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Perceptions of English Language Arts Teachers Related to Low Student Performance on the PARCC Assessment

Melissa Smith
Walden University

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College of Education

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Melissa Smith

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Michelle McCraney, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Lynne Orr, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Ionut-Dorin Stanciu, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Perceptions of English Language Arts Teachers Related to Low Student Performance on

the PARCC Assessment

by

Melissa Smith

MA, Sage University, 2013

BA, Lincoln University, 2010

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

The problem explored in this study was the low achievement of third grade students on the English Language Arts (ELA) Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in ELA. The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory. Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory suggests that when learners are engaged in the process of learning, they are able to learn from the person who is presenting the information (Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory Developmental Standards, 2020). The study location was an urban school setting. The data were gathered through structured interviews recorded via Zoom with 10 third grade ELA educators. Open coding was used to identify three themes aligned to the research question. Findings from the study indicated that educators reported that students' prior knowledge, the difference in the way the curriculum assessments are formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC assessments, and students' abilities to demonstrate comprehension impacted their performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment. The results further indicated that teachers needed additional support related to prior knowledge, building student comprehension and test formatting. As a result, a three-day professional development was created to support educators with planning related to the identified themes that arose from the interviews. Findings from the study could lead to positive social change as administrators use the findings to improve the learning opportunities experienced by students and improve the standing of a neighborhood school based on PARCC scores.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	2
Rationale	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Significance of the Study	7
Research Question	8
Review of the Literature	8
Conceptual Framework.....	10
Teacher/Educator Perceptions	11
Teaching Strategies.....	14
High-Stakes Testing.....	17
PARCC Assessment.....	19
Influences on Student Achievement	21
Implications.....	24
Summary.....	25
Section 2: The Methodology.....	28
Research Design and Approach	28
Qualitative Research Design.....	29
Participants.....	30
Ethical Considerations	32

Role of the Researcher	35
Data Collection	36
Preparation for Analysis	43
Coding.....	45
Themes	46
Evidence of Data Quality.....	46
Data Analysis	49
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	51
Credibility	51
Transferability.....	52
Dependability.....	52
Results.....	53
Theme 1: Educators Reported that Students’ Prior Knowledge had an Impact on Their Level of Success in the ELA PARCC Assessment.....	54
Theme 2: Educators Reported the Difference in how the Curriculum Assessments were Formatted Compared to the Format of the ELA PARCC Assessments.....	56
Theme 3: Educators Reported that Students’ Ability to Demonstrate Comprehension Impacted Their Performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment.....	58
Section 3: The Project.....	60
Introduction.....	60
Rationale	63

Review of the Literature	64
Conceptual Framework.....	65
Professional Development	65
Student Prior Knowledge.....	69
Comprehension	71
Testing Format	73
Project Description.....	74
Project Evaluation Plan.....	78
Project Implications	80
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	82
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	82
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	83
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change	84
Reflection on Importance of the Work	85
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	86
Conclusion	88
References.....	90
Appendix A: The Project	104

List of Tables

Table 1. Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment for English Language Arts, 2015- 2019.....	4
Table 2. Teacher Interview Protocol/Alignment of Questions and Theoretical Framework	41
Table 3. Themes and Categories for the Research Question	53

List of Figures

Figure 1. Research Question, Categories, Sub-Categories, and Themes.....	51
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Section 1: The Problem

To ensure that educational institutions were providing students in K-12 with the necessary skills needed to be successful at the college level, the Department of Education implemented standards at the local and national levels. English Language Arts (ELA) standards helped outline the skills that students should be taught and master at each level, based on the specific content. The ELA standards build off each one another to map out the skills students need to learn, as well as the order in which the skills should be taught. Muktiarni et al. (2018) suggested that English Language Arts standards helped ensure that educators in the K-12 setting were preparing students with the skills needed to problem solve and apply higher-order thinking strategies. The two types of assessments, formative and summative assessments, are designed to align with specific grade-level standards (Standards Alignment to Curriculum and Assessment, n.d.). Formative assessments allow teachers to gain an understanding of their student's knowledge throughout instruction, whereas summative assessments enable students to demonstrate what they learned and what skills they still need to learn (Lee et al., 2020).

In the NE District, students were assessed using the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC) assessment of English Language Arts and Math in grades 3-11 (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC, n.d.). The PARCC assessment was aligned to and based on the Common Core Standards, which allows the data from the assessment to be used by educators to identify and address areas in which students still needed support, along with areas where students have grown (PARCC, n.d.). ELA curriculums were

developed using ELA standards, and therefore, were used to guide the skills that students would be taught and to outline how students would gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities as described in the standards (Standards Alignment to Curriculum and Assessment, n.d.).

The Local Problem

Third grade students at ML Charter Academy in Washington DC were consistently performing below standards in English Language Arts according to the PARCC assessment (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2019). There appeared to be a gap in practice because students at the study site were being assessed on skills they have not yet been taught or mastered based on the ELA standards and their correlation to the ELA PARCC assessment. The PARCC data for the test site demonstrated that less than 20% of third-grade students scored at a level 4, which means that they scored at a level of meeting expectations in 2019, 27.6% met expectations in 2018, 20.5% met expectations in 2017 (PARCC, n.d.). One of the reported reasons that there was such a low level of success with the ELA PARCC assessments was students either lacking the necessary skills and or not having been taught how to critically think through a task, which may prevent them from gaining a deeper understanding of the passage or providing an answer based on the text due to their comprehension of the text (Personal Communication, December 2019).

In many cases, teachers at the study site were not fluent in their knowledge of the standards that guided the third-grade curriculum, and as a result, the full standard was not being taught; this directly impacted the opportunities students had when it came to

exposure and explicitly learning and engaging in skills aligned to third-grade ELA (Personal Communication, 2019). Epifanić et al. (2020) suggested that when instruction is delivered at a level that is considered high quality and connected to the curriculum, students had a greater chance at performing proficiently. The directors team, which is composed of the Head of School, the Principal, Director of ELA and the Director of Math, has begun to discuss the possible steps that can be taken to help create opportunities for educators to dive deeper into the curriculum and the aligned standards to identify if there is a gap between the skills students were mastering and the skills students were being assessed on through the PARCC Assessment (Leadership Team Meeting Minutes, 2019). This was an important step for the Director Team to take because they were working to identify why students were underperforming in ELA related to the PARCC standards, as well as how the gap can be closed.

Students at the study site were not being prepared to be successful on this assessment when compared to students in the same grade in different Wards, which are the different charter schools throughout Washington, DC (DC PARCC Results, n.d.). According to the PARCC Assessment guide,

Students have the opportunity to obtain a score ranging from one to five; Level 1 means the student has not met the expectations of the assessment, Level 2 means the student has partially met the expectations of the test, Level 3 means the students is approach the expectations, Level 4 means the students has met the expectations of the test and Level 5 means the student has exceeded the expectations.

This ability is based on their grade level and knowledge of the test content (PARCC Scores & Performance Levels Explained - TestPrep-Online, n.d.). According to the data provided by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education of Washington DC, only 19.6% of third-grade students received a score of proficiency (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2019).

Though the entire District of Columbia has implemented the same standards and high-stakes tests, there is a difference in the achievement of PARCC among the various communities of Washington DC, also called Wards. Traynor (2017) stated that the large discrepancy in scores might be attributed to the fact that students were learning and being educated differently, demonstrating that when all teachers were not teaching the same standards student achievement is impacted. The director team meets weekly to discuss the need to identify the current gaps in order to help students move toward proficiency in the area of comprehension and critical thinking skills related to English Language Arts (Leadership Team, 2019). According to the School Quality Report (2019) the study site did not earn the maximum number of points for the English Language Arts PARCC because of low student performance on the assessment (see Table 1). The students in this section of NE District called Ward A, historically scored lower than students in other sections of the District of Columbia when performing at a mastery level on the ELA PARCC assessment (DC PARCC Results, n.d.).

Table 1

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment for English Language Arts, 2015- 2019

English Language Arts PARCC Data by Year	Data Percentages
2015	12% of all the students who tested in grades 3-12 in Ward A met or exceeded the passing expectations on the ELA PARCC assessment
2016	16.2 % students in Ward A met or exceeded the passing expectations on the ELA PARCC assessment
2017	18.7% students in Ward A met or exceeded the passing expectations on the ELA PARCC assessment
2018	25% students in Ward A met or exceeded the passing expectations on the ELA PARCC assessment.
2019	25% of students in Ward A demonstrated a high level of mastery of the standards assessed on the ELA PARCC assessment

Based on the data, more than 70% of students each year in Ward A were not demonstrating understanding of the standards in English Language Arts based on the standards of their grade bands (DC PARCC Results, n.d.). However, between 20% and 64.5% of students in grades 3-12 who took the ELA PARCC Assessment in 2015 within Washington DC, except for one other ward, achieved scores that met the expectations of the assessment (2016 DC PARCC Results, n.d.). In 2016, between 23% and 60% of students met the expectations of the assessment (2016 DC PARCC Results, n.d.). Based on the data, the third-grade students in Ward A were not successfully meeting the passing expectations set by PARCC.

Rationale

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in ELA. The data that was gathered from the study provided the knowledge necessary to identify the perceptions of teachers around why students at the study site were scoring low on the ELA PARCC assessment. It was important to explore

teacher's perceptions because Lee and Min (2017) suggested the way teachers deliver lessons depended on their level of agreement with the lesson or the overall curriculum. Von der EDmbose et al. (2016b) also commented that when teachers produce lessons informed by student data, students achieved at higher levels.

Definition of Terms

In this section, I provided definitions of terms to ensure there is a clear understanding of what is meant when the terms below were used throughout the study. By providing clear definitions, there is no need to create one's own understanding of the term while engaging with the information (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). The terms below were used throughout the study as well as for topics of broader research to support the study.

High-stakes Assessment or Standardized Assessments: An assessment used to measure one's ability, knowledge, and skills that impact a students' standing for the year, or even their ability to move on to the next grade (Bach, 2020).

Individual Instruction: Individualized instruction is a method of instruction that allows students to receive instruction specific to their goals and is created based on the curriculum (Individualized instruction (Adult Career and Continuing Education Services | NYS Education Department. 2017, August 21).

Teacher's/Educators' Perceptions: The educator's views and ideas related to a specific topic (Zulaiha, Ambarsari et al., 2020). For this study, the terms educator and teacher were used to identify how this population viewed ideas related to the purpose of the study.

Teaching Strategies: The methods that the teacher used to present the material to the students in the learning environment (You & Zeng, 2018).

Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory: Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory suggested that when learners are involved in the learning process, they are actively learning from the person who is presenting the information (Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory Developmental Standards, 2020).

Whole Group Instruction: Instruction that is usually teacher-led to introduce new concepts. This teaching is provided as direct instruction to the entire class ensuring that all scholars receive the information. The data gathered is used as a baseline for learning and assessment (Meador, 2019).

