low SES students. I was able to discover if the instructional strategies are being used among multiple staff members and the teachers' descriptions and perceptions of how well the strategies work for the low SES students' academic achievement in their classrooms. I was also able to discover if there were any instructional strategies that have been most successful for teaching low SES students in language arts and mathematics at the elementary level. Reynolds et al. (2019) suggested that teachers who understand their low SES students' needs are aware of the teaching strategies they need and use to meet those students' needs.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I explained the problem that students from low SES backgrounds tend to have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. I explained

the purpose and research questions that guide the study to investigate the problem. I also defined the study's framework based on Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership theory. According to Hersey and Blanchard's model, teachers are the leaders that modify and change their instructional strategies based on the needs and abilities of their followers, their students, more specifically addressing the need to support their low SES students. In this chapter, I defined key concepts of the study and terms that supported the study and assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, I will include current literature that explains the relevance of this problem. The literature provides more detailed information about how the framework supports the research and the study. It also describes a review of literature as it relates to all aspects of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that I studied was that students from low SES backgrounds tend to have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support the poor academic achievement of low SES students in language arts and mathematics. Current literature has established that students from low SES backgrounds require varied instructional strategies to alleviate the detriments that they face in academics. In this chapter, I include an exhaustive review of the information from current literature that explains the relevance of the problem that was studied.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Literature searches were conducted using Walden University's library. The Education Source, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, and ERIC databases were used to search for the literature needed for this study. Criteria used in the searches included articles that were full text, peer reviewed, and published between 2016 and 2021. Key search terms and term combinations for the literature included the following: *instruct, practice or instruct, method, teach, teach method, teach strategy, strategies to engage SES students, teach practices, instructional strategies for SES, best practice, individualized instruction, classroom technique, situational leadership, Hersey, Blanchard, Hersey and Blanchard, low socioeconomic status, low income, impoverished, disadvantaged, poor, poverty, underserved, low SES, social class, success, achieve, and achievement.*

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which suggests that leaders adjust their styles to different situations. Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) model suggests that leaders modify and change their instructional strategies and styles based on the needs and abilities of their followers (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). When applying this theory to this study, the leaders are the teachers and the followers are their students. This study focused specifically on teachers adjusting their instructional strategies to address the needs and different abilities of their low SES students. As Hersey and Blanchard (1970, 1996) discussed, the situational leadership theory can be applied to many different settings, one of them being the educational setting and focuses on meeting the needs of the followers, or students in this case. According to White and Greenwood (2002), as a situational leader, it is the teacher's responsibility to assess the needs of their students and know what the student's need, as well as be able to differentiate their instructional strategies to meet those needs. It is essential for teachers to choose different instructional strategies to meet the educational goals and academic achievement of low SES students, as well as all students.

Leahy and Shore (2019) discussed how research has shown that schools with effective leadership have had great success in the academic achievement of their low SES student populations. In their study, one of the factors that led to the success of their low SES students was the presence of situational leadership, where the teacher was able to adjust their styles based on needs. Depending on the situations, they modified their styles, which led to more schoolwide success. They suggest that this type of leadership promotes

growth and effectiveness in the success of the school and the students' academic success.

Definitions for Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory are essential for this study and its concept. In respect to education in the classroom, Hersey and Blanchard (1969) refer to the leaders as being the teachers of students. They refer to the followers as being the students to which the leaders, or teachers, must adjust. When a situational leadership role is assumed by the teacher and their instructional strategies are chosen based on the needs and levels of their students, improvements in the academic achievement of students can be achieved (Raza & Sikandar, 2018).

Poverty or low SES students and their academic achievement has long been researched. From the research I have reviewed, it has been an ongoing problem for years and the use and quality of varied instructional strategies is a determining factor in assisting with the problem. This current study benefited from my using Hersey and Blanchard's framework as it showed the varied instructional strategies that the leaders, or teachers, are using to support the abilities and needs of their low SES students. From participant responses, I uncovered just how much variation in instructional strategies is being used and determined ones that seem to work well with low SES students. This study also benefited from this framework as it aided in keeping the interview questions for participants focused on instructional strategies.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables**

Students of generational poverty experience larger deficits in academic achievement and development. Low SES students tend to be less proficient in academics when compared to their nonpoverty peers, especially in language arts and mathematics

(Hirn et al., 2018). Students from high-income families have been found to have cognitive scores 60% above low SES students (Williams et al., 2017). Williams et al. (2017) also noted that high-income students and low-income students showed score gaps of 20 points or more in reading and mathematics. Low SES students have been found to have low language skills and greater language difficulties (Qi et al., 2020). Instructional support can have positive impacts on language skills and language development. Detriments of skills in language, such as reading fluency, can negatively impact educational achievement for low SES students (Lange, 2019). Using different instructional strategies in low SES schools can help low SES students have higher academic achievement in language, cognition, and literacy (Nag et al., 2016). Discrepancies in academic achievement in language arts between students of poverty and their nonpoverty peers are noticeable (Kennedy, 2018). Classroom practices and instructional strategies can help to alleviate this discrepancy. Developing vocabulary and oral language in the early years of low SES students' educational journey is necessary for future educational success, and if not developed, can have long-lasting effects of language difficulties (Seven et al., 2020). Research has shown that a current gap exists in fluency between low SES students and their peers (Lange, 2019). These students lack the necessary skills that are needed and this causes difficulties in their learning and academic achievement. Teaching quality can impact these deficits in skills negatively or positively.

Low SES students often have lower achievement in their mathematics skills (Banerjee & Lamb, 2016). Hentges et al. (2019) discussed that mathematics is an area where lower academic achievement is prevalent for low SES students. This lower

achievement can be a sign that these students will likely continue to have less academic success as they continue through their academic years. Jacob et al. (2017) believed that instructional strategies and instructional quality must exist to increase the academic achievement in mathematics for low SES students. According to Engel et al. (2016), gaps in academic achievement between students of poverty versus their nonpoverty peers is due to schools being unprepared and having limited resources. Effective schools are needed in low income and low resource communities to succeed in supporting students in their learning (Schwartz et al., 2019). To have growth in academic achievement, these schools should have teachers that support low SES students through instructional strategies, such as high order thinking, and lessons that are engaging. Providing varying teaching strategies can help encourage low SES students to have academic success regardless of limited resources or parental support (Bose, 2020). Classrooms that use instructional strategies are essential for the participation of low SES students (Archambault et al., 2020). Classrooms that use varying instructional strategies have the ability to reduce or limit the academic achievement gap that exists for low SES students (Aguiar & Aguiar, 2020). These classrooms need to have instruction that is stimulating and planned. Teachers who have strong content knowledge and use effective teaching strategies are needed to lessen the academic achievement gap and widen the success of low SES students (Hirn et al., 2018).

According to Šafránková and Zátopková (2017), teachers decide how students learn and they modify their teaching strategies to assist students in achieving academic success. Teachers are pivotal in the success and learning of disadvantaged students. They

help to bring and build knowledge and skills and help to build abilities and capabilities in all students, regardless of socioeconomic status (Lekwa, A. J., Reddy, L. A., & Shernoff, E. S., 2019; Moen et al., 2019; Nolan & Lamb, 2019; Šafránková & Zátopková, 2017). Since low SES students face many deficits in their academic success, it is essential for teachers to modify their teaching to support low SES students.

### **How Low SES Affects Student Academic Achievement**

Poverty and poor academic achievement have been found to have a direct correlation to one another (Dotson & Foley, 2017). This correlation between the two begins in the early stages of a student's education. The most crucial years of a child's life is within the first 5 years. These first 5 years include the development of skills such as social-emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills (Allee-Herndon & Roberts, 2019; Moen et al., 2019). These skills set the stage for how a child learns (Moen et al., 2019). According to Williams et al. (2017), educational gaps between low SES students and high-income students is seen prior to entering kindergarten. These deficits often continue throughout these students' entire educational experiences. Interventions which include instructional strategies can positively impact the academic achievement of poverty students, negating the detriments they often experience (Flouri & Midouhas, 2016). Negating the detriments that low SES students face can also be alleviating by ensuring varying instructional strategies are used in prekindergarten or head start programs (Valentino, 2018). In her study, Valentino (2018) suggested that prekindergarten programs with varying instructional strategies are necessary to help close the achievement gap between low SES and high SES students. Prekindergarten classrooms



that have scaffolding, engaging activities, teacher-child relationships, awareness of student's needs, and use open-ended questions positively influences student academic achievement (Valentino, 2018). Using these strategies from the beginning of a student's academic career can help to alleviate the existing achievement gap and increase their success.

Early learning experiences set the foundation for all future academic experiences for low SES students (Nolan & Lamb, 2019). Early learning experiences in programs increase the cognitive, language, and social skills that are essential for long-lasting benefits of student learning (Buckley et al., 2020). Early learning experiences for low SES students that include varying instructional strategies tend to limit placing these students into special education, limit retention rates, and increase graduation rates (Aguiar & Aguiar, 2020). Essential skills and learning experiences can be greatly affected when a student lives in poverty. There are several negative experiences that a child living in poverty can be exposed to. These negative experiences can include living in run-down neighborhoods, high crime or violent areas, poor health, lack of food, and exposure to parental stress (Moen et al., 2019; Williams et al. 2017). Students in low-income families also tend to have less academic support and opportunities such as tutors and enrichment experiences (Williams et al., 2017). Because of these experiences, lack of development in skills, and deprivation of resources and basic needs, children living in poverty often experience lower academic achievement and school success (Moen et al., 2019). It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that learning experiences for these low SES students are positive experiences consisting of varying instructional strategies.

Children from low SES families tend to have more academic detriments, including low reading and mathematics skills (Reyes et al., 2018). Low SES students also tend to perform lower on standardized testing and have poor grades (Hentges et al., 2019). Instruction that is interesting often results in low SES students being more engaged. Reyes et al. (2018) posited that students of poverty often experience detriments in their education and academic achievement due to a lack of resources and beginning their education late. These students of poverty often do not finish their schooling and drop out of school. Students of poverty often have lower competence and cognitive skills due to poverty stressors like having limited access to books and toys (Cedeño et al., 2016). Since children from low SES families face several disadvantages, schools and teaching instruction should assist in alleviating the detriments and help these students succeed.

Schools can make a significant impact on the detriments that low SES students may face (Flouri & Midouhas, 2016). These detriments include behavior problems, emotional problems, low parental involvement, and health issues. Schools that have a rigorous curriculum provided by teachers have the potential to undo the detriments low SES students face. Interventions geared to students' mental health and use positive peer collaboration can also assist in decreasing the negative detriments that they may experience.

### **The Importance of Effective Teaching Strategies**

A combination of several different components can result in the hindrance or success of low SES student's academic achievement. These components include

curricular components, teacher strategies in the classroom, and how students behave (Lekwa, A. J., Reddy, L. A., & Shernoff, E. S., 2019). As teachers play a critical role in the combination of components, it is their strategies that often affect the other components. Without effective teaching strategies, learning and academic success are narrowed. Stipek and Chiatovich (2017) and Reddy, L. A., Lekwa, A., Dudek, C., et al. (2020) posited that teachers who work in low-income communities tend to be less experienced and, therefore, provide lower quality instruction to low SES students. Teachers who work in low-income communities may also have lower expectations and negative views of low SES students (Archambault et al., 2020). Hirn et al. (2018) argued that teachers who work with low SES students are not only usually less experienced, but they often have lower levels of education. Teachers in low-income schools have also been known to offer lower quality instruction and strategies (Reddy, L. A., Lekwa, A., Dudek, C., et al., 2020). Schools and teachers have the ability to change the academic outcomes for low SES students if strategies are used and start early on in a child's learning (Flouri & Midouhas, 2016).

According to Moen et al. (2019), how a teacher implements their instruction directly impacts a child's development and their academic gains. The authors noted that varying instruction and support from teachers to low SES students provides positive and successful academic achievement in these students that is often instilled as these students advance through their educational career. Classrooms that include different types of instruction yield better cognitive, linguistic, social, and behavioral development for low SES students (Aguiar & Aguiar, 2020).

### **Strategies for Success**

The academic success of low SES students relies on the implementation of differentiated learning and teaching strategies (Byrd, 2020). In a study conducted by Nag et al. (2016), gaps in academic literacy achievement were seen in classrooms that had unplanned learning experiences. These unplanned learning experiences were literacy strategies used in the classrooms that included asking closed-ended questions, provided biased feedback, focused on getting correct answers, used whole class choral responses, used little scaffolding, and lower order thinking questions. The feedback provided to students did not include explanations to further their understanding. In these classrooms, accuracy and getting the right answer were a priority. When reading or giving responses to questions, the students were expected to do so in unison. Making real world connections to the content was lacking, and often left to the students to make on their own. Much of the learning in these classrooms was left to the child.

Several components are necessary for positive academic outcomes for low SES students (Moen et al., 2019). Components for such success include teacher facilitated activities and teaching strategies, instructional support, and classroom emotional support. Teacher-facilitated activities and teaching strategies are ones that are engaging and maximize opportunities for student learning. Instructional support includes supporting the cognitive and language development of students, as well as providing quality feedback, modeling, and problem-solving. Along with feedback, asking open-ended questions that engage students is also a strategy used in classrooms (Infurna, 2020). Instructional support helps promote low SES student's language and mathematics skills (Qi et al.,

2020). A classroom with strong emotional support is one where the teacher is providing a positive environment and has awareness and responsiveness in supporting the students and their learning (Moen et al., 2019). Strong emotional support has been found to help increase social skills for low SES students, as well as decrease behavior problems (Qi et al., 2020). Using these components and instructional strategies aid in fostering positive academic achievement and engagement for low SES students (Moen et al., 2019).

According to Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua (2019), varying teaching strategies include evidence-based teaching using direct and active instruction, which includes concrete explanations, explaining learning objectives, providing feedback, and student engagement. Providing verbal feedback improves student's academic progress and engagement in their learning (Hirn et al., 2018). In the study conducted by Hirn et al. (2018), it was found that teachers in low achieving schools provided feedback that was geared toward behavior rather than instruction and was mostly negative in nature. This was found to hinder student achievement. Matthews (2020) found that mathematics teachers who provided quality feedback to students were more likely to readjust and modify their teaching to support the struggling learners. Providing concrete feedback to low SES students helps to promote their engagement (Archambault et al., 2020). Active instruction and active student engagement, according to Ng (2018), refers to student participation, collaboration, and student's thoughts and perspectives. Ng (2018) posited that when teachers use student engagement or student voice as a teaching strategy, the teachers are more likely to listen and respond to students about their learning. Teacher responses to student voice results in more engaging teaching strategies, increased student

motivation, and improved learning and school outcomes. Engaging strategies such as collaboration, student voice, communication, and the use of reflection are strategies that enhance student motivation and academic achievement (Hann, 2020).

Varying instructional strategies such as cooperative learning includes identifying similarities and differences, setting student objectives, using questions and cues, and activating prior knowledge have also provided positive outcomes for low SES students (Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua, 2019). Cooperative learning also includes using tasks such as peer or group work, playing games, visual representations, problem solving strategies, and making connections between abstract and concrete concepts (Berta & Hoffmann, 2020). In another study conducted by Lekwa, A. J., Reddy, L. A., & Shernoff, E. S. (2019), they discussed differentiation of teaching materials and multiple opportunities for responding to questions as effective teaching strategies, coupled with behavior management.

Rojas et al. (2019) conducted a study to compare more effective teachers and less effective teachers in two low SES schools. These teachers were labeled more effective or less effective based on their student performance scores in science. The study showed that the more effective teacher, who had had some specific training, provides students with mixed scaffolding experiences, deeper questioning, open-ended questions, activates prior knowledge, and more student verbal responses during active learning. The less effective teacher with lower student achievement scores provided a lot of scaffolding, less opportunity for student replies, and less opportunities for students to come up with their own ideas and comprehension of the content. Purposeful scaffolding helps support

students as they learn new skills (Green & Holman, 2021). Matthews (2020) revealed that teachers used scaffolding to increase student understanding and enable deeper student learning.

A study conducted by Merritt et al. (2017) examined the teaching strategies used by two different teachers who were labeled as effective as seen in their students' academic gains in mathematics. While the focus was mainly on English Language (EL) students, it also focused on low SES students, which made up 68% of the students. The schools where the two teachers worked were Title I schools, where funds are provided to assist students from low-income families. The results of the study showed that the two teachers, while using slightly different levels of strategies, both used several of the same strategies when teaching mathematics. Strategies that both teachers used included: multiple representations including visuals and graphic organizers, questioning that allowed for student thinking and verbal responses, modeling and scaffolding, and explicit teaching of different math strategies. Graphic organizers help students gather their thoughts, zero in on meaningful information, and organize those thoughts and information, therefore making the student able to understand the text and take meaning from it (Green & Holman, 2021). Seven et al. (2020) discussed how explicit instruction yields positive results for student academic achievement, especially in language development for young, low SES children.

Bustamante et al. (2018) posited that using science and Math (STEM) instruction with existing domain specific content starting in early childhood can elicit the use of many instructional strategies that are beneficial to low SES students. Incorporating this

type of instruction allows students to have hands-on, engaging learning activities, critical thinking, and collaboration with peers and teachers.

Aguiar and Aguiar (2020) found that there was a correlation between the academic achievement in classrooms with low SES students and the lack of instructional support they were receiving. Classrooms that lacked instructional support yielded less favorable results than classrooms that did provide instructional support. Classrooms that provided instructional support showed that low SES students received more supportive activities that enhanced the students cognitive and linguistic skills. It can then be concluded that low SES students who are in classrooms with instructional support tend to receive more effective teaching.

Odom et al. (2019) discussed the need for several instructional strategies for low SES students. These strategies included intentional instruction that includes questioning, self-assessment, and modeling. Teacher questioning during active instruction is essential for low SES students. In a study conducted by Hirn et al. (2018), it was found that teachers in higher achieving schools provided more questioning to students than in the lower achieving schools. Frequent questioning allows for more active engagement between the student and the curriculum, which in turn, increases academic achievement. Modeling includes the use of graphic organizers, question stems, and visuals to help support the academic achievement and learning for low SES students.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Supporting Low SES Students**

#### ***How Teachers Believe They are Supporting low SES Students***

Teachers' perceptions of how low SES students learn plays a role in their



academic achievement. Banerjee and Lamb (2016) found that low SES students who felt their teachers had low expectations of them and provided them negative feedback had a higher chance of missing school and devalued their education. Matthews (2020) also found that students who perceived their teachers had low care for them tended to put in less effort. According to Glock and Kleen (2020), research has shown that some teachers have negative stereotypes and preconceived judgements for low SES students. These beliefs cause teachers to see poor academic performance and effort for low SES students as normal so they do not consider that they (the teachers) can be a potential cause for their lack of success. Instead, teachers often associate positive academic learning and competency with high SES students. Negative stereotypes can help cause the inequality that low SES students face (Ellis et al., 2016). Matthews (2020) found that the negative beliefs of preservice mathematics teachers towards urban poverty students, their ability, and motivation, resulted in lower quality instruction and a lack of care in instruction.

Marttinen et al. (2020) conducted a study where preservice teachers participated in a service-learning opportunity to gain field experience and learning experiences before entering K-12 classrooms. The program they participated in was one that specifically served low SES students. The study found that after participation in the program, the preservice teachers had discovered biases that they had and as a result, they changed their prior stereotypes and perceptions of low SES students because of the experience.

Glock and Kleen (2020) also found through research that some teachers who work with low SES students tend to have lower expectations for them, receive less challenging and stimulating instruction, and have the believed stereotypes that these children will not

perform well academically. According to Morales (2016), inside school factors such as teacher bias, lack of teacher experience, and low teacher expectations has a great effect on the academic achievement of low SES students. Low SES students need high expectations and engaging instruction to help motivate them and increase their chances of academic success (Welty, 2021). In their study, Glock and Kleen (2020) explored preservice teachers and their attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices about low SES students and their academic success. The results revealed that preservice teachers had negative implicit attitudes towards low SES students than high SES students. They also had more favorable stereotypes of high SES students than low SES students. Findings did not show prejudices about low SES students. Fergus (2019) found in his research and experiences that many educators had biases against students who live in poverty. He argued that some educators automatically associate poverty students with dysfunctional behavior, low academic achievement in school, and lower expectations. Pivoda and Stickney (2020) discussed how author Paul Gorski mentions that teachers should examine their beliefs and stereotypes of low SES students. Teachers must be able to confront their biases so that their teaching can be based on the students' experiences (Evans et al., 2020). Evans et al. (2020) believed that teachers need multiple perspectives and approaches for understanding students and ensuring their academic success.

White and Murray (2016) revealed that preservice teachers were inexperienced with students of poverty and at times uncomfortable even discussing poverty. These preservice teachers believed that the academic achievement of poor students was up to the students themselves to overcome. The preservice teachers from this study were not

receiving any training or education geared specifically for the low SES students that they may encounter in their future experience. According to Gupta and Lee (2020), research has shown that there is a need for improving low quality teacher preparation programs.

### ***How Teachers can Improve Instruction***

Teachers who care and have high expectations for low SES students can positively impact their academic achievement (Cedeño et al., 2016). Özden and Atasoy (2020) concluded from their study that socioeconomically disadvantaged students attributed variances in their achievement levels being dependent on the variation of teachers' instructional strategies. In the study conducted by Williams et al. (2017), low SES students attributed their academic success to teachers who cared for them, understood how poverty could affect the students, and by providing them with different resources that they needed. Coupled with these characteristics that positively impact low SES student achievement is the need for professional development and training. According to Ellis et al. (2016), preservice teachers also need training in understanding poverty and having low SES students in their classrooms. Some studies have shown a high correlation between effective classrooms and the education and training the teachers have received (Aguiar & Aguiar, 2020). For teachers to be effective in obtaining student academic achievement gains, preservice and inservice teachers both need the proper preparation (Gupta & Lee, 2020). In their study, Gupta and Lee (2020) obtained preservice and inservice teachers that participated in university courses and workshops focusing on literacy education. The inservice teachers taught in a Title 1 school, with students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Some of the topics included in

the training were discussing cultural and diversity issues, discussing and applying strategies, discussing and applying effective questioning, and applying effective teaching and assessing. The teachers used in the study were observed to ensure that the knowledge gained from the workshops was being used in their classrooms. After implementing what the teachers had learned, students took literacy benchmarks. Benchmark results showed that the students made progress and had gains in their reading and writing scores. Much like this study, a study conducted by Schwartz et al. (2019) revealed that teachers who received training and support were most effective at achieving increases in student academic achievement.

Professional development programs can lead to improved student outcomes. Professional development that focuses on the challenges with working with different types of students, such as low SES, is important to ensure effective classrooms (Aguilar & Aguilar, 2020). Training and professional development programs can help teachers learn effective instructional strategies that are more engaging, include high cognitive thinking for students, and more student problem solving (Jacob et al., 2017). Continuing professional development for teachers can help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses within the classroom and further enhance their content knowledge (Kennedy, 2018). With this continued support, teachers can maintain and improve student engagement. Infurna (2020) stated that teacher participants in his study made mention of the ongoing professional development that they are able to receive. The teacher participants attribute the opportunities for professional development as a reason they have such effective classrooms. Hirn et al. (2018) discussed that professional development and

teacher training is needed, especially for preservice teachers and should include strategies that are engaging such as questioning and behavior management.

Lewka, Reddy, Dudek, & Hua (2019) believed that professional development and workshops should not be the sole method to ensuring effective instructional strategies are being used. They also believed that direct assessments of teachers and the strategies they use could be implemented to provide teachers with feedback, support teachers, and improve practice. Using teacher assessments that include looking at low SES student achievement has been known to produce slightly higher increases in language achievement for those low SES students (Alexander & Jang, 2020). Instructional coaching is a way to provide direct assessment of teachers and professional development. Instructional coaching has been known to support teachers, increase teacher effectiveness, improve teacher instruction and strategies, and increase student academic achievement (Reddy, L. A., Lekwa, A., & Shernoff, E., 2021).

Berta and Hoffmann (2020) conducted a study that examined teacher perceptions of the implementation of a cooperative learning method program. When teachers were asked their thoughts, one of the things that teachers believed to be beneficial was the ongoing support they received. They were mentored throughout the process and believed that this is something that should be used in general as a way to maintain training. Buckley et al. (2020) discovered that continuous mentoring and professional development provided positive impacts, changes in teacher strategies, and increased the quality of teaching strategies.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Recent research indicated that many low SES students perform lower in their academic achievement. These students need to get support from teachers through the use of varying instructional strategies. Varying instructional strategies are needed for low SES students from the beginning of their educational journeys. It was unknown what varying instructional strategies teachers at the study site were using. Current research shows that low SES students perform lower in their academic achievement when compared to their peers especially in language arts and mathematics. This study helps to identify strengths and weaknesses in instructional strategies and attempts to ensure that all low SES students are receiving an equitable education through the delivery of different instructional strategies that work best for them. With the knowledge obtained from the study, it is my hope that this information will lead to the use of a variety of instructional strategies, as well as the enforcement of training and professional development that will allow teachers to attain the knowledge and skills necessary to implement these instructional strategies.

In Chapter 3, I will focus on the research methods that the study used to answer the research questions. I include detailed information on the research design, role of the researcher, participant and instrumentation selection, procedures for collecting and analyzing the data, establishing trustworthiness, and ethical procedures for the study.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions about how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. This chapter includes descriptions of the study's research design, rationale, and methodology. It also includes information about the role of the researcher, the instrumentation used for the study, and recruitment of participants. Finally, it includes descriptions of how data was collected and analyzed and how the study met trustworthiness and followed ethical procedures.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research questions for this qualitative study were as follows:

RQ1: How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?

RQ2: What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

The problem of the study is that students from low SES backgrounds tend to have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. Students from low SES backgrounds require teachers that provide classrooms with varying instructional strategies beginning in the early years of education to maintain positive engagement that

assists in alleviating the detriments that these low SES students face in academics (Archambault et al., 2020; Buckley et al., 2020).

The study was conducted using a basic qualitative method. This qualitative method was chosen because I examined the concept through the interpretation of teachers' experiences and the meaning those teachers gave to their experiences (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The collection of data from teachers about their daily work traditions were examined to understand their perceptions and experiences of working with low SES students. The qualitative data collection also examined how teachers support low SES students using different instructional strategies. A phenomenological approach was not used as it focuses on the emotional feelings and intense experiences of participants (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnography was not chosen as it focuses on the culture, beliefs, and attitudes of participants. Since the research in this study is not based on theories, grounded theory was also not used. Lastly, a case study approach was not used as this study did not focus on one individual, one classroom, or one particular program within the school.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role in this study was an observer-participant. As the observer-participant, it was known that I served as the researcher and interacted with the participants through interviews; however, I did not take on a role as a participant. As the researcher conducting the data collection in the elementary school where I am currently employed, I may have a professional relationship with some of the participants. However, none of these relationships included any personal, supervisory, or power relationships as both me



and the participants are all coworkers on the same level.

In this qualitative study, researcher bias was managed. To do this, I had to maintain a level of consciousness about any potential biases. When conducting, gathering, and analyzing the data collected, I did so in an objective manner. I focused only on the participants' responses to the interview questions. I used analytic memos and notes to document what I was seeing and any conclusions I made and reflected on what may have impacted how I reported the data collected.

Another potential ethical issue that could have arisen was that I conducted the study within my own work environment. Working within my own work environment could have led to a conflict of interest and researcher bias. Conducting research in a researcher's place of employment may cause the participants to feel pressure to participate or respond in a certain way (Burkholder et al., 2016). To address this potential issue, I assured participants that their responses would be strictly for the sole purpose of the study. I also assured them that they would have anonymity and confidentiality in their personal identifying information by securing any records in a locked filing cabinet and by using pseudonyms. I provided a clear explanation and information on how the interview process would work and established rapport to make the participants feel more comfortable and trustworthy.