Significance of the Study

This project study was significant because exploring the problem may benefit teachers and students at study sites. The gap in practice was explored by interviewing teachers about their current perspectives on why third-grade students at the study site consistently scored low on the PARCC assessment. The findings provided the data needed to inform next steps and ensure that any possible gap in practice was addressed and then improved. Secondly, the findings from this study have the potential to create social change by providing the data needed to ensure third-grade students are being given the tools needed to successfully take and pass the PARCC assessment. Lastly, the findings from this study may provide educators and administrators with data suggesting how to improve the local problem of third-grade students consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in ELA.

The data from this study can be used in a variety of ways. For example, other local schools within the same ward or surrounding wards that were experiencing similar experiences with high-stakes assessments may also be able to use the data that was gathered from this study to create a plan for their respective educational institution. Educators at the study site may be able to use the findings from the study to inform their teaching and instructional strategies in the classroom, which may yield overall improvement in the academic success of third-grade students. The findings from this study will be made known to the Head of School and other educators of ML Charter Academy.

Research Question

Third grade students at a charter school in the NE district were consistently scoring below standards on the ELA PARCC assessment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in ELA. The research question investigated third-grade teacher's perceptions about the current learning opportunities provided with the curriculum and the relation student success on the ELA PARCC.

RQ: What are the third-grade educators' perceptions regarding the causes of the low ELA PARCC achievement in relation to the existing instructional practices?

Review of the Literature

Providing a variety of current and relevant literature helped to support the context of the study. Talwar et al. (2021) suggested that literature reviews provide support for

the research study by identifying both past and current research related to the study topic. In this section, there is a review of literature connected to teachers' perspectives, high-stakes assessments, and teaching strategies. The goal of the literature review was to investigate the factors that impacted student achievement related to the PARCC assessment at the study site.

In this review of literature, I researched topics related to teacher's perspectives, teaching strategies, and high-stakes assessments. I used the Walden Library to access peer reviewed journals through ERIC, EBSCOhost, Education Research Starter, Education Source, Science Direct, and SAGE journals. To ensure that I gathered information that would be valid for my research, I searched for peer-reviewed articles, and most of them range from 2016 to 2020 to ensure credibility. The keywords and terms used to gather data related to my topic were as follows: *teacher views on testing, teacher attitudes and testing, perspectives of educators on testing, perspectives of educators on assessments and curriculum, perspectives of educators on high-stakes tests, teacher views on high-stakes tests, assessments in elementary, teaching strategies in elementary classrooms, teaching strategies in the classroom, PARCC testing and PARCC assessments.*

To ensure that I would have enough information and insight to guide my research, it was essential for me first to gather information to deepen my lens around teacher perspectives, various teaching strategies, and high-stakes testing. The topics for this qualitative study are (a) teacher's perspectives, (b) teaching strategies, (c) high-stakes assessments, and (d) influences on student achievement. The purpose of gathering

information from these peer reviewed articles was to provide supporting information related to the broader and local problem that was discussed in this study. Thomas (2017) suggested that having a variety of sources helps to provide a solid and detailed assessment of the topic being discussed.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory. Vygotsky's Social Constructivist theory suggests that when learners are involved in the learning process, they are actively learning from the person who is presenting the information (Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory Developmental Standards, 2020). Allowing the constructivist theory to guide the research allowed evidence to be presented showing that when scholars were able to connect the information, they already know to the new information they are required to learn, they are more successful academically. Vygotsky also provided evidence, as cited in Justice and Ezell (1999), that “traditional assessment strategies” provide data to demonstrate the skills that children already have. Vygotsky also stated, as cited in Justice and Ezell (1999), that when children had the opportunity to participate in collaborative learning with various levels of scaffolding and intervention, there were multiple opportunities for misconceptions or knowledge gaps to be addressed; overall, this approach improved student success on assessments (Justice & Ezell, 1999). Vygotsky’s theory also guided the development of the research question and interview questions, which were based on the various parts of theory.

This evidence suggested that when teachers provided instruction geared toward passing the assessments, there were many missed academic opportunities. As a result, teachers may not be providing opportunities for collaboration or sufficient intervention activities to increase student success with a specific standard; therefore, the success of students aligned to assessments is impacted. Student engagement could be connected to the educators' teaching strategies and the teacher's perspectives of what was being taught and how it is being taught. Therefore, gaining insight into the perceptions of third-grade educators related to teaching strategies and alignment provided an opportunity make data-informed moves toward teaching strategies that create this type of learning environment. Smith and Robinson (2020) proposed that teacher's perspectives have impacted their ability to accept and deliver content.

When students are engaged in learning as a regular teaching strategy, Vygotsky advocated that they are learning; therefore, there could be an impact on testing performance. Rahman (2018) provided evidence that the existence of high stakes testing influenced how teachers delivered lessons and what information was taught. Teachers become so focused on the high-stakes test that the instruction provided is geared to students being able to correctly answer possible test questions; this eliminates the true opportunity to learn and engage with various skills needed to be successful in ELA for their grade (Williams, 2017).

Teacher/Educator Perceptions

As stated by Boylan et al., "The establishment of teacher perspectives informs systemic change in order to develop strategies that transform teachers' knowledge, beliefs

and views about mindset theory” (2018, p.17). Teachers are essential in the process of developing students in the academic setting; therefore, understanding their perspectives or views within the classroom setting is also essential (Etxebarrieta et al., 2020). As we are discussing the views and perspectives of teachers, we are diving into their actual “feelings and beliefs” (Etxebarrieta et al., 2020). Educators are not always aware of the impact their feelings and beliefs have on their instructional decisions in the classroom. In fact, according to Etxebarrieta et al. (2020), when teachers approach a situation in the classroom with negative thoughts, the outcome is usually negative; however, when the approach to a situation is positive, the outcome is also positive. In other words, a teacher’s beliefs, perspectives, and personal views impact their overall effectiveness (Kalayci & Ergül, 2020). Gaining insight into the way a teacher felt, along with their beliefs, provided the information needed to help provide efficient and effective lessons (Clark, 2020).

Teacher's views of their experiences, the curriculum, high-stakes assessment, and even the student population they teach impacted the way that they delivered instruction. A teacher’s perspective of the curriculum was what drove the strategies that teachers used to deliver the lessons and skills to students along with the level of engagement (Gundogmus, 2018). Smith and Robinson (2020) suggested that the way a teacher felt about the material they were teaching impacted their openness when it came to exploring various ways to deliver instruction. Lidar et al. (2017) suggested that a teacher's perception of the content’s difficulty from their students’ perspective influenced the material that was taught and the way that it was taught. Williamson (2017) provided

evidence showing that, “test-centric instruction constrains reading and writing practices in schools by separating literacy practices into discrete and isolated tasks that are not shaped by social context” (p.74).

A teacher’s past experience with curriculum and high-stakes testing can hinder a teacher's window of perception because they begin to develop biases that they do not even realize they have. An educator’s perspective not only hinders the decisions that were made in the class, but as a result, it also can add to current “inequities” (Brodeur & Ortmann, 2018). When educators were able to make connections between how their perceptions influenced their delivery of the academic content, there were more opportunities for student academic success (Liu et al., 2018.). The teachers’ bias ultimately impacts their instruction, as well as the success of their students. Lee and Min (2017) suggested that one of the critical pieces to the success of an educator is their “buy-in or positive belief” of what they were doing and the impact of the work that they were doing. Having a positive mindset influenced their performance. According to Cutler (2020) when educators do not have a positive mindset in the classroom, it has a damaging impact on the way that they delivered instruction. A teacher’s perspectives were not only based on how they felt about the student’s ability to learn and the curriculum they needed to teach, but also their ability to foster an effective learning environment; this, in turn, influences the learning that was happening in the classroom (Ekin, 2018). Identifying the perceptions of educators was important because teacher thoughts and views could make or break the instructional opportunities in the classroom. Harvey et al. (2016) expressed

that a teacher's negative view influenced the expectations they set for their students related to their academic success.

Though there was evidence that there were many different perspectives among teachers, one thing that was agreed upon was that time does play a role in instruction (Anderson et al., 2019). Davis and Boudreaux (2019) commented, “When leadership demonstrated a strong belief in their teachers' capability to deliver meaningful instruction, classroom environment and achievement was influenced” (p. 4). For there to be a shift in the overall rate of student success, a shift was needed in educator expectations and abilities. Davis and Boudreaux (2019) commented on the need for a strong collaborative relationship to help shift the thinking and improve student achievement.

Teaching Strategies

There are many strategies that should be used in the classroom to deliver instruction to students. Many times, teachers develop lessons and deliver instruction to students in ways that do not provide opportunities for student to interact with one another, which was shown to be essential in creating a learning environment where students were able to make gains (Awacorach et al. 2021; Keith, 2019). When thinking of what strategies to use in the classroom to deliver content, it is essential to select strategies that allowed students to actively participate in their learning, which yields high student engagement (Graves et al., 2018). Turner and Solis (2017) found that when students had the opportunity to participate in learning activities, students were overall more engaged. Various teaching strategies that created a student-centered classroom

environment with different opportunities for them to engage with the material also had a greater impact than an environment that was more teacher-centered, (Turner & Solis, 2017). Dolezal (2020) recommended that classrooms that were student-centered created opportunities for students to become better critical thinkers. Allowing the students to engage with the lesson in a variety of ways also helped to improve their individual motivation (Graves et al., 2018).

For example, providing students with opportunities to have independent work time in addition to group work time also impacted engagement and how students were able to obtain the information they were learning. Sesta (2020) suggested that when there was trust within the classroom, there were opportunities for students to take a greater level of ownership in the process of learning through engaging in meaningful classroom discussions. Providing students with the opportunity to work in groups as they engaged with the academic material being taught had the potential to positively impact student engagement (Brigandi et al., 2018).

Another strategy that could be used in the classroom to engage students in the learning was by implementing opportunities for students to engage in discussion about the material. Discussions provided students with the opportunity to listen to others' perspectives, gain a deeper understanding through asking and answering questions, and identify and provide opportunities for further instruction based on the student's understanding. Akerson et al. (2019) suggested that when students participate in classroom discussions, they can deepen their understanding as well as build on any understanding they may currently have. "Educators may also use reading strategies to

stimulate reading interest and promote reading comprehension. For example, teachers may apply joint learning in small groups in which students are actively involved in face-to-face interactions with peers while reading” (Huang et al., 2019, p. 3).