Although I work at the study site, I do not hold personal relationships or outside friendships with the staff and participants were not my subordinates. Due to the large size of the school, there are many coworkers that I have never even met. Regardless, I ensured that I held no bias when choosing participants for the study or when I collected the data. I

also explained to participants that I wanted their truthful perspectives and experiences. I made sure that the interview questions did not guide or suggest that participants needed to answer in a certain way. I wanted to ensure that the data collected was accurate and that participants who may know me did not simply say things that they thought I wanted to hear.

I assured all participants that their participation would be purely voluntary with no identifying information and completely confidential. Should any participants decide to remove themselves from the study, I would respect their decision and assured them that any previous data from participation would remain confidential. However, no participants decided to remove themselves from the study.

### **Methodology**

The following sections explain how I designed and conducted my research to answer the research questions. I explain how participants were selected, the instrumentation used, the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan.

#### **Participant Selection**

The study's population was located in an elementary school in South Carolina. The elementary school consists of grades prekindergarten through fifth grade. The population consisted of teachers with a wide range of ages and teaching experience. Some teachers have recently graduated college and just started their teaching careers, while other teachers have decades of teaching experience. For the study, I used purposeful sampling, where all general education teachers of kindergarten through fifth

grade that work in the school were invited to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling allowed me to recruit teacher participants that would be able to provide information about their experiences and perceptions related to the teaching of low SES students. The criteria that teachers had to meet was that they had to teach general education and had to teach all subject areas. In the study site selected, all general education teachers teach all subject areas so it was known that they met this criterion. I also limited the participants in this study to general education teachers that were at least in their second year of teaching, but no less, as experience working with low SES students was needed for the study.

Although the data provided as evidence of the problem for this study was through student performance data of students Grades 3-5, teacher participants from kindergarten through second grade were needed for this study. Nolan and Lamb (2019) discussed that early learning experiences for low SES students set the foundation for their academic careers. Quality early learning experiences can help low SES students maintain academic success, limit retention rates, and increase graduation rates (Aguiar & Aguiar, 2020). Since the early years of a student's education sets the foundation of learning that continues throughout their educational experiences (Williams et al., 2017), it was necessary to include participants that teach kindergarten through second grade as well. Although participants in all of these grade levels was desired, I was only able to obtain one participant from first grade and one from second grade since no kindergarten teachers volunteered for the study.

Once voluntary participant interest was established, I had planned to randomly

select at least one to two participants per grade level from kindergarten through fifth grade. Randomly selecting participants depended on how many teachers from each grade level agreed to participate. For example, if only one first grade teacher volunteered to participate, they were automatically chosen for the study. However, if more than one teacher from a grade level agreed to participate, they would have been randomly chosen by assigning each volunteer a number. Since there were only seven interested volunteers, I did not have to randomly select participants; instead, all participants who volunteered were used in the study. Child development (prekindergarten) teachers were not used for the study as there are only two teachers for that grade level and neither may volunteer to participate in the study. A minimum of 10 participants were to be used for the study, although I wanted to recruit 12, if possible. Having large amounts of participants does not always mean that credible findings will be discovered (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I limited the number of teachers to 12, based on the suggestion of Guetterman (2015). Guetterman mentioned that Creswell (2013) recommended obtaining great detail about a few individuals. Guetterman (2015) discussed Creswell's specific suggestions for sample size according to the different types of qualitative approaches. While there is no mention of a specific sample size for a basic qualitative study, Guetterman suggested a range of four to 30 participants for the other types of qualitative approaches. Although I desired 10 participants, I was only able to obtain a sample size of seven participants. To determine possible participants, an email to all qualifying teaching staff was sent asking if they would like to volunteer to participate. They had 1 week to reply. With approval from the local research site, the principal of the school forwarded the study invitation email that I

had sent to him to all general education teachers. Participants were notified in the email to respond with interest directly to me at my email address. Once replies were received and I made my selections, those voluntary participants were sent an email that contained a consent form.

### **Instrumentation**

One instrument was used for data collection for this study. An interview guide, which can be found in Appendix A, assisted in maintaining focus to collect the data needed to answer the research questions. Voice recordings of the interviews were used to assist with transcription and coding. I produced the interview guide using Microsoft Word. The interview guide included open-ended questions and probes that assisted in the data collection needed for this study. The questions asked in the interview provided the data needed to answer the research questions. Open-ended interview questions allowed the participants to provide detailed responses and obtain a depth of data.

The voice recordings helped not only with transcription of the interviews but were also used to help develop codes, categories, and themes. Content validity was established by ensuring that the interview questions would determine the perceptions of how teachers support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics instruction and experiences using instructional strategies. This was achieved with the interview questions that specifically focused on those aspects.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Once I received institutional review board (IRB) approval from Walden University (#05-25-22-0947885) and the local research site, I sent an email invitation to

the site's principal. He then forwarded that study invitation email to all general education teachers asking for anyone that would like to voluntarily participate. This email included information regarding the purpose of the study and an explanation of the methods for confidentiality of participation. The email also included a cut-off date when volunteer responses would be needed. Once the cut-off date has passed, one or two participants per grade level would be selected to participate, depending on the number of responses. The chosen participants would then receive a reply email including further details about the study, as well as an informed consent form. If the volunteers still agreed to participate, they would reply to the email with the words "I consent."

Interviews took place after the working hours of the study site and were conducted outside of the study site's location. Participants had the option to conduct the interview by phone or through videoconferencing. If videoconferencing was chosen, only voice recording would have taken place and no video recording. Only one participant chose to conduct their interview through videoconferencing with no video recording. Conducting the interviews outside of the study site's location allowed the researcher to provide the confidentiality needed and would help the participant to feel comfortable. It was my obligation as the interviewer to make the interviewee feel comfortable and protected throughout the interview process (see Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews occurred at the convenience of participants, with hopes that they would be completed within a couple of weeks of obtaining informed consent. Each interview was expected to not take any longer than 60 minutes, as I wanted to be considerate of the interviewee's time. However, the interviews were not rushed and if more time was needed, then it may

have extended beyond that time frame. Once each interview was complete, I transcribed it.

At the conclusion of each interview, the participant was asked if they had any questions about the study, the interview, or anything else regarding the study at that moment. Participants were notified that their information would be kept so that they could receive a summary of the study's results via email when it was completed. I also thanked the participants for their time and participation.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The analysis of the data collected answered the research questions: How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students? What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students? How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies? How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies? I used the interview recordings to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, I created the coding tables in Microsoft word. I then used the coding tables to plug in the data from the transcriptions and analyzed the data collected from the interviews. To analyze the data, I used open coding, which then lead to themes (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). As I analyzed the interview transcripts, I developed codes using direct quotes from participants. These codes were used to determine labels for concepts or events when analyzing the qualitative data (see Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

After developing those codes, I broke them down into categories based on similar characteristics and connections. Finally, these codes helped me to organize the data and use the categories to develop themes that provided meaning to answer the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Themes are the patterns that evolve as a result of coding and categorizing data (see Saldaña, 2016). I recoded all of the data several times to look for any new codes that may have arisen. After the coding was completed, I used thematic content analysis, in which I used meanings and relationships of words and concepts from the transcripts (see Kahraman & Kaya, 2021). I used these meanings and relationships of words and concepts to assist in helping me find the patterns across the data about the concept to which the research study was based (see Given, 2008). To support this thematic analysis, I have provided excerpts of select responses of the participants, shown in Appendix B.

To manage the data collected, Microsoft Word was used to create the coding tables and the data has been stored in those tables. Interviews completed on the phone were recorded via the Voice Memos application and was downloaded onto my personal laptop. If any discrepant cases have arisen from the participant interviews, I have explained to the readers why I believe the participant differed drastically in their responses.

### **Trustworthiness**

Establishing trustworthiness requires meeting the four standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (see Toma, 2011). To establish credibility (internal validity), I ensured there was truth and honesty in my participants



responses by using iterative questioning. This iterative questioning included using probes and rephrasing questions for better detail or clarification. Being upfront and thorough about the interview process, as well as building rapport with participants, also helped to establish credibility. When analyzing the data, focusing on the meaning of the data collected helped with credibility. I did this by referring to my transcripts and coding tables.

Toma (2011) described establishing transferability (external validity) through thick descriptions of the context. This thick description allows others to see the similarity between them and the research. As Toma (2011) recommended, I have provided rich descriptions in the study where readers are able to see the connections from the results and able to apply them to other contexts, situations, and settings. The evidence found through the data collection and research helps the readers to understand how the study can be applicable. Transferability is also be established through the use of varying participants. Although the participants came from the same study site, the selected participants varied by grade levels taught.

To establish dependability in my study, I provided detailed information about the processes I used in the study. Shenton (2004) explained that if detailed information about the processes is included, then the same research process could be completed the same exact way again and that data should yield similar results. I used audit trails to describe how I collected and analyzed the data. I include descriptions of how I completed my coding and how the coding led to the themes and categories. Presenting my coding table in the study assists in showing the data and analysis of the data.

As Shenton (2004) suggested, establishing confirmability requires reflexivity, or making sure that biases and prejudice do not play a part in any of the data analysis. When conducting the interviews, I made sure not to guide or suggest any answers of the participants. When analyzing and reporting the data collected, I was cognizant of eliminating any assumptions and biases I may have had. Focusing on the meaning of the collected data on the participants' experiences and through their descriptive responses helped me to analyze the data objectively. Being aware of my identity, positionality, and subjectivity as a researcher helped to aid in providing an unbiased and trustworthy study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

### **Ethical Procedures**

To carry out the research for this study, institutional permission was obtained from the school district where the study site is located. The district required certain documentation weeks in advance before the participant recruitment and data collection can begin. Approval from the IRB was needed to ensure that all ethical challenges and partner organization documents met the necessary requirements. Informed consent was needed from all participants. The informed consent emails contained all details of the study. It also gave the participants the right to decline participation or withdraw from participation at any time within the study. To safeguard the informed consent forms and maintain the confidential information, they have been stored on my personal computer that is kept at my personal residence and will be kept after the study for a period of 5 years. Completed interview guides have been stored in a personal secure filing cabinet at my residence.

All data collected are confidential. The use of pseudonyms was used for participants in place of their names to maintain confidentiality. Participants know that their personal and identifying information has been hidden in any data presentation that emerged from their interview. Completed coding tables, transcriptions, and voice recordings will be stored on my personal computer which is safeguarded by antivirus software. After the 5-year period expires, interview guides will be shredded and coding tables, informed consent emails, transcriptions, and voice recordings will be erased from my computer.

### **Summary**

Managing bias throughout the research process, from recruiting participants to relaying the collected data, was achieved through thoughtful carefully thought-out processes. Using appropriate strategies throughout the research process enabled the researcher to establish trustworthiness in their study. Adhering to ethical standards and managing data and security can be difficult during qualitative research. With plans and procedures in place, best ethical practices were maintained and a credible study was accomplished.

In Chapter 4, I will focus on the results of the study. Setting, data collection, data analysis will be explained with great detail. Results of the study will be presented to the readers and will include tables and figures if needed. Lastly, evidence of trustworthiness will be established.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this basic qualitative study, I sought to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. I used semistructured interview questions to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding varying instructional strategies for low SES students. The following research questions were used to carry out the study's investigation:

RQ1: How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?

RQ2: What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

This chapter includes detailed information on the setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary of these components. The setting section includes any personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants and descriptions of the participant demographics and characteristics relating to this study. The data collection section includes detailed information about the number of participants, how the data was collected and recorded, and any variations in data collection from the original plan presented in Chapter 3. The data analysis section explains the processes on how the data was coded, categorized, and how the themes

emerged. The results section includes explaining the data that supports each research question and any tables or figures that help to represent that data. Finally, evidence of trustworthiness is explained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Setting**

Since the interview invitations were emailed at the end of May and the school year ended in the first few days of June, participants were unable to schedule the interviews immediately as they were busy with end of year tasks to close out the school year. Scheduled activities and vacations after the school year ended resulted in interviews taking over a month to schedule and complete. These conditions did not have any influence on participants and their responses in the interviews.

A total of seven participants were used in this study. There were no participants who taught kindergarten. One participant was a first-grade teacher. One participant was a second-grade teacher. One participant was a third-grade teacher. Two participants were fourth-grade teachers. Two participants were fifth-grade teachers. All participants taught all subjects in their grade level. Six of the participants have Master's degrees and one participant has a Bachelor's degree. The participant number and the number of years each participant has been teaching are presented in Table 1. Specific grade levels, degree types, and the specific number of years teaching were not identified with the corresponding participant in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

### **Table 1**

*Participants Number of Years Teaching*

Participant Number	Years of Teaching Experience
1	15+
2	10-15
3	10-15
4	2-5
5	15+
6	15+
7	15+

### Data Collection

Interview data was collected from seven participants. All interviews took place on the phone while the participant was at home, except for the first interview, which was conducted via Google Meet. Interview 1 took place on June 12<sup>th</sup> and lasted almost 26 minutes. Interview 2 took place on June 17<sup>th</sup> and lasted a little over 20 minutes. Interview 3 took place on June 21<sup>st</sup> and lasted a little over 26 minutes. Interview 4 took place on June 23<sup>rd</sup> and lasted a few seconds over 25 minutes. Interview 5 took place on June 27<sup>th</sup> and lasted a few seconds over 35 minutes. Interview 6 took place on July 14<sup>th</sup> and lasted about 18 minutes. The last and final interview, Interview 7, was completed on July 19<sup>th</sup> and lasted a little over 27 minutes. All interviews were recorded using the Voice Memo application on my iPad. The interviews were then downloaded to my personal computer and were then uploaded to Microsoft Word and transcribed using Microsoft Word. I checked all transcriptions against the recordings for accuracy.

Participants were given more than the 1 week to respond as was originally planned. Since the invitation email was forwarded from the principal on a Friday afternoon close to the end of the school year, I felt it was necessary to give additional time to respond to the invitation as possible teacher participants would be busy with

ending out the school year. None of the interviews lasted the hour as originally anticipated. Some of the first few interviews were going to be conducted via Google Meet. However, there were several problems with the first interview and getting them into the Google Meet. It took several tries to get into the Google Meet until the first interviewee switched the device they were using at their home. The second interview was attempted with Google Meet, and again there were issues with them being allowed into the Google Meet. After we both troubleshooted on each of our ends, the interviewee agreed to do the interview by phone.

### **Data Analysis**

Using the interview data collected from the seven participants, I used open coding to create codes that created categories, which then led to themes. The first thing I did before beginning coding was transcribing all of the interviews. I used the transcription function in Microsoft Word to help with an initial transcription. I then went through each interview recording comparing them against the transcriptions and made corrections to the transcriptions as needed. I checked the transcripts again against the recording to ensure completing the most accurate transcription. After checking the transcriptions for accuracy, I printed each transcript. I read each transcript several times so that I could familiarize myself with participant responses and the information they were conveying.

After reading each transcript several times, I began to highlight participant responses and applied a code. I then created a coding table in Microsoft Word. After creating the coding table, I first imported paraphrased participant responses for each of the interview questions so that the data was side by side and I could compare and contrast

the information. I then inserted the codes for each of the interview questions. I went back through the transcriptions and the responses in the coding table several times and recoded the data. Next in the data analysis process was taking the codes and creating categories. Once the categories were created, I then used the categories to identify the themes. The specific codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data is shown in Appendix B. Excerpts from the interviews are presented in the appendix, to emphasize their importance and to give the reader a quick overview.

Two discrepant cases were found when collected data. The first discrepant case was found during Interview 4 because the participant did receive training in instructional strategies for low SES students and how to work with them when she entered the district and worked at a high poverty school. Although they varied from the other participants in respect to training and professional development, all other interview questions applied to the participant the same as it did for the others. The second discrepant case was found during Interview 7 because the participant did receive training on how to work with low SES students. However, the participant did not receive any training on varying instructional strategies for low SES students, just how to work with them. Although they varied from the other participants, they received this training 10-12 years ago and all other interview questions still applied to the participant.

## **Results**

### **Results for RQ1**

Research Question 1 asked, “How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?” Based on



coding and categorizing the participant's responses, the following five themes appeared:

(a) no support from district with training specific to low SES students, (b) only training is for students in general, (c) training could have provided understanding, awareness, and ability to reach the low SES learners, (d) training would help teachers understand these students and their families, and (e) students would have performed better academically.

***Theme 1: No support from district with training specific to low SES students***

Among the participants, only one participant mentioned having training specific to low SES students in their first year of teaching because the school they entered had a high poverty rate. The training included the type of home life these students may have, suggestions for how to handle situations when dealing with these students, and how to use instructional strategies to best assist and support the low SES students. All other participants mentioned not having any training or professional development specific to low SES students. The only training they had received included strategies for building relationships with all students, using Kagan strategies for all students, and small group instruction for all students.

***Theme 2: Only training is for students in general***

Aside from the one participant that did receive training specific to low SES students, all other participants mentioned having had training, however, the trainings or professional development sessions were very general and not aimed specifically at working with low SES students. The participant that had training 10-12 years ago also mentioned not getting district support and only receiving general training geared towards all students.

Participant 1 mentioned that they had received training through their Master's degree program and that they are taking classes to receive a Gifted and Talented certification and those strategies they are being taught in their classes could apply for all students and modified to fit low SES students. Participant 2 mentioned that they could see a cross between the training they have received for multilingual learners, since some of those students are lower.

***Theme 3: Training could have provided understanding, awareness, and ability to reach the low SES learners***

Participant 4, the participant that had received training, believed that the training they received helped them when they first entered the district. Participant 4 stated, "I think it helped really narrow down the type of students I was going to be working with, specifically during my first year of teaching." The other participants believe that if they had received training when they first entered the school district, it would have helped and believe that training or professional development would help them now. Participant 1 said that talking about teaching in the classroom is not enough. They said "I think it would be extremely helpful if the district uhm, helped support teachers in teaching low SES schools, I mean low SES kids instead of just talking about them being a subpopulation in assessment data." Participant 5 stated,

It would have given me more insight on things that I could use to motivate them.

It would give me some ideas on how to reach them, cause again, and in, in my,

you know, uh, experience, a lot of the, the low SES kids, they don't, aren't

motivated to do. That they don't, they don't have that motivation at home, nor do

they have that intrinsic motivation as well.

Participants 3 and 5 believed that having training or professional development now would help with new ideas and approaches on how to reach the low SES students.

Participant 6 mentioned “A lot, it would have brought a lot more awareness of simple things. I think I would have looked at things a lot differently a lot earlier.” They believe that there could not be any quality training offered now, but that any training would just bring continued awareness. Participant 7 believed they have compassion, some empathy, and understanding, but went on to say:

I can't say that I fully understand. I just think I'm more aware of the different backgrounds that children are coming from and I think training now would maybe just sort of help prepare me as I go into each new school year.

These participants believed that training would have been beneficial for them as teachers and also for the low SES students that they taught. They believe that having training now would help to support them and their low SES students.

***Theme 4: Training would help teachers understand these students and their families.***

Almost all participants mentioned that training or professional development when they entered the district and now would help them better understand low SES students and their families. Participant 2 believed that training would have helped them, especially when it came to building relationships. They shared:

It was very hard to find a, okay, like build relationships at first because I wasn't understanding what they were lacking at home. Um, so as a new teacher, it would have been nice to have been given strategies to like build those relationships and

find out like, kind of what works for them to not just promote like better relationship with them, um, but how to address like their weaknesses and to help them grow.

Participant 3 believed that training would have helped them when first entering the district because it would have helped to understand the diversity in the area. They added that having training or professional development would help them now, stating “It would help me now because I feel like behaviors and students change every year.”

Participant 4 shared that with the way the world is changing today, training or professional development would help them now because things are changing for families and students. As mentioned for awareness in Theme 3, Participant 7 shared that the awareness that training would bring would help with understanding of the different backgrounds low SES students come from and would help prepare them for each new school year.

***Theme 5: Students would have performed better academically***

Most of the participants believe that had they received training or professional development from the district, their previous low SES students would have performed better academically. Participant 1 said “I feel like I could have made a, a lot more progress with some of my students.” Participant 2 stated, “I think they would have performed better uhm, in both math and reading.” Participant 5 believed it would have benefited their previous students greatly sharing,

Knowing where they came from, understanding you know, their motives, what helps them even. Even, even their triggers 'cause sometimes you know that they

will have issues. So, having this training and being able to understand where again these kids are coming from, I feel like I could better read, have a better relationship with them, thus having hopefully a higher academic achievement.

Participant 7 admitted that having previous training or professional development would have helped them have a better understanding of where the students were coming from,

Then maybe I would have handled situations differently as far as with them, behavior wise, if, you know if their behaviors were, um, out of line or things like that in, in communicating with them, or in trying to communicate with the parents, I, I may have approached it differently.

Participant 3 was not sure if previous training or professional development would have helped their previous low SES students perform better academically because impacts are hard to make when these students have a crazy home life. Participant 4 stated that since they did receive training, their low SES students did well and made growth to the best of their abilities.

The participants felt that having previous training would have helped their previous low SES students perform better academically. They believed that training would have also helped them to better understand low SES students and the type of life they live.

## **Results for RQ2**

Research Question 2 asked, “What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?” Based on coding and categorizing

the participant's responses, the following two themes appeared: (a) experience with low SES every year, and (b) participation depending on when it was offered.

***Theme 1: Experience with low SES every year***

All participants have had previous experience working with low SES students and believe they have experience with them every year. Participant 1 shared that every year classes are split up to include some low SES students in every class. Participant 2 stated, "I would say like the past few years definitely have had quite a few students." Participant 3 shared that they have more experience working with low SES students because they are in a high poverty school now. Participant 6 mentioned that they have worked with low SES students every year. Participant 7 said,

I would say that for the majority of my career, I have always been, not always at title one schools, although I have been at some title one schools, I, it seems that there are pockets of children, you know, in that category at every school I've been.

Participants 4 and 5 believed that they had minimal experience working with low SES students because they were unaware until I told them that the current school they teach in has a low SES population of over 50%.

***Theme 2: Participation depending on when it was offered***

All participants except one said that if training or professional development for varying instructional strategies and working with low SES students was offered, that they would take the training class. Participant 1 stated that they would definitely take training in the beginning of the year or maybe even over summer. Participant 5 shared, "I would definitely, again, use this to help reach my kids, understand them better, uh, help

motivate them, and basically, giving, having a nice background on where they're coming from.”

Participant 4 shared that they would attend any trainings offered but that they would prefer them to be offered during their planning time, known as PLC, during a designated professional development day during the school year, or after school if they could. Participant 7 shared that they would definitely participate in training if offered if it were likely at the beginning of the school year. Participant 6 admitted that they would not participate in training offered:

I'm not sure that I would unless it was something that I knew was bringing new uh, strategies or something that was newly, you know, that could be implemented within our classroom reasonably, realistically. I think it would be something that I've already had a background in and that it wouldn't necessarily provide me anything new or meaningful.

The participants are willing to take any offered and beneficial training or professional development specific to low SES students to better assist them in supporting these students.

### **Results for RQ3 and RQ4**

Research Question 3 asked, “How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?” Research Question 4 asked, “How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?” These results for these research questions are

grouped together because the participant responses for each of the strategies used to support the low SES students answers how it was applied to both language arts and mathematics. Based on coding and categorizing the participant's responses, the following nine themes appeared: (a) they are supported via cooperative learning, modified instruction, effective questioning, relationships with peers and teachers, and visuals, pictures, and sketches used in language arts and mathematics, (b) student self-assessment is sometimes used in language arts, but used mostly in mathematics, (c) graphic organizers used in both, but mostly language arts, (d) question stems used mostly in language arts, (e) other strategies used include finding interests, giving students choice, modeling, and scaffolding, (f) strategies work best because of the different types and styles of learners, they are engaging and hands-on, less pressure, (g) some very confident, some confident but not fully, some it varies day to day, (h) reducing class size and having more flexibility with approaches and curriculum would help the effectiveness of strategies/teaching, and (i) usage of standardized MAP testing, observations, tests, quizzes, formal, informal, cumulative, and summative assessments to assess academic achievement.

***Theme 1: They are supported by cooperative learning, modified instruction, effective questioning, relationships with peers and teachers, and visuals, pictures, and sketches used in language arts and mathematics***

For both language arts and mathematics, all participants stated that they use cooperative learning, modified instruction, effective questioning, relationships with peers and teachers, and visuals, pictures, and sketches as strategies within the classroom. Of the



seven participants, four participants mention using Kagan structures for cooperative learning. Participant 1 spoke about Kagan stating:

I think our Kagan structures definitely help provide a cushion for low SES students. They may not have the experience um, that some of our other students have because of their economic situation. The, the way that Kagan is designed allows um, for those students to hear other students' experiences and opinions and maybe be able to pick up on one or two things that they can also share, even if they don't have the grander experience, so that kind of pushes them a little bit and allows them a little wiggle room even if they don't have the direct experience, they can still share something which allows them to participate in class.

Participant 2 described Kagan as:

Kagan, um, is a strategy that we use, or a program that we use, to get all the kids to obviously cooperate together, but also have accountability. Um, so sometimes they are paired up with their shoulder partner. So, the person sitting beside them and there will be a task where maybe they both like, work on the same, the same page, but they take turns doing it. Or it could be that it's something where the, the one student is teaching the other and then they trade roles. Or it could be as a table group where all four are supposed to contribute um, their thoughts and ideas. Um, maybe to a question about what they just read or maybe different strategies on how they solved that math problem. But they all are supposed to work together and put something towards the task.

Participant 7 shared that they believe cooperative learning has its benefits but also

stated, “I think it's underutilized in, only because it, it takes a lot of ahead of time prep work and you really have to practice it with the students in order to get them to be successful.”

All participants stated that they use modified instruction for both subjects, language arts and mathematics. Although all participants shared that they use effective questioning for both language arts and mathematics, Participant 1 admitted to using it mostly in language arts. Participant 6 admitted that they try to use it in both subjects.

All participants use relationships with peers and teachers in both language arts and mathematics. Participant 4 shared, “I think if the student gets along well with the teacher, and vice versa, they're gonna be more interested in learning what you're teaching, even if they're not a huge fan of the subject.”

For the strategy of using visuals, pictures, or sketches, all but one participant stated that they use this strategy for both language arts and math. Participant 6 mentioned that they use this strategy whenever possible.

***Theme 2: Student self-assessment is sometimes used in language arts, but used mostly in mathematics***

When responding to the strategy student self-assessment, some participants mentioned using it in both language arts and mathematics, however, they mentioned that they tend to use it more or mostly in mathematics. Participant 1 mentioned that they try to use the strategy but not a whole lot. Participant 5 admitted that they have used this strategy, but it is not one of their frequent choices. Participant 6 mentioned that they use student self-assessment on a case-by-case basis because they teach primary and the

students are younger. Participant 7 mentioned that they do not use it as often as they should because “in the times that I have, students will assess themselves very high. So, they really need help in assessing themselves truthfully.”

The use of student self-assessment as an instructional strategy is not one frequently used by the participants.

***Theme 3: Graphic organizers used in both but mostly language arts***

All participants use graphic organizers as an instructional strategy. However, four participants shared that while they use the strategy for both language arts and mathematics, they mostly use them in language arts.

***Theme 4: Question stems used mostly in language arts***

While most participants mentioned using question stems for language arts and mathematics, four participants admitted to using them mostly in language arts. Participant 2 admitted that they use question stems only for language arts and not mathematics. Participant 6 admitted that they use question stems on a case-by-case basis.