Educating students using a variety of these strategies provided multiple opportunities for them to think critically and problem solve, which were skills needed to be successful academically (Ferguson-Patrick, 2018). Graves et al., (2018) provided evidence to support that a variety of strategies should be used in the classroom to ensure that students are actively engaged in the learning process. Providing students with multiple chances to build and construct their own knowledge based on the material that was delivered was important. Some of the ways that teachers achieved this was through the use of strategies like modeling the work or the critical thinking skills, providing scaffolded explanations of the material students are engaged in, and providing opportunities for students to work in pairs, groups, and even at the independent level to demonstrate their understanding and further build on the knowledge that they had gained (Graves et al., 2018).

Though it was the goal of the teachers, and the expectation of the educational institution was to create a learning environment that is fostering meaningful learning that will, in turn, provided students with the tools and skills needed to be critical thinkers and problem solvers, that was not always the case. Teachers felt pressured to make sure their instruction is aligned to the test. According to Bach (2020) the implementation of high-stakes tests has caused a huge strain in the classroom when it came to how teachers delivered meaningful instruction and as a result, teachers felt the need to teach to the test

to move toward improved student academic success. Munter and Haines (2019) proposed that instruction had become more about improved student scores, which again had further pushed teachers to focus more on the test and less on the day-to-day instruction taking place in the classroom. Bach (2020) described this type of learning environment as “test-centric instruction” (p.74). Through this level of instruction, students were simply learning to answer questions that may be on the test (Ramsey-Jordan, 2019), but not engaging with the material in a meaningful way that allowed a deep conceptualization of the material that was taught aligned to the standards for the grade (Ramsey-Jordan, 2019). As demonstrated through the literature, the more pressure teachers felt around student achievement impacted the strategies they used in the classroom, and as a result, learning goes from being centered around the students and more test and teacher centered.

High-Stakes Testing

Standardized assessment has been a part of education since the “19th century” (Munter & Haines, 2019). Standardized assessments were used throughout the world to assess how much students have learned or mastered, based on a given criterion. Standardized tests were created to provide an assessment that could be used to assess all students the same way on the same material, based on the same criteria for each subject and grade level (Jonsson & Leden, 2019). Ramsay-Jordan (2020) commented that the implementation of high- stakes testing was an additional way to place a higher level of accountability on all stakeholders such as the school, teachers, and students when it came to student’s academic success. One of the reasons that this level of testing was

considered to have impacted accountability across different stakeholders was because according to the goal of the testing, as accountability is placed in the correct places, then student success can be said to be, because of the level of quality instruction (Ramsay-Jordan 2020).

Though the term standardized assessment and high-stakes testing was used interchangeably, it was not until recently that assessments were referred to as being in a category of high-stakes (Munter & Haines, 2019). An assessment may be considered “high-stakes” if the results of the assessment or test have a major influence on students and teachers and even the school’s current standing (Bach, 2020). One goal of high-stakes testing was to create a tool that could be used as a comparative measure, and it has also created what some educators consider "constraints" in the classroom as well (Jonsson & Leden, 2019). The results of high stakes standardized tests created both positive and negative consequences for the student, the educator, and even the learning institution (Munter & Haines, 2019).

The topic of high-stakes assessments was a topic that often-caused stress in the classroom for teachers and students. Jonsson and Leden (2019) recommended that high stakes testing influenced teachers' instructions. In many cases, high- stakes testing "Causes increased pressure on teachers to teach to the test" and spend lesson time engaging students in meaningful learning opportunities where they can practice the skills needed to be successful on the assessment (Von der Embse et al., 2016b, p. 2). Though the goal of educators was to ensure that they were providing the instruction needed for students to be successful on high-stakes assessments, they were unintentionally not fully

teaching the skill or standard needed to be successful. However, there were also cases in which educators were not sure how to teach the skills that were assessed without teaching the test. Djoub (2018) suggested that when teachers were not clear on what will be assessed, it impacted their instructional practices. According to a study conducted by Zulaiha et al. (2020) there was a difference between a teacher's understanding of what needed to be taught and the actual instruction of what was taught. As stated, before the implementation of high-stakes testing was supposed to ensure that all students were now in educational settings gaining meaningful instruction and engaged in a variety of opportunities to learn, that was not always reality, and therefore it became a “double edge sword” (Ramsay-Jordan, 2020, p.7).

As teachers begin to gain a deeper understanding of what the test was assessing, they will be able to adjust their instructional strategies along with ensuring that the full standards or skills that would be assessed are taught. Rahman (2018) many times teachers were teaching the skills that were needed to pass classroom assessments, but they have not practiced the skills needed for students to be successful on high-stakes assessments. Additionally, as educators became more comfortable with the skills assessed, their instruction was impacted, and the success of students will increase.

PARCC Assessment

PARCC was a test that was created based on the Common Core Standards (Peel, 2017). PARCC is an assessment given to students who are in grades 3-11 in the subjects of Math and English Language Arts (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, PARCC, 2016). Almost all 50 states within the United States have

implemented the Common Core Standards, and many states have begun to identify concerns when it comes to the current standards (Peel, 2017). Many states felt that using the “PARCC assessment,” students were able to be assessed equally and in a meaningful way without allowing where they live to have an impact on their success (The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, PARCC, 2016). According to Peel (2017) the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers believed that children everywhere in testing grades were given the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned and were able to do through the completion of the PARCC assessment. High stakes, standardized testing worked to exacerbate educational inequities and produced a “stratified system of basic skills and scripted instruction for historically marginalized students that helped reproduce a stratified labor force for the deeply unequal social structure that characterizes the neoliberal global economy” (Bach, 2020, p.21). Peel (2017) provided evidence that supported that high-stakes assessments like PARCC and similar tests provided a sense of uniformity when it came to administering a test that could be used to gather data that would compare students across states in the same grade with the same Common Core standards.

The PARCC assessment was created to evaluate students' understanding in alignment with the Common Core Standards (Peel, 2017). However, there were still some concerns around the current high-stakes assessments such as PARCC; there was evidence that the most recent tests that had been taken provided much more rigor than high-stakes assessments in the past (Peel, 2017). According to Peel (2017) after reviewing the PARCC assessment, it was clear that the assessment did not allow scholars

to engage with the material on the assessment in a way that would help them demonstrate their understanding in a rigorous way. There were also concerns when it related to the lack of diversity among the developers of the test, along with no evidence of necessary reading applications embedded in the test (Peel, 2017). According to Peel (2017) there were also some concerns around the current high-stakes assessments such as PARCC; however, evidence showed that the most recent tests that have been taken provided much more rigor than high-stakes assessments in the past (Peel, 2017).

Influences on Student Achievement

Students at the study site were not demonstrating high levels of proficiency when it comes to the ELA PARCC assessment. According to PARCC (n.d.) demonstrating proficiency means that students have composed a total score of a four of five on the assessment. There were many student circumstances that impacted student's success when it came to first taking the test and secondly passing the assessment in accordance with standards and guidelines set by the state related to the ELA assessment and tied to specific grade level expectations. According to Keith (2017), there were both school and home circumstances that impacted a scholar's success. According to research there was a strong connection between a student's passion for reading, the amount of time students spent on reading and students being able to achieve when it came to literacy assessments (Gentilini & Greer, 2020). When the interest in reading was not fostered in and outside of the classroom, there was a significant chance that a student's academic performance in later grades would be impacted (Gentilini & Greer, 2020).

Keith (2017) suggested that influences that impacted a student's success that are school and home related are external influences. For example, some of the external influences that have impacted student's academic testing success were a lack of resources students had access to at home related to growing her literacy skills, the language at home maybe different from the language that was spoken predominately at school, they do not have a lot interaction with others which impacted their vocabulary development and comprehension skills (Keith, 2017). According to Huang et al. (2019), a study that was done showed that students in the 3rd and 5th who had access to literacy resources outside of school on a consistent bases scored better on literacy assessments than their counterparts who did not have the same opportunities and access. Another way that parents helped foster their student's motivation related to reading and reading for understanding is through modeling and demonstrating their own reading habits for students. When there was a lack of access to literacy materials, example of what it looked like to be a reader along with the expectations of reading, the impact was greater than simply not passing an assessment, in fact when these areas were lacking it impacted student's acquisition and linguistic knowledge" (Huang et al., 2019, p.4).

There were also external factors that are related to the classroom. Huang et al. (2019) recommended that one of the most important components of a literacy classroom was the resources and the amount of time that was spent on instruction. When the proper resources, interventions were implemented into the classroom instruction it can support students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. For example, student's lacked access to resources and engagement in the classroom also impacted their vocabulary

development along with their critical and comprehension skills (Keith, 2017). McClung et al. (2019) commented that the amount of free choice that students had within the classroom also has an impacted their engagement, motivation, and ability to build connection between what they were reading and daily life, building comprehension skills through creating opportunities for fairness in literacy (McClung et al., 2019). Huang et al. (2019) recommended that an additional way for educators to promote choice in the classroom was ensuring that students have daily access to a classroom library where they were able to have access to a variety of literature. However, Gentilini and Greer (2020), also stated that there may be more to the idea of providing student choice in the classroom to impact student growth in reading. When students have an opportunity to have consistent access to the library it in turn helped to inspire student motivation related to reading (Huang et al., 2019). When it comes to motivation it was important to identify how students were extrinsically motivated to move from students needing others to motivate them to motivating themselves to do their best on tasks and assessments. The type of interventions that were put in place to support students also impacted students academically (Keith, 2017). “The results of this study suggest that it was not enough to learn the structure of reading: rather, one must learn to “love to read” to derive meaning from text in his or her development of comprehension and vocabulary” (Gentilini & Greer, 2020, p. 1). When it comes to academic achievement in reading, Gentilini and Greer (2020) stated that students needed the skills such as example, knowing how to correctly and consistently decode words to build their understanding of language and knowledge, which influenced reading achievement. To be successful, they also needed to

have the will to want to read and work to gain the skills needed to be successful readers who can comprehend what they were reading (Gentilini & Greer, 2020).

Though these were circumstances that can impacted all students, the reality was that students who fell into the poverty category experienced these external inequities at a higher rate than those who fell into a more middle to upper class category (Keith, 2017). When students had access to literacy support in school as well as at home using a variety of materials and resources, evidence showed that those supports were impactful when it comes to developing student's "emergent literacy skills and overall reading performance" (Huang et al., 2019, p.2). Research from a study done in Hong Kong also showed that when students had an opportunity to experience differentiated levels of interventions, experienced improved scores on the high-stakes reading assessment (Huang et al., 2019).

Implications

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC) assessment in English Language Arts (ELA). Through this research, data was obtained that has the possible implications to identify possible gaps and barriers related to students' achievement on the ELA PARCC. It was crucial to understand the current teaching strategies to be able to begin to identify the shifts that needed to be made to improve the current gap at the study site. This study may provide data about how the current views of educators and the leadership team was impacting the learning environment and, as a result, impacting student success when it comes to the PARCC

assessment. The findings from this study may provide evidence needed for professional development because by the end of the study the data will help to provide insight into why students at the study site were consistently performing below mastery on the ELA PARCC assessment performing.