***Theme 5: Other strategies used include finding interests, giving students choice, modeling, and scaffolding***

Some participants mentioned using other strategies that were not presented to them in the interview questions to best facilitate learning for low SES students. Participant 2 shared that they use student choice and letting students pick their own interests as strategies to get the low SES students to take ownership and feel in control. Participant 5 shared that they use modeling as a strategy for low SES students. Participant 6 shared that they use a lot of scaffolding for low SES students “In the primary, since I

am obviously a primary teacher, a lot of scaffolding.”

The participants have used several other instructional strategies that they felt worked or may have worked for their low SES students.

***Theme 6: Strategies work best because of the different types and styles of learners, they are engaging and hands-on, less pressure***

When asked why they believe these varying instructional strategies work best for low SES students, Participants 1, 4, and 5 said it is because the strategies work for different styles and types of learners and they provide different ways of learning for the low SES students. Participant 1 said “most of those strategies hit a lot of the different styles of learners, visual learners, auditory learners.” Participant 4 said:

I mean every student is a different type of learner. One thing may work for one student but not another student. Um, so, I think if you really, if you introduce them all to the students and let them choose what works best for them, I think you'll have more growth than if you were to push a specific strategy on, on a student.

Participants 3 and 6 said it is because the strategies are hands-on and engaging. Participants 2 and 6 said it is because these strategies help low SES students feel less pressure and less frustration. Participant 6 shared “It provides them different ways, different avenues of learning, uh, it's more hands-on and engaging, and it's also less pressure.”

The participants mentioned being aware of the varying learning style of their low SES students and the need for instructional strategies that get these students engaged and

active in their learning.

***Theme 7: Some very confident, some confident but not fully, some varies day to day***

When asked to describe their level of confidence that the varying instructional strategies that they are using are effective for the learning of low SES students in language arts and mathematics, Participants 1, 3, and 6 shared that they are pretty confident. Participants 2 and 4 described their confidence in the effectiveness of these strategies as 80% confident. Participant 2 stated that even though they are 80% confident in the varying strategies, they would still like to have other strategies to use. Participant 4 stated they were 80% confident sharing,

Oh, I would say my confidence level would be about at an 80%. Um, and I would say that because it all depends on the, I guess, feedbacks not the right word. Um, but, but how the students show me that they've learned. If they've shown me that they have understood what I'm teaching, then the instructional strategy worked, I did my job, and we can move on. If they're still struggling with the content, then I really need to reexamine what I'm doing with that student and how I'm trying to get them to understand the content.

Participant 5 shared that their confidence varies by day. Participant 5 stated, "My confidence is, it, I would say every day is different." Participant 7 shared that they are doing as much as they can but struggle. Participant 7 shared, "I, I would say they seem to, I mean, the strategies themselves I think are, as, we're doing as much as we can do."

While the participants felt high levels of confidence in the effectiveness of varying instructional strategies, their confidence levels still have room to grow.

***Theme 8: Reducing class size and having more flexibility with approaches and curriculum would help the effectiveness of strategies/teaching***

When asked how participants could be more successful with using strategies for low SES students, Participants 1, 2, and 4 mentioned being more flexible. Participant 1 stated, “I also think it's a combination of a little, a little more flexibility while also having the flexibility to try the different strategies we know work.” Participant 2 stated, “I do feel like there are times that we need to be more flexible.”

Participant 1 admitted that they could be more successful:

Class size I think is the biggest thing that would, that inhibits the growth of low SES students because they don't get as much of that strategy work and as much of that intervention within the regular classroom because of class sizes. I think class size, class size would definitely help with the teachers being more successful.

Participant 7 admitted:

I think the struggle comes in with classroom size. In, in smaller groups, these could be more effective because kids are typically distracted you know, with, with everyone around them, but, and again, I think that it seems that low SES kids seem to have greater attention deficits oftentimes. I definitely think, yes, that in smaller groups uh, the, the low SES kids have a greater chance of getting it and grasping it, um, just because, just even if nothing else, for the close proximity to the teacher. And to be able to have them closer to you and able to sort of hold their attention a little better rather than spread out over an entire classroom with you know, 25 other kids.

The participants desired better conditions to assist the academic performance of low SES students by allowing them the ability to give these students the full support they need to succeed.

***Theme 9: Usage of standardized MAP testing, observations, tests, quizzes, formal, informal, cumulative, and summative assessments to assess academic achievement***

Participants were asked how they assess the academic achievement of their low SES students in language arts and mathematics in regards to the instructional strategies that they use. Participant 1 and 2 mentioned using the MAP standardized test that students take a couple of times per year. Participant 5 also mentioned the MAP standardized testing but mentioned that they believe that test is only a measure of what they can do on that specific day. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 all mentioned using teacher/classroom observations. Participant 5 shared, “So basically comparing their work would be how I would assess how my strategies are doing. I like to look at the, the depth of work that they're turning in.” Participants 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 all mention some sort of assessment, whether it be quizzes, tests, informal assessments, formal assessments, cumulative assessments, or summative assessments and using a combination of those to assess the academic achievement of low SES students. Participant 6 stated,

I'm monitoring in various different ways whether it's formal assessments, informal, cumulative, um summative. You, you know assessments all the time, and it's also just classroom monitoring. You know, just walking around, watching, observing. Um, Looking over their daily work or homework, things like that.

The participants used several different ways to assess the academic progress of

their low SES students as tools to assess using varying instructional strategies.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Meeting the four standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability helped to establish the trustworthiness of this study. To ensure there was credibility in my study, I used iterative questioning in my interview questions. This iterative questioning including using probes and rephrasing questions for better understanding for the participants when needed. Throughout the whole interview process, I was upfront with participants about the whole process and built rapport with participants before the interviews. When asking the interview questions and responding to the participants, I was sure to have an awareness to not guide them or suggest answers. When analyzing the data, I used the transcripts and coding tables to maintain my focus in the meaning of the data. These key components and procedures helped to establish credibility.

This study includes thick, rich descriptions of the study's findings that allows the reader to see the connections from the study's results and use those results to apply them to other contexts, situations, or settings. I provided excerpts or direct quotes of select participant responses that support my interpretations and findings. Readers can understand how the study can be applicable through the evidence found from the data collection and presented in the study. The findings in the study could be transferable to other educators and school institutions much like the study site presented. This thorough context and presentation of the findings helped to establish transferability.

This study contains detailed information of the processes I used in completing my



research. Including this detailed information allows for the same research process to be completed the same way again, helping to establish dependability. Furthermore, to establish dependability in this study I used audit trails. These audit trails included notes I made throughout my research, including notes on observations and discoveries made, and notes taken during the data collection process. The audit trails also included descriptions of how I coded the data, identified categories, and developed the themes. A coding table presented in Appendix C assists in showing the data and analysis of the data.

The last standard in trustworthiness, confirmability, was established by using the audit trail and analytic memos. Having these detailed notes and information throughout the process helped my awareness to make sure that any assumptions, biases, or prejudices did not play a part when I analyzed the data. The audit trail and analytic memos also allowed me to remain focused on the participant responses and objectively analyze those responses.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, the data analysis and results of the study were presented. The themes that emerged from the data analysis helped to answer each of the research questions. For Research Question 1, “How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?” most participants feel that they have not been nor are currently being supported by the district when it comes to instructional strategies or training on how to work with low SES students. The participants believe that training or professional development specific to low SES students would have helped them as teachers, as well as helped the low SES

students. They believe that the low SES students would have performed better academically, had they had some sort of training or professional development.

For Research Question 2, “What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?” two teachers stated that they have had some previous training years ago. Aside from the training years ago, they have not had any additional training specific to low SES students. Again, all participants have had trainings or professional development sessions, but the trainings or professional development sessions have been general training and none have been specific to low SES students. All participants except for one would participate in training or professional development specific to low SES students if it was offered now, depending on when it was offered. All participants have had experience working with low SES students previously, and all participants believe they have experience with low SES students every year.

For Research Question 3, “How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?” and Research Question 4, “How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?” the participants are using varying instructional strategies that they believe work best for low SES students because of the different types and styles of learners, because they are engaging and hands-on, and cause less pressure on the low SES students. Some participants felt very confident that the varying strategies they are using are effective and some participants said their confidence

varied from day to day. Participants use a variety of methods to assess the academic achievement for their low SES students.

In Chapter 5, I will describe the interpretations of this study's findings and the limitations of the study. I will also describe any recommendations I have for future research. Lastly, I will describe all implications for positive social change and any other implications, as well as provide a conclusion for the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. This study was conducted because students from low SES backgrounds at the study site have poor academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. Understanding the teachers' perceptions about how they support low SES students can help lead to an understanding of how to help support teachers so that their low SES students can improve in their academic achievement. Qualitative data were collected using semistructured, open-ended interviews with teacher participants.

Key findings from the study indicate that most participants feel that they have not been nor are currently being supported by the district when it comes to instructional strategies or training on how to work with low SES students. While two participants did receive some training at some point, they still have not had any support from the district since that initial training. All participants have had trainings or professional development sessions, but the trainings or professional development sessions have been general training and none have been specific to low SES students. All participants except for one would participate in training or professional development specific to low SES students if it was offered now, depending on when it was offered. All participants have had experience working with low SES students previously, and all participants believe they have experience with low SES students every year.

The participants are using cooperative learning, modified instruction, effective questioning, relationships with peers and teachers, and visuals, pictures, and sketches in

language arts and mathematics. The participants are using student self-assessment sometimes in language arts, but mostly mathematics. The participants are using graphic organizers both language arts and mathematics, but mostly in language arts. The participants are using question stems mostly in language arts. The participants mention using finding interests, giving students choice, modeling, and scaffolding as other instructional strategies in the classroom. Participants are using a variety of methods to assess the academic achievement of their low SES students regarding the strategies they use in the classroom.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In this section, I will describe my data findings and interpretation of the findings. The data finding and interpretations were gathered from conducting seven semistructured, open-ended interviews and the peer-reviewed literature review. These interpretations both confirm and disconfirm knowledge in the discipline found in the peer-reviewed literature. The four research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ1: How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?

RQ2: What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

The findings and interpretations of this study are based on the themes found for each research question.

### **Interpretations for Research Questions 1 and 2**

I combined the interpretations for RQ1 and RQ2 because participant answers to RQ2 directly related their answers for RQ1. From the interview questions related to this research question, the following themes emerged: (a) no support from district with training specific to low SES students, (b) only training is for students in general, (c) training could have provided understanding, awareness, and ability to reach the low SES learners, (d) training would help teachers understand these students and their families, and (e) students would have performed better academically. From the interview questions related to RQ2, the following themes emerged: (a) experience with low SES every year, and (b) participation depending on when it was offered.

Some participants in the study expressed that they have not received any training or professional development specifically aimed at varying instructional strategies for low SES students or how to work with those students. Two participants have received training years ago, but along with the other participants, express that they would participate in any trainings that were offered for low SES students. All participants mention having training from the district; however, the training is for students in general and does not focus specifically on low SES students. The participants believe that if they had had training, they would have had more understanding, awareness, and ability to reach low SES students. They believe that training would have helped them better understand the students and their families. The participants also believe that their previous low SES

students would have performed better academically if they had had training. All but one participant admitted that they would participate in any trainings that were offered for low SES students, depending on when they were offered. These participant responses indicate that implementation of professional development is needed for teachers to feel supported and adequately trained. All participants shared that while they do not have much experience with training or professional development, they do have experience with low SES students in their previous years of teaching and every year that they are teaching.

According to these findings, it can be interpreted that these participants do not feel supported by the district in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students. It can also be interpreted that these participants would like some training or professional development geared toward working with low SES students. According to Rojas et al. (2019), the teacher in the study labeled as effective had some specific training and therefore provided students with varying instructional strategies. In the study conducted by Williams et al. (2017), low SES students attributed their academic success to teachers who understood how poverty could affect them. According to Gupta and Lee (2020), inservice teachers need the proper preparation for teachers to be effective in obtaining student academic achievement gains. In their study, Gupta and Lee obtained inservice teachers that participated in university courses and workshops focusing on literacy education. The inservice teachers taught in a Title 1 school with students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. After implementing what the teachers had learned, students took literacy benchmarks that showed that the students made progress and had gains in their reading and writing scores (Gupta & Lee, 2020). A study

conducted by Schwartz et al. (2019) revealed that teachers who received training and support were most effective at achieving increases in student academic achievement. The research showed that having training for teachers and how they know, understand, and teach low SES students is essential for the academic success of low SES students. This study's results showing the participants' desire for training supports the need for training to better support low SES students.

Aguiar and Aguiar (2020) posited that professional development programs that focus on the challenges with working with different types of students, such as low SES, is important to ensure that teaching in classrooms can lead to improved student outcomes. According to Kennedy (2018), teachers who receive continuing professional development can identify their strengths and weaknesses within the classroom and further enhance their content knowledge. With this continued support, teachers can maintain and improve student engagement. In a study conducted by Infurna (2020), teacher participants mentioned their ongoing professional development that they were able to receive. The teacher participants believe the opportunities for professional development were the reason they have such effective classrooms (Infurna, 2020).

One aspect of the literature review that was disconfirmed by my study is the belief that teachers who work in low SES schools tend to be less experienced and less educated. According to Stipek and Chiatovich (2017) and Reddy, L. A., Lekwa, A., Dudek, C., et al. (2020), teachers who work in low-income communities tend to be less experienced. According to Hirn et al. (2018) teachers who work with low SES students are not only usually less experienced, but they often have lower levels of education. Participants for



this study were experienced in working with low SES students and continue to be every year. Also, all but one of the participants has obtained a Master's degree, therefore their levels of education are quite high.

### **Interpretations for Research Questions 3 and 4**

I combined these research questions because the participant responses for each of the strategies used to support the low SES students answers how it was applied to both language arts and mathematics. From the interview questions related to these two research questions, the following themes emerged: (a) they are supported via cooperative learning, modified instruction, effective questioning, relationships with peers and teachers, and visuals, pictures, and sketches used in language arts and mathematics, (b) student self-assessment sometimes in language arts, mostly mathematics, (c) graphic organizers used in both, but mostly language arts, (d) question stems used mostly in language arts, (e) other strategies used include finding interests, giving students choice, modeling, and scaffolding, (f) strategies work best because of the different types and styles of learners, they are engaging and hands-on, less pressure, (g) some very confident, some confident but not fully, some it varies day to day, (h) reducing class size and having more flexibility with approaches and curriculum would help the effectiveness of strategies/teaching, and (i) usage of standardized MAP testing, observations, tests, quizzes, formal, informal, cumulative, and summative assessments to assess academic achievement.