Through this study, data was gathered and as a result it could be the data needed to create positive social changes at the study site for teachers, and students. Positive social change may impact each group of stakeholders through the implementation of the strategies discussed in the study, along with using the data from the study to make the necessary academic and teaching adjustments. As the team reviews the data the finds could be used to improve the current perspectives of the teachers and educators around PARCC, the strategies used in the classroom may improve, which can impact student's success with high-stakes testing. Therefore, creating an opportunity for social change also has the potential to improve the learning opportunities experienced by students and improving the standing of a neighborhood school based on PARCC scores.

Summary

In summary, the literature review for this study addressed three topics. The three topics for this qualitative study were (a) teacher's perspectives, (b) teaching strategies, (c) high-stakes assessments, (d) influences on student's achievement success. The review of the research revealed how the perspective of teachers impacted the learning environment for students. The research also provided evidence to support the idea that when teachers were using strategies in the classroom that was student-centered, the level of student

engagement will increase, which in turn impacted their level of understanding of the material that was taught.

In Section 1, I discussed the local problem of a gap in practice between what teachers are teaching in the classroom and the material that is being assessed on the ELA PARCC Assessment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC) assessment in English Language Arts (ELA). Gathering information through peer-reviewed articles, along with conducting interviews, provided the necessary information needed to address and answer the two research questions that were used to guide the study. The study was guided by Vygotsky's Theory because evidence of the importance of making sure that the instruction in the classroom was meaningful and intentional, and the impact that it could have on a student's academic success on assessments. Vygotsky's Theory also guided the study because of the importance of traditional testing strategies and the influence on student achievement.

In the review of the literature, I came across articles that addressed perceptions of educators teaching strategies, high stakes assessments, and the various impacts on student achievement when it came to demonstrating proficiency on the PARCC assessment. According to the research, the perceptions of teachers had a significant impact on students' achievement. The research also demonstrated a need for further research to identify ways to shift teacher perspectives when it comes to high-stakes testing. One possible outcome of the findings of this study is to develop an opportunity for a three-part

professional development at the study site that would first help identify current biases and how to address them, second to identify the current teaching strategies and the possible shifts needed, and lastly, to reflect in part to see the possible outcomes of the shift that have been identified; in the first two parts of the professional development, to move to toward a path of improving student achievement.

In section two of the study, I discussed how the methodology research design and approach were appropriate for the study that was conducted. I also be provided an outline that demonstrated how participants were selected, the strategies that were used to build and foster a meaningful relationship between myself and the participants. In the last part of section two, I also provided data collection methods, coding strategies, and opportunities to provide validity and prevent bias will also be discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The problem was that third-grade students in one charter school consistently scored low on the PARCC assessment in ELA. The design of the study allowed for an exploration of teachers' perceptions related to the performance of the scholars. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about third grade students in one charter school who were consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in English Language Arts (ELA). A qualitative approach provided an opportunity to gain a complete understanding of each participant's experience (Rahman, 2016). A basic qualitative research design was directly related to the problem identified for this study because the goal of the study was to gain insight into third-grade ELA educators' perceptions.

Conducting a basic qualitative study allowed the participants to provide their personal insights as they related to the identified problem at the study site. The participants provided their insight by engaging in one-on-one interviews, which also provided me with the data needed to answer the research questions driving the study. According to Babbie (2017), the use of interviews in a qualitative study allows for detailed information to be obtained when it came to participants' experiences, as well as an opportunity to observe the participants. Data were gathered through interviews related to participants' opinions and knowledge related to the interview questions, which were related to the research questions.

Qualitative Research Design

Burkholder et al. (2016) suggested that qualitative research provided an opportunity to explore a group of individuals and a variety of events in depth. This approach was selected to guide the study because the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of third grade teachers about the learning opportunities provided by the curriculum and the relation to student success on the ELA PARCC. According to Burkholder et al. (2016) a qualitative study allowed data to be gathered through interviews that could then be used to gain an understanding of the problem presented in the study.

However, there were other qualitative methods such as narrative, grounded theory, ethnography or case studies; these methods would not be the best methods to use for this study. A narrative approach is not the best approach because a narrative approach would be based on my understanding of the topic or subject under study (Thomas, 2017). Grounded theory was not the best option because the goal of the study is not to create a theory (Thomas, 2017). Ethnography was not the best option because I was not looking to be a part of the study; rather, the study was looking to gather data from the participants (Thomas, 2017). Lastly, a case study was not the best approach because I will be interviewing many participants and gathering data based on a local problem, and the data may not be easily generalizable to other sites like my research site (Murphy, 2014). Though there were other methods of research such as a mixed-methods approach or a quantitative approach, conducting a study guided by basic qualitative methods was

best because it allowed me to approach the problem through the lens of “why” the current problem exists, instead of “how” the problem was created (Butin, 2010).

Participants

Inclusion Criteria and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to compose a sampling group large enough for the study; it also allowed me to target a specific group of people (Thomas, 2017). Purposive sampling also allowed me to identify the sample group based on what was known about the participants and the overall goal of the study (Babbie, 2017). For this study, the participant group was composed of third-grade educators from the study site. These participants were also faculty that had been in their position for one or more years, which enabled them to provide valuable insights based on their experiences related to the interview questions and the identified problem at the study site. This participant group was selected as opposed to other educators at the study site because the goal and the focus of the study was based on third-grade educators’ perceptions.

There were 10 participants who joined in the individual, semi structured interviews. The participant groups were composed of third-grade educators from the study site. Having a participant group of this size allowed me to gather sufficient data related to teachers’ perspectives of the research question guiding the study, as well as insights into various experiences. According to Guest et al. (2006) a group could demonstrate saturation based on the data that they have provided to me aligned to the interview questions. Therefore, having a sample size between 10 and 12 participants who

in the field being studied ensured they had the experiences and the knowledge needed for sufficient data collection.

Recruitment and Rapport

The very first step in gaining access to the participants was to speak to the Head of School about the study that I conducted at the site. The Head of School was the person responsible for providing permission to conduct the study at the site. Permission was given through an in-person conversation and followed up by an email request (Appendix B). After permission to conduct the study at the site was granted, the next step was to email the prospective participants. The study was outlined within the email, as well as the expectations established for them as participants and me as the interviewer (Appendix C). Once the individuals responded letting me know if they would like to participate, I sent them a consent form to sign, which again outlined their rights as participants, the goal of the study, and the expectations for myself as the interviewer (Appendix C). Lastly, the 10 participants were asked to provide three different times they were available to sign up for our initial one-on-one, introductory meeting via Zoom.

The study site included over 500 students in grades pre-school through 8th grade with two teachers in each classroom. There were two preschool classes with one lead educator and one assistant in both classes, three pre-kindergarten classes with one lead educator and one assistant in each class, three kindergarten, and three first grade classes. In grades two through eight, there were two classes in each grade band. In grades kindergarten through eighth, the model was that there was a general education teacher and a special educator in each class, and the classes were departmentalized. This means

that there was a general education math teacher, special education math teacher, general education ELA educator, and a special education ELA educator in each of these grades. There were also subject matter academic coaches based in grade bands; for example, there was an ELA Coach for 6-8 ELA and one for Math. The structure was similar for the K-2 and 3-5 grade bands. Regarding the leadership team, there were three deans, a Math Director, ELA Director, School Culture Manager, Principal, and a Head of School. There were 10 participants for this study, and all were faculty members from the study site.

Though I have a working relationship with many of the possible participants, it was important for me to establish a relationship with them as the person who was conducting the research and them as the participant in the study. Establishing this type of rapport was important because it allowed the participant to be more comfortable opening up and engaging in conversation with me throughout the interview (Thomas, 2017). Once I got the responses back for participation, I set up a time to meet one on one online with each of the participants through a Zoom to ensure that they understood the entire process and had an opportunity to ask any questions they may have regarding the study. The next step was to have the participants provide me with two options of times outside of work hours that would be convenient for them to participate in the online interview.

Ethical Considerations

All the ethical standards put in place by Walden University's IRB department were used to guide the study and to ensure that participants were protected during each step of the research. I ensured the protection of participants' rights by confirming

confidentiality throughout the study, obtaining their consent for participation in the study, and ensuring there was no harm due to participating in the study. To ensure that confidentiality of participants was maintained, each participant was provided with a number based on the order in which they interviewed. For example, the first teacher would be TE1 so that their name was not revealed at any point during the research process. I worked to ensure that no harm was caused; participants were provided with a consent form to sign, so that they knew that their participation was totally optional. This process established clear expectations for each participant. In order for an individual's rights to be completely protected, I explained HIPPA in great detail. Explaining to the participant about HIPPA and how it would be followed throughout the study provided the participant with further clarity on rights and safety.

Confidentiality

Though I have a working relationship with some of the participants, maintaining confidentiality was very important because it was my duty to ensure that the participants were protected from any harm as they participated in the study (Babbie, 2017). The local site and teachers' names will never be used; instead, the school was referred to as "ML Charter Academy," and teachers were identified using pseudonyms in the order they are interviewed. There was not any personal information shared in the overall data gathered from the interviews to help maintain confidentiality. The participants were assigned a number based on the order in which they are interviewed, for example the first teacher would be TE1, and I continued that pattern so that everyone I interviewed was assigned a number related to the order that they were interviewed in. It was important to make sure

that I had a clear system for how I would be able to identify participants without using their name, because I wanted to ensure that I had a “clean data set” (Kaiser, 2009). This data will be kept for a period no less than five years, and it will be stored in my password-protected computer as well as kept on my personal flash drive, that only I will have access to.

Informed Consent

Participants were provided with a consent form to sign that shows they willingly decided to participate in the study, as stated in Appendix D. The consent form provided the participants with detailed information of the study’s purpose, outlined their rights as participants, the goals of the study, and the expectations for me as the interviewer as demonstrated in Appendix D. The consent form also let the participants know that the interview was hosted and recorded online. Perspective participants were notified that participating in the study was voluntary and participation did not affect their current role at the study site. Providing participants with this information allowed them to make informed decisions about choosing to participate in the study, because they had been given a clear description (Wiles, 2013).

Protection from Harm

As for the research, it was my responsibility to make sure that I protected all the participants in my study from any act of harm as result of their participation. One of the ways that I ensured that the participants were protected was by safeguarding the use of ethical guidelines implemented by the IRB, such as notifying the participants of their rights, providing consent forms, identifying any possible exposure to harm because of

being a participant in the study, storing the data properly, and maintaining confidentiality throughout the study. I also made sure that I did not start my study until I had the necessary approval to do so from my committee and IRB; I did this to ensure that I had accounted for and addressed any possible opportunities where participants could experience harm as participation in the study.