The academic success of low SES students relies on the implementation of differentiated learning and teaching strategies (Byrd, 2020). In a study conducted by Nag

et al. (2016), gaps in academic literacy achievement were seen in classrooms that had unplanned learning experiences where the learning was left to the child. There were closed-ended questions, biased feedback, focus on getting correct answers, little scaffolding, and lower order thinking questions. Making real world connections to the content was lacking, and often left to the students to make on their own. According to Moen et al. (2019), components for academic success of low SES students include teaching strategies that are engaging, as well as instructional support and modeling. Along with feedback, asking open-ended questions that engage students is also a strategy used in classrooms with varying instructional strategies (Infurna, 2020). According to Lekwa, A. J., Reddy, L. A., Dudek, C. M., & Hua, A. N. (2019) varying teaching strategies include concrete explanations, explaining learning objectives, providing feedback, and student engagement. Providing verbal feedback improves student's academic progress and engagement in their learning (Hirn et al., 2018). Archambault et al. (2020) posited that providing concrete feedback to low SES students helps to promote their engagement. The participants in this study mentioned using effective questioning that involves open-ended questions, scaffolding, hands-on, engaging strategies, modeling, and making connections. Interpretations of the implementation of these instructional strategies suggests that the participants are using strategies that inhibit the success of low SES students. The one strategy that was lacking among several participants was the mention of providing feedback directly to students, although some of the participants mentioned that some of the strategies themselves provide immediate feedback for students.

Hann (2020) stated that engaging strategies such as collaboration, student voice, communication, and the use of reflection are strategies that enhance student motivation and academic achievement. These strategies were not mentioned among most of the participants. Participant 2 did state that they like to give their students choice, which does provide them with their own student voice and a feeling of being in control and taking ownership. The participants do mention the use of a lot of collaboration, especially through the Kagan structures that they use. Communication is one strategy that the participants would like to see change to be more successful. Student self-reflection is an instructional strategy that the participants use mostly in mathematics.

According to Morales (2016), teacher bias, lack of teacher experience, and low teacher expectations has a great effect on the academic achievement of low SES students. Welty (2021) posited that low SES students need high expectations and engaging instruction to help motivate them and increase their chances of academic success. After interviewing the seven participants, no apparent bias towards low SES students emerged. All the participants have experience and education and engage in varying instructional strategies for low SES students. None of the teachers made any mention to having any different expectations for low SES students, just that these students tend to need more support. The participants mention being confident that the strategies they are using are effective for low SES students, with the exception of two teachers who believe that it varies day to day.

This study was based on the conceptual framework according to Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) life cycle theory, which was later changed to situational leadership

theory. This situational leadership theory posits that leaders modify their styles based on different situations, their followers, and the abilities of their followers (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). When this theory is applied to the classroom, the situational leader is the teacher and the followers are the students. According to Raza and Sikandar, this theory is based on the idea that the teacher must modify and differentiate the instructional strategies to support students based on the different levels and abilities of the students. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1969), the leader, or the teacher, when applied to a classroom setting, should determine the abilities, limitations, and readiness of their followers, the students, and adjust their teaching methods according to those characteristics. Under their situational leadership theory, the leader focuses on the different tasks and activities that are to be used that will enable improvements and outcomes for their followers (Blanchard & Hersey, 1970, 1996). According to Šafránková and Zátopková (2017), teachers decide how students learn and they modify their teaching strategies to assist students in achieving academic success.

I used Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) situational leadership theory as the framework when I created the interview questions for the study. These questions focused on the teachers' strategies that they use when modifying and choosing their instructional strategies for low SES students. The interview questions included probes on how teachers support low SES students using different instructional strategies and how the success of the strategies was assessed. Using Hersey and Blanchard's theory, I investigated teachers' perceptions about how they supported low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics through the use of different instructional

strategies based on their different levels and abilities.

The findings of this study support Hersey and Blanchard's theory as the participants (the leaders) all use modified and varying instructional strategies for their students of differing abilities, specifically low SES students. The participants modify their styles based on different situations, their followers (the low SES students), and the abilities of their followers. These participants determine the different abilities of their followers, as well as their abilities, limitations, and readiness and adjust their teaching methods or strategies used. The participants (the leaders) use different tasks and activities that best enable academic success and outcomes for their low SES students (the followers). The participants assist their low SES students with the strategies they know and determine when and which subjects to best use them.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Possible limitations to this study include the participant sample size, potential researcher bias due to being employed at the study site, and apprehension from participants when answering questions. This study was limited to teachers at the study site who taught grades kindergarten through fifth grade, teaching all subjects, who had a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience. Child development (prekindergarten) teachers were excluded from the study because there are only two teachers and it would be possible that none would volunteer and would also be hard to maintain confidentiality since there are only two of them. Special area teachers were excluded from participating as they do not teach language arts and mathematics. Special education teachers were excluded since they already modify their entire curriculum to meet the needs of their

students. For the study, I wanted to obtain at least 12 participants, with a minimum of 10 participants. However, I was only able to obtain seven participants, therefore, I was only able to gather the perceptions of participants from a small sample size.

Potential researcher bias was also a limitation of this study since I was conducting the study where I currently work. Although I conducted the study in my place of employment, I do not hold personal relationships with other staff and am not in any position of power. To alleviate any potential biases, I remained objective and dealt only with the facts during the interviews. I also documented the responses of the participants, as well as my experiences throughout the study using analytic memos and audit trails. This helped to manage any biases I may have had and helped with keeping me neutral and objective.

Apprehension from participants when answering interview questions was also another limitation to this study. After conducting the interviews, I do believe that participants were honest and forthcoming in their responses when answering the interview questions. Building rapport and trust with the participants prior to beginning the interviews helped to alleviate this limitation, as well as actively listening to participants.

### **Recommendations**

A few recommendations are suggested for further research. The first recommendation is to replicate the study with a larger participant sample size and include other geographic areas. A study using a larger participant sample size may demonstrate whether other teachers are being supported by their districts in regards to varying

instructional strategies for low SES students and how to work with them. It may also demonstrate the perceptions of others teaching in how they support low SES students in language arts and mathematics.

The second recommendation is to conduct the study with teachers who do receive frequent training or professional development in regards to varying instructional strategies for low SES students and how to work with them. A study using teachers who do receive frequent training may demonstrate the perceptions of those teachers in how they support their low SES students in language arts and mathematics. It may also demonstrate whether frequent training or professional development aimed toward low SES students is beneficial and if it increases the academic achievement of low SES students.

The last recommendation is to conduct the study outside of just the elementary level and extend it to middle School and high school. A study using middle and high schools may demonstrate the perceptions of teachers in the middle and high schools and whether they receive support from their districts through training or professional development. It may also demonstrate how low SES students perform academically as they continue their educational careers.

### **Implications**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. Participants in the study do not feel that the district supports them in training or professional development regarding varying instructional

strategies for low SES students or how to work with them. All but one participant would participate in any offered training or professional development depending on when it was offered.

The results of this study have implications for positive social change through district personnel, administrators, and curriculum coaches. This study may lead to these different district employees offering some training or professional development sessions that are geared toward low SES students. The participants are willing to participate in any trainings offered and believe that training would be beneficial to them and their low SES students. This shows a desire for the participants to be supported by their district and a desire to gain more knowledge and ideas so that they can increase the academic achievement of their low SES students. Not only does the study have implications for the study site, but it also has implications that can lead to supporting teachers in other schools and communities with similar demographics.

This study could also have implications for positive social change by bringing awareness to the instructional strategies that are being implemented in classrooms with low SES students. From the study, I was able to discover if the instructional strategies are being used among multiple staff members and the teachers' descriptions and perceptions of how well the strategies work for the low SES students' academic achievement in their classrooms. Some strategies were used more than others and some more one subject versus the other subject. Supporting teachers through training and professional development could help teachers not only feel supported, but also more aware in how they could use these strategies always in both language arts and mathematics, therefore



using a variety of instructional strategies that needed for the success of low SES students.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding how they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts and mathematics. The results of the study demonstrated that teachers are using varying instructional strategies to support their low SES students and are confident that the strategies are effective but they would still like and be open to participating in more training and acquiring new ideas and strategies. The results also demonstrate that teachers are using some strategies more for one subject versus the other, and some strategies are not being used or are not used consistently. These teachers believe that if they had had training upon entering the district, they would have had more awareness for their low SES students, better relationships with their low SES students, and would have provided better support to their low SES students. They also believe that their low SES students would have potentially had greater academic achievement.

The research shows that varying instructional strategies and proper training or professional development is needed for the academic success of low SES students. It is my hope that this study will lead to positive social change by informing the site study district and others with similar demographics of the importance of initial and continuing training directly related to working with low SES students. I also hope the study will lead to positive social change by bringing awareness to the instructional strategies being used for low SES students. This awareness can help provide teachers, educational leaders, and district personnel guidance on the strategies needed for low SES students, how and when

to use them, and how to implement them with consistency. When teachers feel that they have the proper and continuous training or professional development to support them, which leads to them supporting their low SES students, both the teachers and the low SES students can be more successful.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

**Interview Guide****Date/Time:****Interview Location:****Participant #:****Research Questions:****RQ1:** How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students?**RQ2:** What kind of previous training or experience have teachers had with working with low SES students?**RQ3:** How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in language arts instruction through the use of instructional strategies?**RQ4:** How do teachers perceive they support low SES students in their academic achievement in mathematics instruction through the use of instructional strategies?

The following guide shows the alignment of the above RQs to the interview questions beginning with Interview Question 2.

<b>Introduction/Beginning of interview:</b> Build rapport/trust Reminders about study	Restate purpose of study Estimated time Reminder of confidentiality & audio recording for transcription purposes  -Do you have any questions? -Are you ready to begin?
<b>Question 1:</b> Can you tell me about your background? -years teaching -subjects and grades you have taught -highest degree/specialization	
<b>Question 2:</b> How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students? RQ1, RQ2	
<b>Question 3:</b> Describe any training or professional development you have received on how to work with low SES students. RQ1, RQ2	

<p><b>Question 4:</b> Describe any training or professional development you have received on varying instructional strategies that could be used to support low SES students. RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 5:</b> Describe how you think training or professional development would have helped you when you first entered the school district. RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 6:</b> Describe how you think training or professional development would help you now. RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 7:</b> If training or professional development were offered, describe how you would take advantage of them? RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 8:</b> If you have not had any district provided training or professional development, describe how you think that previous students you have taught would have done academically if you had received some training or professional development. RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 9:</b> What kind of previous training or experience have you had working with low SES students? RQ1, RQ2</p>	
<p><b>Question 10:</b> What specific strategies work best to facilitate learning for low SES students in language arts? RQ3</p>	



<p>What specific strategies work best to facilitate learning for low SES students in mathematics? RQ4</p> <p>If you use the following strategies, describe how you use it and tell me whether you use the strategies for language arts and/or mathematics.</p> <p>Cooperative learning?  Modified instruction?  Effective questioning?  Student self-assessment?  Use of graphic organizers?  Relationships with peers and teachers?  Question stems?  Visual representations, pictures, sketches?</p> <p>Possible Probes:  Why do you think these strategies work best?  Could you tell me more about each strategy? Describe them.  Could you give me an example of a strategy and how you use it?</p>	
<p><b>Question 11:</b> Describe your level of confidence that the instructional strategies you are using are effective for the learning of low SES students in language arts and mathematics? RQ3, RQ4</p> <p>Follow up: What would you change?  How could you be more successful with using instructional strategies?</p>	
<p><b>Question 12:</b> How do you assess the academic achievement of low SES students in your class in mathematics and language arts in regard to the instructional strategies that you utilize? RQ3, RQ4</p> <p>Possible Probes:  Could you tell me more about this?</p>	

Could you give me an example?	
<b>End of Interview</b> Ask if there is anything else they would like to add/mention.  Ask if they have any questions for you (the interviewer).	Thank them for their time and provide contact information for any follow-up or questions.