Anytime a study is conducted, there is an opportunity for bias to arise; however, I needed to make sure that I was aware of my values and how they could impact my data collection (Babbie, 2017). Since I knew that there was also an opportunity for my biases to arise, I made sure to take notes during the interview process, after the interview process, and even through the process of transcription of the interview responses to ensure that any biases that arose are documented and do not impact my overall findings within the study. Journaling helped to ensure that I was not placing my opinion into the data that was gathered from each of the participants.

Role of the Researcher

I have experience in the study setting as an educator for the past four years, from 2017 to currently. My roles at this school have been a classroom teacher, Team Lead and the F.E.L.T. Lead, and the Dean of Student Culture at the study site. My position as Dean of Student Culture did not impact teachers' overall evaluation, current positions, or opportunity for advancement. I was not in a supervisory role over any of the study participants. Though I did have working relationships with many of the participants, I was sure to document and identify personal biases in my journal that are to ensure that the study is contaminated at a minimal level. Some potential biases that may have arouse

were around my knowledge of how a teacher may teach, strategies they may use in the classroom, the number of years they have been teaching or even my opinion about their content knowledge or even my personal relationship with the participants. My role was to conduct interviews, record data and review the current and past data.

I gathered information through interviews. Though I worked at the site in which I conducted interviews, I still needed to establish a relationship with the participants but not as their colleague. It was important for me to make sure that I was not allowing my personal experiences and views cloud the data. In fact, Thomas (2017) states that when the researcher has built a relationship with the participants, they were willing to share their insights and experiences. To ensure that I was only recording the participants' responses and not my own views I recorded the interviews and then transcribed them along with keeping a journal where I was able to record any of my personal thoughts, insights, and observations of body language during the interviews.

Data Collection

For this project study the data was collected by individual semistructured interviews. The goal was to schedule three interviews per week for the first four weeks, to ensure that there was an opportunity to interview all twelve participants. Each interview was a length of no less than thirty to forty-five minutes; however, I also allotted an additional fifteen minutes as a buffer for each interview to ensure that the dialogue was natural and there was no pressure on the participant to rush their thinking as they were responding to each of the interview questions. Within the allotted time for interviews participants were asked nine open-ended questions presented in Appendix E.

Each interview was conducted and recorded via online software, due to the current pandemic. To ensure that I had captured the participant responses the recording was input into software called Delve which allowed me to create transcriptions of each interview and will also help me begin to create categories, identify themes, and create codes.

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis. The interview participant group was composed of third-grade educators. There was an interview protocol used to guide the interviews presented in Appendix E. The interview protocol was sent to groups of people who I considered to be Subject Matter Experts. Each of these experts had five or more years of experience working with students in third- grade or has experience at the Elementary level. The interview protocol was geared to gather data based on teacher perspectives and therefore was sent to educators.

There was a total of six subject matter experts. None of the SMEs were part of the actual study and they did not work at the study site, however having a group of experts composed of people who are similar to the participant group assisted in the process of identifying the alignment and validity of the instrument used to gather the data (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). As SME feedback was provided related to the alignment of the research question guiding the study, the framework guiding the study, and the interview protocol (Zamanzadeh et al.2015). Zamanzadeh et al. (2015) suggests having a group of experts provide feedback around the interview protocol helps to provide validity to the instruments that will be used to gather data. The interview protocol was guided by open-ended questions to allow the participants of the study the opportunity to

share their opinions and experiences without feeling limited in their response (Thomas, 2017). Based on the feedback from the SMEs along with additional feedback from my chair I have made edits to the SME feedback in Appendix F, to ensure that there is full alignment between the research question, the instrument used to gather the data and the framework guiding the study.

Throughout the data collection process, I used a research journal as a tool of reflection. Maintaining a research journal allowed me to capture my thoughts as I was preparing to conduct the interviews and assisted in deferring any personal biases that may arise as I was gathering the data. Journaling also provided me with an opportunity to capture commonalities that I identified across participants and the overall interview experience. Lastly, journaling helped me acknowledge and ask questions I had once interviews were completed.

Conducting one on one interviews online allowed me to gain insight from stakeholders on individual levels. It also assisted in creating and establishing relationships with the stakeholders that I worked with throughout the data collection process. Utilizing Delve allowed the opportunity to engage in a face-to-face interview process. Conducting one-on-one interviews provided the opportunity to gather observation data relating to the participant as they are answering questions (i.e., body language). Establishing this relationship with each of the stakeholders allowed the participants to be more comfortable with sharing information during the interview process (Smith, 2019). There were 10 participants for this study. The study site was composed of over 500 students in grades pre-school through 8th grade, with two teachers

in each classroom, there were two general education teachers, two special education teachers and six support educators for third grade during the study period.

The questions for this project study were created and reviewed by six SMEs to gather data needed to explore the perceptions of third-grade teachers about their current ELA teaching practices and their suggestions to align more closely with the ELA PARCC assessment items. Ramli et al. (2020) suggested that having an expert panel review the interview protocol provided the me with the feedback needed to ensure that there was alignment between the research questions and the interview protocols (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015).

Instrumentation

For this qualitative study, I used the interview protocol and a journal to gather data along with recording the interview sessions with each of the participants. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) a journal provides an opportunity for continuous reflection. The interview protocol for the third-grade educators is listed in Appendix E. The interviews were recorded using Zoom.

The interview protocol consisted of nine questions found in Appendix E was used to guide the interview and gather data from the participants. The protocol was reviewed by SMEs to determine the alignment between the protocol and the research questions. The educator interview protocol was reviewed by a group of SMEs who were not a participant in the study. The interview protocol in Appendix E was for third-grade educators. The use of interview protocols allowed the participants to engage in a conversation and discuss their thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and experiences (Thomas,

2017). Interviews allowed me to gather meaningful information that represented various perspectives that one may not be able to gather through other sources of data collection (Thomas, 2017).

The interview protocol that was used to gather data was an adequate tool for the research purpose of this study. To ensure the interview protocol was aligned and to yield the data to answer the research questions, I sent my research questions along with the interview protocol to a panel of experts and they provided feedback as demonstrated in Appendix F. The SMEs provided feedback related to the alignment of the research questions to the interview protocol and framework guiding the study. The SMEs were composed of three educators. The panel of experts was composed of people who have been in the field of education for five or more years and had experience as a teacher and are not part of the groups of participants at the study site. Ramli et al. (2020) suggested that having an expert panel provide feedback around the interview protocol and research questions for alignment helps establish validity within the protocol and the data gathered.

Table 2 displays the questions used in the interview protocol for the educators. The connection between the questions in the teacher interview protocol research questions is also displayed in the table below. The use of this interview protocol gave the participants the opportunity to share their perceptions and opinions about the PARCC assessment and what was considered current teaching strategies. Demonstrating alignment between the interview questions and the research questions helped to demonstrate overall validity within the study and the data collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's Social Constructivist

Theory. Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory was used as a base line for creating and aligning the interview protocol for this research study. Allowing the constructivist theory to guide the research allowed evidence to be presented that demonstrates that when scholars were able to connect the information they already know to the new information; they were required to learn they were more successful academically.

Table 2

Teacher Interview Protocol/Alignment of Questions and Theoretical Framework

Research Question	Interview Questions	Theoretical Alignment
What are the third grade educators' perceptions regarding the causes of low ELA PARCC achievement in relation to the existing instructional practices?	1. What impact do you believe a student's prior knowledge on their individual achievement on ELA PARCC?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory- Individual Instruction
	2.What are your perceptions about the opportunities available to students to build their prior knowledge in ELA?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Individual Instruction
	3.What are the current opportunities within the curriculum that support build on prior knowledge of students?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Organizational
	How often within the curriculum do students complete activities that activate their prior knowledge and allow them to make connections the new tasks?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Organizational
	What connections do you notice between the skills taught on the assessment and the strategies that you use in class to teach those skills?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Whole Group Instruction/ Individual Instruction
	What are the current strategies used in the classroom to strengthen students' comprehension and critical thinking skills?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Whole Group/ Individual Instruction
	What is your perception about the relationship between the ELA skill taught within the curriculum and the skills assessed on the ELA PARCC?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Organizational
	What do you suggest to align ELA instruction with the ELA PARRC assessment?	Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory -Organizational
	Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to add?	

Data was gathered through interviews with third-grade educators that lasted no longer than an hour. The interview questions were semistructured. A semistructured interview protocol allowed for the interview to flow more like a regular conversation, instead of me providing a box in which participants needed to stay in as they are participating in the interview process (Thomas, 2017). Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic that was being experienced, all interviews were conducted within Zoom. Participants were given a unique log-in code to ensure that only myself and the participant would have access to the meeting and that other participants were only able to enter the meeting once I left them into the meeting. The interview began with a “getting to know you” icebreaker that created an inviting environment and helped to build a positive rapport (Appendix D). Taking the time to establish a positive rapport with the participants was essential, because trust was needed for participants to feel comfortable to fully engage in the interview (Babbie, 2017). Once the icebreaker was completed, I took a moment to remind the participants of the following things: the goal of the study, duration of the interview, the interview recording, as well as provided an opportunity to voice any concerns ask any questions before the interview began (Appendix D).

All the data was tracked in a very organized and precise way. The interviews were recorded through the use of Zoom and then transcribed using software called Delve. A reflective journal was used to take additional notes about participants, body language as they were engaged in the interview, and follow up questions. Journaling allowed in reflections to be captured throughout the process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I

was also able to make note of any thoughts that arose, as I was administering the interview to ensure that I did not allow my personal bias to impact my study. Implementing a reflective journal to make note of any possible bias that arose helped with the overall validity and trustworthiness of the study, because it demonstrated the constant thought process that I was going through as I interacted with each piece of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Writing down reflections in a journal allowed me to make note of their initial understanding of the data gathered and then to then revisit the data to gain a clearer understanding (Mirlashari et al., 2017).

Preparation for Analysis

The information in this section provided an outline for how data was gathered and analyzed throughout the study. How the data was analyzed was important to the study, because it was important to demonstrate validity in the study. The data for this study was gathered through individual interviews and recorded using Zoom. The data was collected and yielded responses to the research question that guided the study:

RQ1: What are the third-grade educators' perceptions regarding the causes of the low ELA PARCC achievement in relation to the existing instructional practices?

For this study there was one participant group composed of third grade educators. The interview protocol was created to guide the interview process for educators. The goal was to complete all the interviews within the first month. Within the following month all the data gathered through the recorded interviews to be transcribed. Once all the interviews were conducted, I began to analyze the data gathered from each of the interviews, along with the data from my reflections and observations of each of the

participants responses and body language which identified the common themes that arose or discovered underlying meanings (Babbie, 2017).