## Appendix B: Codes, Categories, Themes, Excerpts

**Table B1***Codes, Categories, Themes, Excerpts*

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
General training offered geared toward all students	General training but generally no training specific to low SES	No support from district with training specific to low SES students	P1	“Nothing specific to targeting low SES.”
			P2	“I honestly do not feel like we have any specific training on this.”
			P5	“The district has done some training with Kagan, which involves getting all the students involved, not just really, particularly not the low, ugh, SES kids.”
			P6	“I’d have to say that most of them are not targeted specifically to low SES.”
College provided  No training/professional development from district	Not from district	Only training is for students in general	P7	“It seems the trainings I’ve had have just been geared towards students in general.”
			P1	“The only training I received was through my Master’s program.”
	Training from other sources		P2	“...but there has not been an actual training.”
			P3	“But, but like a training basically all about low SES students? I don’t remember ever being to one that was specifically about it”
			P4	“I received training during my first year of teaching, uhm, mainly because I was in a building with a high poverty rate.”
			P6	“I’ve had again, just general professional developments where it’s been touched on and then coaching, as well as I’ve taken classes in college.”
			P7	“Several years ago, I attended a training, ugh, through a previous school at, uhm, for children in poverty situations.”
Certification courses that could apply strategies for low SES	Training not provided	Only training is for students in general	P1	“All of the things that I’m learning in gifted and talented certification courses could most definitely be applied to a low SES group”
			P2	“Uhm, the only cross that I could see, say would possibly be like with our MLs, because some of them are also lower. Uhm, but there has not been an actual training.”
			P3	“Like mainly in our trainings we’ll get, you know, the big idea... but like a training basically all about low SES students? I don’t remember ever being to one that was specifically about it.”
			P4	“We were told to have multiple resources available that had, that were in different languages. We saw a lot of our low SES students as being, uhm, maybe African
Broad training with big ideas, not specific to low SES				
Training specific to ESL, ML, and low performing				

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
				American, Hispanic, Asian, different racial statuses as well.”
			P6	“Ugh, the primary professional, ugh, training options that I have received haven’t been towards SES, they have been towards ESL students or low performing students.”
Would’ve helped build relationships, strategies	Training would have helped	Training could have provided understanding, awareness, and ability to reach these different learners	P1	“I think it would be extremely helpful if the district, uhm, helped support teachers in teaching low SES schools, I mean low SES kids instead of just talking about them being a subpopulation in assessment data.”
Help understand diversity Learn how to handle low SES			P2	“It would have helped me coming into the district I’m in now, uhm, because previously I did not encounter many students where they would be considered, uhm, low socioeconomic.”“It was very hard to find a way, like build relationships at first.”
Help narrow down student they’d be working with			P3	“Oh, because it would have helped me understand the diversity in the area.”
Insight on how to motivate, how to reach them			P4	“Uhm, I think as a first-year teacher, since I had it my first year teaching, as a first-year teacher it helped me immensely because since our district is so large that uhm, not every school is the same. It’s not the same group of students at every single school, so I think it helped really narrow down the type of students I was going to be working with, specifically during my first year of teaching”
Awareness of where students were so could look at differently			P5	“It would give me some ideas on how to reach them”
No training was culture shock, unaware how to deal with it, helped prepare			P7	“I think when I first entered it, especially as a young teacher, not having any knowledge or experience in dealing with children in, in, uhm, low socioeconomic status I, I think it was just a bit of a culture shock for me.”
New ideas & approaches	Training for more/new ideas	Training would help understand these students and their families	P1	“Refreshers in uhm, just teaching strategies in general and not necessarily just the ones that the district has purchased”
Better idea of students and families, backgrounds	Understanding students and their families		P2	“I have certain things I do in the classroom, but those are limited because it’s things I’ve come up with. It would be nice to have new ideas uhm and new approaches for different, for different things.”
Strategies other than district provided			P3	“Uh, it would help me now because I feel like behaviors and students change every year”
			P4	“So, I think that since things are changing in the world economically, we should be having training uhm, more regularly to be able to help our students since we spend such a good amount of time with them.”
			P6	“Uhm, I’m not sure that uh there would be any quality training that I could receive now,

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
			P7	um, per the district, I think it's just more of continued awareness."
Training would be welcomed	Preferred time for PD or training	Participation depending on when it was offered	P1	"I think training now would maybe just sort of help prepare me as I go into each new school year." "I would definitely take those in the beginning of the year, maybe even over the summer"
Prefer beginning of year, professional development day or PLC planning time	Teacher participation		P2	"I would take them."
			P4	"I would definitely. My goal would be to attend it. As a teacher since we do have limited amount of time, I would prefer to do the training during either like a PLC time on my planning time or a designated Professional Development Day."
			P5	"I would definitely, again, use this to help reach my kids, understand them better, ugh, help motivate them."
			P6	"I would definitely, again, use this to help reach my kids, understand them better, ugh, help motivate them."
			P7	"I'm not sure that I would unless it was something that I knew was bringing new ugh, strategies or something that was newly, you know, that could be implemented within our classroom reasonably."
More progress made/performed better/better academic achievement	Increased progress	Students would have performed better academically.	P1	"I think I definitely would um, participate it, at some point, most likely if they're early beginning of the year." "Oh, if I could go back especially to the very, very beginning, I, if I had known the power of small group targeted instruction, I feel like I could have made a, a lot more progress with some of my students."
Better understanding of kids and where they were coming from			P2	"I think they would have performed better uhm, in both math and reading."
Better relationships Communication with them and parents			P4	"I would like to say that they performed well, or at least to the best of their abilities"
One with training- made good amount of growth			P5	"I, I think that it would have benefit, benefit them greatly."
			P7	"I think it may have helped me with just have a better understanding of where they were coming from and so then maybe I would have handled situations differently as far as with them, behavior wise, if, you know if their behaviors were, uhm, out of line or things like that in, in communicating with them, or in trying to communicate with the parents, I I may have approached it differently."
Experience every year	Knowledge of current school population.	Experience with low SES every year.	P2	"I have had experience with it. I would say like the past few years definitely have had quite, quite a few students."
Two unaware of high low SES population	Experienced teachers		P3	"So I have a lot more experience now being in a uh, this is probably the lowest school that I've, I think I've ever been in like low

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
			P4	socioeconomic.” “So, my own, my only experience was my first year of teaching. Uhm, like I said previously, it was a high poverty school. Uhm, so it was definitely a very different environment.”
			P5	“I would say that that would be a surprise to me.”
			P6	“I did teach in PA and the one school that I was at was uhm, 90% free and reduced lunch. It was a very poor, uh, school that I was in so I do have a, a ton of uh, experience with the little SES kids.” “I’m gonna say no, I was definitely unaware of that.”
			P7	“I think that’s yearly. I don’t think there’s any year that I haven’t had.”
Kagan	5 teachers mention Kagan structures	Cooperative learning, Modified instruction, Effective questioning, Graphic organizers, Relationships with peers/teachers, and Visuals, pictures, and sketches used in both subjects.	P1	“I would say that for the majority of my career, I have always been, not always at title one schools, although I have been at some title 1 schools, I, it seems that there are pockets of children you know, in that category at every school I’ve been. “We have a multitude of different styles of learners. Uhm, so most of those strategies hit a lot of the different styles of learners.”
Small group	Some strategies always used for both	Relationships with peers/teachers, and Visuals, pictures, and sketches used in both subjects.	P3	“They all work best because they get them engaged.”
Modeling/Scaffolding	Some strategies used for one subject over the other	Student self-assessment used mostly for math but some use for both.	P4	“I mean every student is a different type of learner.”
Student interest, student choice, manipulatives, differentiated activities	Some strategies used for one subject over the other	Student self-assessment used mostly for math but some use for both.	P5	“I would have to say that I had seen it in my experience that they work best.”
Cooperative learning - both Modified instruction - both Effective questioning - both (One tries to) Student self-assessment - some used, some both, more math, not a go to, not often, case by case Graphic organizers – both, mostly ELA, as much as possible Relationships with peers/teachers – both, have to have relationships, one more in morning meeting Question stems – some do both, mostly ELA Visuals, pictures, sketches – all both except one	Some strategies used for one subject over the other	Use Graphic organizers, Question stems mostly for ELA but some for both.  These strategies work best because of the different types/styles of learners.	P6	“It provides them different ways, different avenues of learning uh, it’s more hands on and engaging.”
Works best because: Different styles/types learners Immediate feedback Helps socially building relationships Less frustration		They’re engaging and hands-on.	P7	“They really need something concrete in front of them.”

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
Helps understanding Engaging/Hands-on Gets their attention Validates understanding More growth Based on experiences Provides different ways of learning Less pressure Gives them something concrete to make connections Every day is different More successful by using them more, consistency				
Pretty confident 80% confidence Doing as much as they can	Not all completely confident. Do their best.	Some very confident, some confident but not fully, some it varies day to day.	P1	"I'm pretty confident that it helps. Uhm, if it's used consistently." "I would change class size" "Having the flexibility to try the different strategies."
Every day is different Smaller classroom size Change approaches/curriculum given by district – doesn't meet needs of low SES	Could do more with different circumstances	Reducing class size and having more flexibility with approaches and curriculum would help the effectiveness of strategies/teaching.	P2 P3 P4	" I would say I'm like 80%." (confident) "I would change, kind of, some of the approaches." "We need to be more flexible." "I'm pretty confident in, yeah, each of them yeah." "I would say my confidence level would be about at an 80%." "I think in the moment you have to really be flexible."
Change relationships with peers and teachers Someone to help – co-teacher or assistant Training would help with new ideas			P5 P6	"...my confidence is, it, I would say every day is different." "I would say using them more." "I feel pretty confident."
More successful with smaller class sizes Flexibility to try new strategies outside of district mandates Be more purposeful Think about presenting material in different way Will look at student profiles and past data to support low SES students Using them more, consistency Availability of materials Better communication with parents			P7	"We're doing as much as we can do. I think the struggle comes in with classroom size"

Codes	Categories	Themes	Participant Number	Excerpt
More effective with smaller groups/classroom				
Standardized tests (MAP) Class room observations Quizzes Exit Slips Summative, cumulative, formal, and informal assessments/tests	Ways used to assess students.	Use standardized MAP testing, observations, quizzes, tests, formal, informal, cumulative, and summative assessments to assess academic achievement	P1	“We, we have to do standardized testing.” “My determination of growth for low SES kids comes from my observations in class.” “Exit slips.” “Quizzes.”
			P2	“Biggest one would be their map scores.” “I also go off of just informal classroom observation.”
			P3	“I’d say I use, you know, uhm, summative assessments. I use exit tickets. I use formal assessments.”
			P4	“All students would still take the same regular posttest or unit uh, knowledge tracker, something like that.”
			P5	“Basically, comparing their work would be how I would assess how my strategies are doing.” “I’m walking around, listening to conversations. I’m looking at notes or work, or just what their thoughts are.”
			P6	“I’m monitoring in various different ways whether it’s formal assessments, informal, cumulative, umm summative. You, you know assessments all the time, and it’s also just classroom monitoring. You know, just walking around, watching, observing. Umm, Looking over their daily work or homework, things like that.”
			P7	“It’s observation of the skills. Quizzes and tests ultimately are where we have to go to, to, to get the grades and, and really check for mastery.



## Appendix C: Coding Table

**Table C1**

*Coding Table*

	<b>Interview 1</b>	<b>Interview 2</b>	<b>Interview 3</b>	<b>Interview 4</b>	<b>Interview 5</b>	<b>Interview 6</b>	<b>Interview 7</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<b>Question 1</b> Background questions. Years teaching Degrees obtained	Teaching 15+ yrs  Master's K12 Literacy	Teaching 10-15 yrs  Master's, GT endorsed	Teaching 10-15 yrs  Master's Curric & Instr	Teaching 2-5 yrs  Master's Instructional Tech	Teaching 15+ yrs  Master's Math & Science	Teaching 15+ yrs  Bachelor's & Associates	Teaching 15+ yrs  Master's Instructional tech, LD & GT certified	4- 15+ 2- 10-15 1 – 2-5 All subjects mult. grades  6 MA, 1 BA	Educated & experienced  Teaching multiple subjects, grades	Experienced, educated and have taught multiple subjects and grades.
<b>Question 2</b> How has the district supported you in respect to instructional strategies or training with working with low SES students? <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	Kagan training balances out low students w/high & engaging them. Assessment data that allows for differ for low students. Nothing specific to targeting low SES	No specific training, just on building relationships with all students, MLs	Pulling small groups based on academic levels not specific to low SES	Received specific training in 1 <sup>st</sup> yr of teaching because the school had a high poverty rate	Kagan training towards all students, not particularly low SES	Provided PD training, counseling services. Not targeted specifically to low SES but are always mentioned Mostly diversity	No specific district support, just general training geared to all students	1 training specific to low SES  General training offered geared toward all students  No support for instructional strategies	General training but generally no training specific to low SES	No support from district with training specific to low SES students.
<b>Question 3</b> Describe any training or professional	Only training through Master's	Have not had any specific training or	Working closely with SPED	The training that was received	Just collaborating with teammate	General PDs that have maybe	Attended training 10-12 yrs ago	1 College provided	Not from district	Some receiving training through their

development you have received on how to work with low SES students. <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	program. Looking at data & impacts on low SES & how to support them	PD. Possible cross to ML training because some are lower	teachers & getting strategies from them.	upon 1 <sup>st</sup> year teaching. Discussed kind of home life they have, may be haven't eaten. May need more 1 on 1 help. Teacher may be their main support system	s. Some ideas given from curriculum coach on analyzing data/map scores but nothing specific to low SES students.	touched on it. Coach has touched on it and provided strategies. Classes in college	through a previous Horry County school on how not to treat these students differently & have more compassion for them. Experiment where \$ was given & had to survive on it for an amt of time to help understand choices families have to make	No training or PD on how to work with low SES	Training from other sources	college courses, not from the district.
<b>Question 4</b> Describe any training or professional development you have received on varying instructional strategies that could be used to support low SES students. <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	Taking GT courses and the strategies in those courses could apply for all students in classroom & modified	Spoke of instructional strategy training received but did not focus on low SES	PLCs showing diff strategies. Training gives the big idea for differing students. No specific training on low SES students.	1 on 1 help, Trained to give extra support with materials to take home. Told to have multiple resources available in diff languages.	In experience, the low SES were the low achieving students. Used small group activities for students that needed	Training has primarily focused on ESL students & low performing students which can be used. Last 4 years received ESL training.	Not asked	None specific to low SES  Training for varying instructional strategies in general  Training specific to ESL and low performing	General training on strategies to use but not specific to low SES  Training provided for other groups of students such as ESL	Training/professional development from district/school are about varying instructional strategies in general

	for low SES.				extra push.					
<b>Question 5</b> Describe how you think training or professional development would have helped you when you first entered the school district. <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	Just talking about teaching in the classroom isn't good enough. Teacher prep programs should focus more on differentiation and needs of levels and types of learners. Think it would be helpful if district supported teaching in teaching low SES kids instead of referring to them as a subpopulation in data	Definitely would have helped me. Hard to build relationships at 1 <sup>st</sup> because I didn't understand what they lacked at home. As new teacher would have been nice to have been given strategies to build relationships & what works for them	Yes, but trainings are mainly big ideas maybe break into groups, focus on different strategies for different students  Would've helped me understand diversity in the area. At other county school had to get extra PD on low SES if in T1 school. To learn how to handle students from low income.	The training received helped immensely. Helped narrow down students I'd be working with, especially during 1 <sup>st</sup> year as a teacher.	Would have given more insight on how to motivate low SES students. Ideas on how to reach them.	Would have brought a lot more awareness of simple things. Awareness of where the students are. Would have looked at things differently	Not having any knowledge or training was a culture shock. Shock at seeing living conditions. Had never seen it before or experienced it. Didn't know how to deal with it. Would have helped prepare for it.	Provide more differentiation for needs/levels/types of learners  District should support teaching of low SES, not just speak of as a sub pop Would've helped build relationships and strategies that work for them  Would've helped to understand diversity  Title 1 school required extra professional development  Learn how to handle low SES	Training would have helped	Training could have provided understanding, awareness, and ability to reach these different learners