Finally, I utilized the analysis of the answers from the responses provided by each of the participants to answer the research questions guiding the study. There were many types of data analysis methods that could have been used to analyze data. However, for this study I used the constant comparison method. Thomas (2017) suggested that one of the benefits of constant comparison method of analysis allowed the me to have multiple opportunities to engage with the data. Through data analysis I was able to identify themes based on the responses provided to the research questions. The goal of the data analysis process was to identify common themes that arise within the data, identify outliers, provide opportunities for triangulation and consistency within the data set (Thomas, 2017).

Data organization was another essential step. Data cannot be properly analyzed if the data is not organized. Analyzing the information presented an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of the data (Thomas, 2017). One of the ways that the data was organized was by labeling the participants. Each of the participants was labeled using a number identifier related to the order in which they were interviewed. The transcriptions of the interviews were labeled based on the same system.

Throughout the process of organizing the data I made sure that I made a note of any reflections, or wonderings in my journal. Keeping track of this information was useful as I interacted with the data at multiple points. I was able to identify possible categories and themes. The data will be stored in my password-protected computer as

well as kept on my personal flash drive, that only I will have access to for five years. The reflections that I made as I was working through the data collection process will also be kept on my password-protected computer.

Coding

Coding is one of the essential steps in ensuring that the data was organized. The codes can be created based on ideas that continually present themselves within the data (Saldaña, 2016). Babbie (2017) presents evidence that showed that coding allowed the me to construct “raw data” into “standardized data (p.338). To make sure that I had correctly coded my data I conducted multiple rounds of coding, which also helped with identifying clear themes that arose (Thomas, 2017). As I went through the coding process, I looked at the data gathered through the interview transcripts along with the notes that I was taking in my journal; as it related to the interviewees body language, and facial expressions, during the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2016).

To ensure that I was consistent with my coding I followed the three stages of the coding process discussed by Thomas (2017). The first stage was “open coding” (Thomas, 2017). During this stage I started to build and identify categories based on the data, then I moved toward axial coding to pair different pieces of data together through constructing labels and placing the data into the possible categories I previously constructed (Thomas, 2017). Lastly, I moved to the third stage of selective coding where I was able to pull out themes that were presented based on the previous two coding steps (Thomas, 2017).

Throughout the process of coding, I continued to make notes in my reflection journal to ensure that I used the same strategy to identify and create, label, and categorize each code. To aid in this process of coding within my qualitative study I used a program called Delve, to identify the various categories presented by the data. Utilizing software called Delve allowed me to code various pieces of data such documents, pdfs, audio, and video (Thomas, 2017).

Themes

Once the interviews were transcribed, the interview responses were analyzed holistically and I began to extract the patterns that were presented in the data. Once the interviews were transcribed, I reviewed the notes that I constructed throughout the interview process. I used the “Constant comparative method” to ensure that through the multiple times of interacting with the data, and I was consistently working to pull out the common themes (Thomas, 2017). Once I was able to identify the themes from the data, I was then able to utilize that information to construct codes to create abbreviations.

Evidence of Data Quality

Member checking was implemented within the interview process to ensure that I had a clear understanding of what the participant was relaying in their response. Member checking, also known as “respondent validation, was a technique for exploring the credibility of results” (Birt et. al., 2016, p1), took place throughout the interview. Some of the ways that member checking was implemented into the interview process, was through restating their responses as well as providing them with a response time; to let me know if my understanding was correct, or if there was a misunderstanding that needed

to be corrected (Thomas, 2017). Another method that was used in the study to provide an additional opportunity to check my data was by sharing the interview transcriptions with the participants to review and provide feedback after the interviews were conducted. Once I had received the feedback, the necessary changes were made, and I began to move forward with organizing the data. Member checking was important to the study because it provided a level of checks and balances for me to ensure that I did not allow my bias to impact the data gathered (Birt et al., 2016).

I used the data gathered from the interviews and from the interview observation notes within the study to provide opportunities for triangulation (Thomas, 2017). Using the data and the notes taken during the interviews allowed me to have two different pieces of data to look at based on the interview protocol. Creating triangulation within the study was important because it allowed a presentation of various research methods that ultimately yielded the same data (Babbie, 2017).

Within research it was important to identify possible bias before starting the interview process. Understanding pre-existing bias helped to prevent bias from showing up in the way that interview questions were asked or even with connecting with the data being gathered (Rubin & Rubin, 2016). For example, bias can arise during the interview process, as well as through the process of transcribing interviews. One of the ways that I ensured that, this did not happen was by adhering to the suggestion of Rubin and Rubin (2016) which was to make sure that the interviews were recorded, which prevented me from having to rely on my memory of the interviews. The other suggestion that I used to guide my interview interactions was to make sure that I remained emotionally constant,

so that the participants did not feel as if I was judging them, but instead listening to understand (Ravitch & Carl 2016). Lastly, to address the emotions that could have arisen; as I was conducting the study that could allow bias to arise around my feeling, I consistently wrote in my reflective journal so that as feelings and thoughts arose they were addressed, based on the data and not just what I thought and felt. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) a reflecting journal allowed the me to document reflections, concerns ongoing, which provided a tool to help assist in identifying the biases.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) identified possible bias is crucial to the overall outcome of how the data was gathered and coded. Making this identification was also helpful in creating validity within the study. Demonstrating validity in the study was done through the process of checking in with each of the interviewees throughout the interview process to make sure that I had a clear understanding of their responses to each question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Another way that I demonstrated evidence of validity was using an expert group, composed of educators, who could ensure that the interview protocol I used, yielded the data needed to answer the research question posed (Rubin & Rubin, 2016).

As I went through the data and created codes, I knew that there may be some pieces of data that would not fit into a particular theme. These pieces of data were called discrepant data (Saldaña, 2016). It was essential that I became comfortable with the fact that there could be discrepant data, because forcing data to fit would impact the validity and trustworthiness of the data (Roulston, 2014). As I was coding the data and identifying themes, I made sure any reflections related to data that do not fit in my

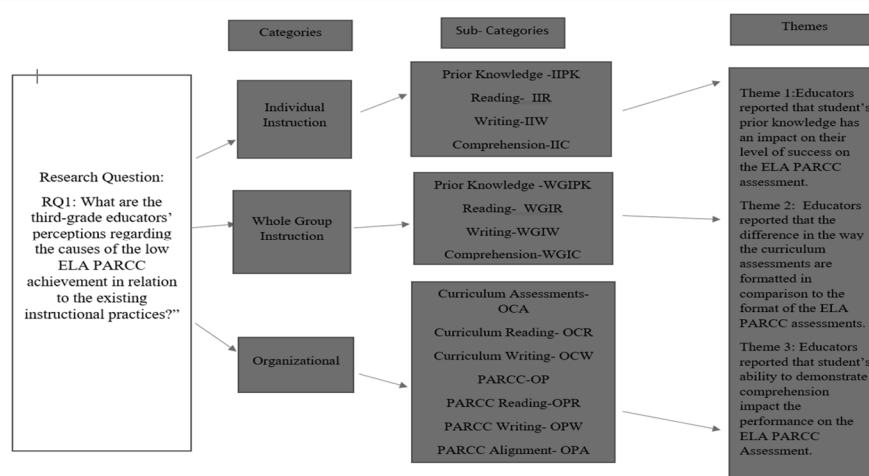
notes. I was able to reflect on the codes and themes that I had identified to ensure that the data was a true outlier of if it was coded incorrectly.

Data Analysis

My data analysis approach was to determine factors connected to the research question through the responses provided by each of the ten participants. Each of the participant interviews was analyzed independently. The data approach I utilized followed three stages, as Thomas (2017) discussed. After reading through the transcripts to ensure that I had an initial understanding of the data collected, I began the process of coding. In the first round of coding, I utilized the open coding method. Open-coding allowed me to read each transcript line by line to identify categories related to the data (Thomas, 2017). The next round of coding I conducted was axial coding. Through axial coding, I was able to identify and group pieces of data based on the labels I assigned to the words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs during the first round of coding (Thomas, 2017). Lastly, I conducted a round of coding using selective coding. Conducting a final round of coding using selective coding methods allowed me to review the data through a different lens for a third to identify themes that arose based on the previous two rounds of coding (Thomas, 2017). Finally, I used Delve software to code the data. As a result, I could identify the number of times that a reference was made to each of the specified categories within the interview data, based on the codes assigned to the data.

Once all three rounds of analysis and coding were completed, I was able to identify three categories, fifteen sub-categories, and three themes (Figure 1, below). The categories were: (a) individual instruction, (b) whole group instruction, and (c)

organizational. The sub-categories related to individual instruction were (a) individual instruction- prior knowledge, (b) individual instruction- reading, (c) individual instruction- writing, and (d) individual instruction- comprehension. The sub-categories related to whole group instruction were (a) whole group instruction - prior knowledge, (b) whole group instruction - reading, (c) whole group instruction - writing, and (d) whole group instruction – comprehension. The sub-categories that were identified related to organization were: (a) organizational- curriculum assessment, (b) organizational- curriculum reading, (c) organizational curriculum writing, (d) organizational-PARCC, (e) organizational- PARCC reading, (f) organizational-PARCC writing, (g) organizational-PARCC alignment. The three themes that were identified were (a) Theme 1: Educators reported that student’s prior knowledge has an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, and (b) Theme 2: Educators reported that the difference in the way the curriculum assessments are formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC assessments and (c) Theme 3: Educators reported that student’s ability to demonstrate comprehension impact the performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment.

Figure 1*Research Question, Categories, Sub-Categories, and Themes***Evidence of Trustworthiness****Credibility**

Credibility was established through a variety of measures. Credibility means that the study's findings were believable, given that the data was represented (Burkholder et al., 2016). The first way that credibility was established was through member checking, which allowed participants to review the transcripts that were composed based on their interviews to provide feedback confirming that their perceptions and ideas were properly represented. I also supported the credibility of my study by constructing a detailed and aligned literature review. As stated by Burkholder et al. (2016), the robustness of a literature review was a vital indicator of the entire study's credibility. Lastly, I also participated in multiple rounds of feedback from my research committee to ensure complete alignment within each part of the study, which also helped to build the study's credibility. Finally, I also utilized the process of triangulation through the use of

interview transcripts and notes from the interview. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), “Qualitative researchers attempt to establish credibility by implementing the validity strategies of triangulation and member checking” (p.188).

Transferability

The transferability of my study was supported by the information I provided to describe the setting of the study site. There were clear expectations regarding identifying how participants were recruited and the specifics around the number of participants that would be recruited (Table 3). I also identified that I would use purposive sampling to ensure that I was recruiting participants who would best align with the goal of my study (Babbie, 2017). Rubin and Rubin (2017) stated that having participants who have knowledge related to the study topic helps with the study's credibility. Of the ten total participants, eight participants were female, and 2 were male. All 10 had one or more years of experience as a third-grade educator.

Dependability

I addressed dependability throughout the study by ensuring that all the steps and procedures I followed in conducting my study were clearly outlined, making it easy for another researcher to repeat my study. According to Ravitch and Carl (2015), providing a precise sequence of methods that can support the steps taken in the data collection process helped ensure dependability throughout the study. I made sure to clearly outline my research design, the research question that guided the study, and the interview protocol that I used to ensure that the interview questions were aligned with the research design and research question.

Results

In this section, I reported the study results. As I coded the data, I identified three categories, fifteen sub-categories, and three themes. Then, the findings were summarized and supported by the responses from the one-on-one interviews I conducted. Table 3 shows the themes and categories that arose as a result of the data from the interviews. Within the table there were also data that represents how times each category and them were discussed by the participants. The data from this table was used to guide the literature review in section three.

Table 3

Themes and Categories for the Research Question

Theme	Categories	# of times mentioned by participants
Educators reported that students' prior knowledge impacts their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment.	Individual Instruction Sub-Category- Individual Instruction Prior Knowledge	31
	Whole Group Instruction Sub-Category – Whole Group Instruction Organization Structure	22
Educators reported the difference in the way the curriculum assessments are formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC assessments	Sub-Category-PARCC Alignment	27
Educators reported that students' ability to demonstrate comprehension impact their performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment	Individual Instruction Sub-Category- Individual Instruction Comprehension	43
	Whole Group Instruction Sub-Category- Whole Group Instruction Comprehension	36

The research question that guided the study was **RQ1**: What is the third-grade educators' perceptions regarding the causes of the low ELA PARCC achievement in relation to the existing instructional practices? I found three themes connected to the

research question. The first theme was that educators reported that students' prior knowledge impacted their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment. The second theme was that educators reported the difference in how the curriculum assessments were formatted compared to the ELA PARCC assessments format. The third and final theme was that educators reported that students' ability demonstrated that comprehension impacted their performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment.

Theme 1: Educators Reported that Students' Prior Knowledge had an Impact on Their Level of Success in the ELA PARCC Assessment

The first theme that emerged in this study was the perception of educators that reported that students' prior knowledge impacted students' level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment. This theme came from third grade educators sharing their perceptions of students' prior knowledge related to individual and whole group instructional opportunities. The educators in the study replied that a student's prior knowledge significantly impacted their learning in the classroom and when it came to taking the ELA PARCC assessment. The educators were very clear when expressing their perceptions of students' prior knowledge and the impact it could have on their achievement in ELA. When the participants talked about prior knowledge, they included vocabulary as part of the scholar's prior knowledge, along with student experiences and exposure. Participant 4 shared that "I believe that prior knowledge has a significant impact on an individual's achievement on ELA PARCC. We know that part of language acquisition, such as like vocabulary and stuff, has to do with exposure to different. Words subject specific language or even just one's own reading and how much how varied and

the range of that reading so we know that a lot of what scholars have learned previously, especially through. Reading different subjects and different types of literature really impacts their ability to comprehend and understand the vocabulary when exposed to it in a standardized test form.” Participant 8 reported that a student's prior knowledge can dictate their readiness for the current year, stating that “ having an understanding of students prior knowledge when they come into the school year allows the teacher to be able to assess is this student ready to tackle grade-level curriculum, does the student need additional support to be able to tackle grade-level curriculum and what scaffolds need to be set in place.”

Similarly, Participant 9 also felt that prior knowledge of a student is has a great impact on a student’s everyday learning experience in ELA, stating, “Prior knowledge has a large impact because I am a firm believer that accessing a child’s prior knowledge or students’ prior knowledge is a part of their learning process. It was also made clear by additional participants that prior knowledge also plays a significant role when it comes to students’ achievement on the ELA PARCC assessment.” Participant 1 shared, “I definitely think that their prior knowledge has a huge and heavy impact on their achievement on ELA PARCC, especially because the questions that are on PARCC are one text opinion questions and then two, they’re really based on your comprehension or understanding.” Participant 6 also felt very similar to participant 1 related to how a student’s prior knowledge can play a role in how well a scholar does or does not do on the ELA PARCC, stated, “I think, it has a pretty big impact, I mean they’re going into the test with a good understanding of ELA and the type of text they’re going to see and

maybe the vocab that they're going to see. And so, if they have not been introduced to all those things and the format, it could impact their achievement." Lastly, participant 10 shared a perspective that demonstrated their belief that prior knowledge of third grade scholars equally impacts the achievement in ELA throughout the year as well as on the park assessment by stating, "I think that it is crucially important for PARCC." Modules build on prior knowledge throughout the school year so that, as we continue to expose our students to various topics or ideas or frames of thoughts, they are able to pull upon those when taking high stakes exams such as PARCC." Though some participants believed that the curriculum provided opportunities to build on scholars' prior knowledge that was not the belief of all the participants. Lupo et al. (2020) also provided evidence that supports that when students have limited prior knowledge, their overall success related to reading and literacy can be impacted in a negative way.

Theme 2: Educators Reported the Difference in how the Curriculum Assessments were Formatted Compared to the Format of the ELA PARCC Assessments.

The second theme to emerge in this study was the perception of educators that reported that the difference in how the curriculum assessments were formatted compared to the ELA PARCC assessment format could have an impact on students' level of success in the ELA PARCC assessment. As I conversed with each of the interviewees, common themes arose around the formatting and alignment of assessments within the curriculum and related to the high-stakes test of the ELA PARCC assessment. For example, participant 4 was sharing her perspective of one of the major alignment issues around students being able to use the tools they learn within the curriculum for curriculum

assessments, but that is not the case on the ELA PARCC assessment by sharing, “But on assessments in the performance task students are able to show what they’ve been learning in class through some creative processes not just writing. Participant 1 also shared a similar reflection related to the fact that when it comes to curriculum assessments, there are certain tools that students are able to utilize, and that is not the case with the PARCC assessment by stating, “On PARCC students don't have anchor charts to be able to look at it's really just pulling off of any skills or strategies that you've learned throughout the school year and being able to actually apply them.” Participant 6 also agreed and took an additional step to suggest how they could create an opportunity for alignment with the format by sharing: “Seeing kind of like a different form of testing that just like giving them a question here and there, that looks exactly like they're going to see it on that test. This would help align them more to like the test the structure of the questions if students have not been introduced to the format it could impact their achievement.” Participant 2 agreed with Participant 6 by sharing their following belief: “Kids get caught up on the format and not the actual skill or concept that is being assessed. Participant 10 shared a suggestion for better alignment between the two by responding with, “For better alignment, how do we have the assessment really encompass like everything the common core state standards call for beyond just like reading a passage and answering questions so like, how we do have not only the writing prompts to be a little bit more robust, but for students to engage in a discussion. Participant 8 also shared that another issue of alignment and formatting is related to the writing tasks that students complete in the curriculum compared to the writing task needed to succeed on the ELA PARCC.

Participant 8 stated, "I think that with PARCC, students will be tasked with more complex writing versus the daily writing in class, so the writing is a little bit less rigorous in terms of what I've seen versus what I know to be on the PARCC assessment."

Sherman et al. (2021) expressed that though the overall goal of an assessment is to identify a student's knowledge, there are additional factors that can impact a student's achievement scores.

Theme 3: Educators Reported that Students' Ability to Demonstrate Comprehension Impacted Their Performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment.

The third theme to emerge in this study was the perception of educators that reported that students' ability to comprehend what they are reading impacts their overall achievement on the ELA PARCC assessment. As I interviewed each participant, the common theme arose around the role student comprehension plays in their achievement and scoring on the ELA PARCC assessment. The consensus of the participants was that scholars need to not only know how to read the material, but the need to demonstrate comprehension to be successful on PARCC. Participant 6 shared that, "Kids need to be able to understand to the answer the question, even just like a multiple-choice question in that format" and Participant 4 said, "That reading of different subjects and different types of literature really impacts their ability to comprehend." The participants also shared strategies that were used in the classroom to help strengthen scholar's comprehension and provide them with a tool that helps to increase their ability to be critical thinkers. One of the strategies that was consistently mentioned was genre-based thinking jobs. Participant 2 shared that, "Genre based thinking jobs really help kids to get at the main idea of a text

to see the author's purpose, why did they write this, what is the author trying to teach us," Participant 1 stated that "Genre based thinking jobs can help with comprehension, because it helps scholars to be able to break down the words to understand what is being said to be able to comprehend." Participant 9 also shared the purpose of genre-based thinking-jobs and the relationship to building student comprehension by stating, "Using the genre-based thinking jobs that is an opportunity for them to like to activate their prior knowledge of like here's how I can like break down the text in my head. And, in some cases, on paper, depending on what's going on to get a deeper meaning of the text and so that's almost essentially a strategy. And that strategy is like the activation of prior knowledge once I get to a new text or new part of the text, what is it that I'm going to do to understand better and get a deeper meaning.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions third grade teachers had about the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum as related to student success on the ELA PARCC. Findings from the study indicated that students' prior knowledge had an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, the differences between the way the assessments were formatted, and the student's ability to demonstrate comprehension impacts performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment. The project was constructed based on the findings presented in Section 2 to resolve the research problem. The project included components that will help support educators' concerns related to prior knowledge, formatting concerns, and ways to address concerns related to student comprehension. The goal of the professional development was to provide educators with knowledge and tools to begin to address the current identified problem of third grade students consistently scoring low on the PARCC assessment in ELA (Appendix A). Throughout the professional development, teachers will have opportunities to engage in discussions and collaborative sessions, as well as work independently to practice utilizing the skills and tools that are being discussed within the professional development sessions (Appendix A).

In Section 3, the project is presented. This section also includes a detailed layout of the project including the project description, the goals, and the purpose, along with a detailed literature review that was aligned with the findings from Section 2. There is also an outline provided related to how the professional development (PD) would be

implemented, the supports that would be provided, the time that would be allocated for each session, possible barriers that arise during the implementation of the PD plan, and the responsibilities of the school leaders and teacher participants (Appendix A). At the end of Section 3, there will also be a project evaluation and additional informational related to the social change at the location of the study.

The PD was created as a guide for the study site to support the third-grade educators and students in creating opportunities within the learning environment for scholars based on the themes that were identified from their interviews. The PD provides materials that include an overview, each part of the PD, and the benefits of the materials and skills presented. There was also an opportunity provided for the participants to actively engage in hands on learning and collaborative activities throughout the PD that will help educators identify adaptations for their current curriculum and materials to positively impact the learning environment in ELA.

The decision to utilize a PD was made after speaking with my committee chair about my findings based on the data. The skills discussed and the materials introduced will be useful to all educators in the building and are transferable to other grades; however, the PD will be geared toward third grade educators. The main goal of this project is to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully create opportunities to build on and assess students' prior knowledge, build comprehension skills and opportunities, and create alignment between the way students are assessed through the curriculum and through the ELA PARCC.