								<p>Help narrow down student they'd be working with</p> <p>More insight on how to motivate, ideas on how to reach them</p> <p>Awareness of where students were so could look at differently</p> <p>No training was culture shock, didn't know how to deal with it, would've helped prepare</p>		
<p><b>Question 6</b> Describe how you think training or professional development would help you now. <b>RQ1, RQ2</b></p>	<p>Refresher in learning styles &amp; cognitive development because a lot of low SES would fall into lower</p>	<p>I think now it would help. Would have more tools in toolkit. Limited things used in the</p>	<p>Help now because behavior &amp; students change every year. Help stay up to date on red flags</p>	<p>With changes going on in the world, would help because things could be changing for</p>	<p>Better idea of where students are coming to me with since more variety of SES kids here</p>	<p>Not sure there would be any quality training that I could receive now, per the district.</p>	<p>Although has compassion and empathy and some understanding, still doesn't fully understand. More</p>	<p>More tools in teacher toolkit</p> <p>New ideas &amp; approaches</p> <p>Help with behavior, staying up to date</p>	<p>Refresher training for more/new ideas</p> <p>Help with behavior</p> <p>Knowledge of families</p>	<p>Training would bring more knowledge, new ideas, tools, awareness, and preparation for low SES students.</p>

	range of cognit development. Having that understanding might help us better reach those kids. Refresher in teaching strategies in general, not just strategies district purchased .	classroom because it's things I've come up with. Would be nice to have new ideas and new approaches.		families. More regular training to be able to help students since we spend a good amount of time with them.	compared to PA. Would give more insight on how to motivate low SES students. Ideas on how to reach them.	Just more continued awareness .	aware of different backgrounds but training now would help prepare for each new school year.	Help what's happening with changing families  Idea of where students coming from, how to motivate and reach them  No quality training could be offered, just continued awareness  Awareness of different backgrounds, prepare for new years	How to motivate these students	Training would help understand these students and their families.  Training provided now would not be good training.
<b>Question 7</b> If training or professional development were offered, describe how you would take advantage of them? <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	Would definitely in the beginning of the year, maybe over summer, depending on how it was structured.	Would take them. Implement it in small group or whole group.	Would go to trainings offered and take it into the classroom and use if for the students.	Would definitely attend. Prefer at PLC time or designated PD day. After school if I could work it out. More likely if it's readily	Would definitely use this to help reach my kids, understand them better, help motivate them, having background on where	Wouldn't unless they knew it actually provided new strategies. Think it would be stuff they already have background in and wouldn't	Would definitely participate, likely if they were at the beginning of the year to refresh.	All would attend except 1  Prefer beginning of year or during a PD day or PLC time	Preferred time for PD or training  Teacher participation	Participation depending on when it was offered.

				available. Would see if I could put to use immediately what was in the training for low SES students. If not immediate use, would file it away	they're coming from, what makes them tick, help them in a positive way.	provide anything meaningful.				
<p><b>Question 8</b> If you have not had any district provided training or professional development, describe how you think that previous students you have taught would have done academically if you had received some training or professional development.</p> <p><b>RQ1, RQ2</b></p>	Could have made a lot more progress instead of referring them to small group instruction outside of the classroom	Thinks they would have performed better	Doesn't know because it's hard to make impacts when they have a crazy home life	Because training was received, thinks they did well, best of their abilities. Thinks they made good amount of growth	Thinks it would have benefited them greatly. Having training would have helped understand where these kids are coming from, could've helped build better relationship with them resulting in higher academic achievement	Would have looked at outside expectations differently, like homework	Would have helped to have a better understanding of where they were coming from so could've handled situations with the students differently, communicating with them and parents	More progress made/performed better/better academic achievement	Increased progress  Communication and relationship building	Students would have performed better academically.  Better communication, relationships, and understanding of the students.

									1 with training-made good amount of growth, did best		
<b>Question 9</b> What kind of previous training or experience have you had working with low SES students? <b>RQ1, RQ2</b>	Every year classes are split to include some low SES students	Experience the last few years as they've had quite a few low SES students.	In a low-income school now so more experience with it now	Only first year of teaching was with high low SES population. Transferred to this school with some low SES students. Was not aware that the school's low SES population was over 50%	High low SES population school in PA for 8 years. Here, not as drastic. Was not aware that the school's low SES population was over 50%	Has worked with low SES every year	Have either been in title 1 school and if not have always had pockets of low SES students	Experience with low SES every year  2 didn't know they were currently in school with high low SES population	Knowledge of current school population.  Experienced teachers	Experience with low SES every year.  Two teachers unaware of high low SES student population in the school.	
<b>Question 10</b> What specific strategies work best to facilitate learning for low SES students in language arts? <b>RQ3</b>  What specific	Kagan structures, connections to text  Math-peer coaching  CL- both MI – both EQ- mostly reading	Finding their interest, giving them choice, letting them feel like they're taking ownership, have	Small group, math manipulatives, differentiated activities CL- both, small groups, Kagan MI- tests, quizzes,	CL- both, interact with each other, learn from each other MI- both EQ- both -creates discussion, breaks down math step by step	Strategies allow SES to get involved, a lot of small groups, modeling, pairing with higher student, visual aids CL-	CL- always both MI- always both EQ- tries to, both SSE- case by case based on performance & ability	CL- underutilized because ahead prep time/work, have to practice it with students, easier to use in ELA	Kagan Small group Modeling Scaffolding Student interests & student choice, manipulatives, differentiated activities	5 teachers mention Kagan  Some strategies always used for both.  Some strategies used for one subject over the other.	Kagan for cooperative learning.  Strategies not listed include finding interests, giving students choice, differentiated activities,	

<p>strategies work best to facilitate learning for low SES students in mathematics? <b>RQ4</b></p> <p>If you use the following strategies, describe how you use it and tell me whether you use the strategies for language arts and/or mathematics.</p> <p>Cooperative learning? Modified instruction? Effective questioning? Student self-assessment? Use of graphic organizers? Relationships with peers and teachers? Question stems? Visual representations, pictures, sketches?</p>	<p>SSE- tried but not a whole lot GO- all the time in ELA, RWP/T-yes, esp in math, collab work in ELA, small groups, 1 on 1, QS- mostly ELA. Some in math but doesn't use often V/P/S- all the time in both</p> <p>Work best because multitude of different styles of learners and most of the strategies hit those different styles and provide immediate feedback</p>	<p>control (ELA)</p> <p>Math – hands on, visuals, collaboration with peers.</p> <p>CL- both Kagan MI- both EQ- both SSE- both more in math, self-reflection GO- more in ELA RWP/T- everyday QS- ELA not math V/P/S- both</p> <p>Work best because helps them socially, build relationships, helps understanding, can grow, less frustration</p>	<p>homework, leveled activities EQ- both SSE- mainly math GO- both RWP/T- morning meeting QS- both V/P/S- both</p> <p>Works best because it gets their attention, validate understanding, engaging</p>	<p>SSE- only math GO- both RWP/T- both more interested if relationships with each other QS- more ELA V/P/S- both</p> <p>Work best because every student is a different type of learner so more growth than using same strategies</p>	<p>MI- both EQ- both SSE- have used, not a go-to strategy GO- both RWP/T- coop learning, yes both. Have to have relationships QS- both, more ELA V/P/S- both</p> <p>Work best</p>	<p>GO- as often as possible, mostly ELA RWP/T- always both QS- case by case V/P/S- when possible</p> <p>Lots of scaffolding for primary, Kagan</p> <p>Works best because it provides different ways, different avenues of learning, hands-on, engaging, less pressure</p>	<p>because more discussion MI- both EQ- both, open ended not yes/no SSE- not used as often as they should bc sometimes students assess themselves high GO- more ELA but could use for math RWP/T- yes QS- occasional, fits more ELA V/P/S- both</p> <p>Work best bc having all those tools available helps them, something concrete in front of them helps make</p>	<p>CL - both except 1 MI - both EQ - both (1 tries to) SSE - some used, some both, more math, mostly math, not a go to, not used often, case by case GO – both, mostly ELA, as much as possible RWP/T – both, have to have relationships, one more in morning meeting QS – some do both, mostly ELA V/P/S – all both except 1 is whenever possible</p> <p>Works best because: Different styles/types of learners Provides immediate feedback</p>	<p>modeling, and scaffolding.</p> <p>CL, MI, EQ, GO, RWP/T, and V/P/S used in both subjects.</p> <p>SSE used mostly for math but some use for both.</p> <p>Use GO, QS mostly for ELA but some for both.</p> <p>These strategies work best because of the different types/styles of learners.</p> <p>They're engaging and hands-on.</p>
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<p>Possible Probes: Why do you think these strategies work best? Could you tell me more about each strategy? Describe them. Could you give me an example of a strategy and how you use it? <b>RQ 3, RQ4</b></p>							connections	<p>Helps socially building relationships Less frustration Helps understanding Engaging Gets their attention Validates understanding More growth Based on experiences over years Provides different ways of learning Hands-on Less pressure Gives them something concrete to make connections</p>		
<p><b>Question 11</b> Describe your level of confidence that the instructional strategies you are using are effective for the learning</p>	<p>Pretty confident that their strategies work if used consistently Would change</p>	<p>Effective because she sees growth every year, 80% confidence. Would still like to have other</p>	<p>Pretty confident, 100% confident that the strategies are effective. Would change</p>	<p>About 80% confident depending on how the students are learning/if they are learning.</p>	<p>Every day is different Could be more successful with using instructional strategies</p>	<p>Pretty confident Wish there was someone to help her like a co-teacher or assistant</p>	<p>Doing as much as she can do but struggles with classroom size and attention level. More</p>	<p>3 pretty confident 2 at 80% confidence Doing as much as they can but struggles</p>	<p>Not all 100% confident. Do their best. Could do more with different circumstances.</p>	<p>Some very confident that varying strategies are effective. Some confident but not fully confident or it varies.</p>

<p>of low SES students in language arts and mathematics?</p> <p>Follow up: What would you change? How could you be more successful with using instructional strategies? <b>RQ 3, RQ4</b></p>	<p>class size because it inhibits the growth of low SES students because they don't get as much strategy work and intervention due to class size. Average class size 25, 26, some years were more.</p> <p>Could be more successful with strategies if class sizes were smaller and with more flexibility to try strategies and implement them without having to stay in the bounds of what the</p>	<p>strategies to use.</p> <p>Would change approaches from district, like different curriculums used. Feels it doesn't meet the needs of that population. Would change rigor, could use more flexibility</p> <p>Could be more successful with strategies by being more purposeful. Take more time to think about how to present it in a different way. Feels like they don't think about how</p>	<p>relations with peers and teachers because making those connections is so important.</p>	<p>Now that she knows about the 50%+ low SES population in our school, will look at the profiles of the students and past data to help find strengths and weaknesses to better support them.</p> <p>Wouldn't change anything. Have to be flexible and collaborate with teammates. Having training would help with new ideas</p>	<p>by using them more, consistency</p>	<p>to help support the classroom to target needs</p> <p>More successful with strategies if they had available hands-on materials, better communication with families.</p>	<p>effective with smaller groups. With smaller groups low SES has better chance of getting it, grasping concepts</p>	<p>Every day is different but could be more successful with using strategies</p> <p>2 smaller classroom size</p> <p>Change approaches/curriculum given by district – doesn't meet needs of low SES</p> <p>Change relationships with peers and teachers because connections are important</p> <p>Someone to help – co-teacher or assistant</p> <p>Training would help with new ideas</p> <p>More successful with</p>		<p>Believe that reducing class size, having more flexibility with approaches/curriculum would help effectiveness of strategies/teaching low SES students.</p> <p>Can be more successful with readily available materials, time to think &amp; plan, having training, and having better relationships with peers and teachers.</p>
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	district provides, like the mandated curriculum programs, especially math	to present it in a different way because she just needs to teach it						<p>smaller class sizes</p> <p>Flexibility to try new strategies outside of district mandates</p> <p>Be more purposeful</p> <p>Think about presenting material in different way</p> <p>Will look at student profiles and past data to support low SES students</p> <p>By using them more and with consistency</p> <p>Availability of hands-on materials</p> <p>Better communication with parents</p> <p>More effective w smaller</p>		
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								groups/classroom		
<p><b>Question 12</b> How do you assess the academic achievement of low SES students in your class in mathematics and language arts in regard to the instructional strategies that you utilize?</p> <p>Possible Probes: Could you tell me more about this? Could you give me an example? <b>RQ 3, RQ4</b></p>	Standardized testing, can they get through without a lot of guidance, observations. Exit slips, quizzes	MAP test scores is biggest assessment.	Summative assessments, exit tickets, formal assessments. Kahoot games  Informal classroom observations	Posttests, modified tests, organizers	Looking at growth, comparing work to work done later, work they're doing in the classroom	Monitoring via formal assessments, informal, cumulative, summative assessments. Classroom monitoring, watching and observing, small group	Observations, independent practice, peer practice, partner practice, quizzes, tests	Standardized tests (MAP)  Work with little guidance  Classroom observations  Exit Slips  Quizzes  Summative, cumulative, formal, and informal assessments /tests  Kahoot games  Post tests  Modified tests  Organizers  Comparing past work to current work looking for growth  Classroom work	Several ways used to assess students.	Use standardized MAP testing, observations, exit slips, tests, formal, informal, cumulative, and summative assessments to assess academic achievement of low SES students.

								Independen t, peer, and partner practice		
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