The project is a three-day PD training that could be used during summer orientation of the school year to come or within the first few weeks of school, as professional developments are being given around the administration and implementation of curriculum. The PD was designed in a way that will allow the information to be presented over three-day period, in which educators would have an opportunity to participate in trainings, gain knowledge from each informational session, and complete hands-on activities to improve the way that the curriculum is implemented and address each of the themes that arose from the data (Appendix A). The main goal of the professional development is to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist with curriculum implementation to improve student performance on the ELA PARCC.

Specific goals for the PD are as follows:

- Goal 1: Teachers will gain a deep understanding of ways to implement additional opportunities to assess and activate students' prior knowledge.
- Goal 2: Teachers will backwards plan using ELA PARCC and the ELA curriculum to create opportunities of alignment between the formatting of the two.
- Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way.
- Goal 4: Teachers will understand a variety of instructional practices that can be utilized to deliver the ELA instruction and build student comprehension.
- Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process of developing alignment.

Rationale

In Section 2, the findings from the study showed a need for both initial and ongoing support needed for educators at the study site. There was a variety of information and perceptions shared by third grade educators through the various interviews that were conducted. Three themes were identified based on participant responses that were related to components that will help support educators' concerns related to prior knowledge, formatting concerns, and ways to improve student comprehension. The project type was selected to address and support the findings related to the research problems and each of the identified themes, as well as support the continual learning of the educators at the study site. Collaboration and learning sessions can help educators gain the experiences needed to successfully approach the current curriculum. Martin et al. (2019) shared that when a PD is implemented successfully it can “transform beliefs and practices of educators” (p.3).

The project audience will consist of third grade educators who need to deepen their understanding, knowledge, and skills when implementing the curriculum related to the identified themes. Throughout the PD, there will be opportunities for educators to learn in a whole group setting, as well as an opportunity for educators to collaborate with one another related to the learned information and creation of classroom resources. The findings from the study demonstrated that there was a need for educators to create occasions for students related to prior knowledge, align curriculum questions to the PARCC format, and explore ways to collaborate with one another to identify additional opportunities to build student comprehension. Educators would also have a chance to

practice the skills they would be introduced to during the three-day professional development. The outcomes created to guide the professional development were composed based on the identified concerns of the participants.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of third grade teachers regarding the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum and related to student success on the ELA PARCC. A professional development was created that would be implemented over a time span of three days (Appendix A). The PD was created to address the concerns of the participants related to the identified themes from interviews. The professional development created provides educators with a deeper understanding and skills they need to successfully create opportunities to build on and assess students' prior knowledge, build comprehension skills and opportunities, and create alignment between the way student are assessed through the curriculum in comparison to ELA PARCC through aligning the format of the tests or assessments.

In this section, there is a literature review connecting to students' prior knowledge, comprehension skills and the format of the tests or assessments. The purpose of choosing these areas of literature was to support the themes that arose from the participant interviews related to factors impacting student achievement when it comes to the PARCC assessment at the study site. In this review of literature, I researched topics related to professional development, prior knowledge, alignment of assessments, testing format and comprehensions skills. I used the Walden Library to access peer reviewed journals through ERIC, EBSCOhost, Education Research Starter, Education Source,

Science Direct, and SAGE journals. To ensure that I was gathering information that would be valid for my research, I searched for peer-reviewed articles; most of them range from 2018 – 2022 because I know that the articles need to be within five years of the study to be credible sources. The keywords and terms used to gather data related to my topic were as follows: *professional development, student prior knowledge, student prior knowledge elementary, student comprehension elementary education, student comprehension, student comprehension elementary or primary school, testing and assessment format elementary school or primary school, testing format and academic achievement or academic performance, testing format, testing format and student success or academic achievement.*

Conceptual Framework

Vygotsky's social constructivist theory was utilized for this study. Vygotsky's social constructivist theory was the best theory to use because it proposed that when students are part of the learning process, they are given opportunities to learn from the person who is leading the discussion or providing the information (Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory - Developmental Standards, 2020). This constructivist theory allowed evidence to be presented that supported the thought that when scholars are able to connect the information, they currently have to the information they will learn it presents an opportunity for them to increase their academic success. Vygotsky also stated, as cited in Justice and Ezell (1999) when children are able to work collaboratively with their classmates, it provides opportunities for misunderstandings to be addressed through a variety of interventions, which can help enhance student's testing performance

(Justice & Ezell, 1999). Vygotsky's theory also guided the creation of the research question and the questions in the interview protocol, related to the different parts of theory.

This evidence suggested that when teachers are implementing instruction related to passing the assessments it creates missed opportunities within the classroom related to academics. As a result, there may not be as many opportunities provided for student to work together, leveled activities to increase student success related to standards and therefore the academic achievement of students related to testing is impacted. Student engagement could be connected to the educators' teaching strategies and the teacher's perspectives of what is being taught and how it is being taught. Therefore, gaining perceptions of third-grade educators connected to the current teaching strategies and alignment can provide an opportunity to look at the data to move toward teaching strategies that are geared to the creation of this specific learning environment. Smith and Robinson (2020) proposed that teacher's perspectives influence their ability to receive and present content.

This information was useful because educators could possibly utilize the information provided to inform instruction strategies that are currently used in the classroom. There appears to be a gap in what is being taught in the classroom and what is assessed on the high-stakes PARCC assessment. When student engagement is part of the expectations of the learning environment through the strategies that the educator uses, Vygotsky advocated that they are learning; therefore, there could be an impact on testing performance. Rahman (2018) suggests the existence of high stakes testing impacts the

instruction introduced in the classroom learning environment and the strategies used to deliver the information to the students. As educators became so focused on the high-stakes test, instruction was impacted in a major way. Instruction became more about students learning how successful take test and therefore the opportunity of true learning and students' engagement through a learning a variety of ELA skills that would allow them to be successful in their grade disappeared (Williams, 2017).

Professional Development

Based on the findings of the study that I presented in Section 2 related to the research question that guided the study, there was a need for professional development to provide educators with additional tools and skills to be successful in the classroom relating to the ELA. According to Gupta and Lee (2020), professional development for educators has the potential to positively impact student achievement. Educators felt that there were many factors that played a role in students success related to ELA PARCC. Based on the needs that were identified by the participants, the best plan of action was to create a three-day professional development opportunity.

Developing a professional development opportunity for the study site was beneficial to the educators who participated in the study as well as other educators at the site. The professional development was structured in a way that allows participants to receive information, collaborate around the information and even provided feedback about the information they learned through each of the sessions. Aaron et al (2021) shared that provided an opportunity for professionals to reflect the knowledge they have and have gained was essential for them to continue as professionals. The goal of the

professional development was to help provide additional knowledge to help those who have attended the pd to gain skills that can be used to strengthen the skills they have within their profession. According Kramarski and Heaysman (2021), to the overall goal was to provide teachers with additional support to assist them with being able to create an environment where students are achieving. When PD is successfully implemented and based on a need identified by educators it provides the opportunity to change current beliefs and practices in the classroom Martin et al., 2019).

Through the PD session that was developed for this study there was careful consideration taken in the way in which the session will be delivered and the impacts that the pd could have on stakeholders, there is an opportunity to impact educators' approach and knowledge as well as student achievement. "To improve current educational practices and better prepare teachers for the challenges they face in today's schools, researchers and policymakers have recommended that PD programs measure effects on both teachers and students" (Kramarski & Heaysman 2021, p. 302).

Providing PD opportunities where educators can gain a deeper understanding of the material they are using for instruction or tools for implementation also impacts their mindset (Martin et al., 2019). When a PD session is structured properly and presents opportunities for the participants to gain new knowledge, it can be used to support individuals or the whole staff, while still striving to improve student achievement (Elek et al., 2022). Though change does not happen overnight, it is easier to foster change in a teacher's mindset or approach when they feel supported and are seeing a positive change within the classroom, based on the new skills they have learned throughout the various

professional development sessions. (Martin et al. 2019), suggests that educators are more open to making changes in their approaches to instruction and their beliefs if their classroom data is showing that students are learning and achieving at a greater rate because of the new changes that have been made related to instruction.

Student Prior Knowledge

When it came to learning it was essential to identify what the students already knew about a topic before beginning to teach the lesson, because this data will allow the educator to plan accordingly. Understanding how students felt about reading and the level of prior knowledge they were bringing to the classroom was important because it informed instruction, related to how educators introduced and approached the lesson (Ugwu, 2019). Cogliano et al., 2018, also shared that students' prior knowledge had a significant impact on their achievement. In the study done by Hattan and Dinsmore (2019), two strategies to activate prior knowledge were discussed. The first strategy was called purposeful activation and the second strategy was called ancillary knowledge activation. Though the goal of both strategies was to activate student's prior knowledge the strategy itself was different and therefore caused students to utilize the prior knowledge in different ways (Hattan & Dinsmore, 2019). "Purposeful activation of prior knowledge during reading occurred when the explicit goal was activating knowledge and necessitates the use of metacognitive knowledge" (Hattan & Dinsmore, 2019, p.25). An example of purposeful activation was when a person or students were asked to complete a chart where they were asked to jot down all the things they knew about the topic before the learning begins (Hattan & Dinsmore, 2019). Through this activity students were able

to recall knowledge or experiences related to the topic to make a connection between what they already knew and what they would be learning about. Ancillary activation of prior knowledge allowed students the opportunity to use their prior knowledge to develop inferences, develop opinions or even construct questions based on their knowledge and experiences (Hattan & Dinsmore, 2019). When we discussed prior knowledge, we were discussing student opportunities to pull from or “referring back to a previous personal experience or previously learned facts or concepts” (Hattan & Dinsmore, 2019, p.25). Bosch et al. (2021), shared that one of the most important factors related to student achievement was students’ prior knowledge tied to the subject they were learning. Cogliano et al. (2018), also shared that students’ prior knowledge had a significant impact on their achievement. In addition, Hofstädter-Thalman, et al. (2022), shared that for learning to take place the prior knowledge of learner must first be activated, because students need to be able to add the information, they were learning to the information they already had.

When scholars do not have any prior knowledge about the subject matter, this was something that must be taken into consideration, as the teacher was planning the material. When scholars do not have prior knowledge related to the subject or topic they were discussing, it impacted their level of engagement as well as their success with tasks related to the subject. Chang (2018) also shared that a student’s prior knowledge was a significant influencing factor related to their academic performance. It was also important to note that not all the students in specific learning environment have the same level or experiences, which meant that there could be a learning environment composed

of scholars that were at various level of understanding because of their experiences, preventing them to be able to pull from their prior knowledge. Bosch et al. (2021), suggested that it was important for educators to identify what prior knowledge their students had each time a new idea was introduced, because the educators goal should be to deliver instruction in a way that all students were able to engage and successfully obtain the knowledge that was being presented though this may mean that the teacher had to adjust the way the lessons were delivered. As educators it was important to understand the impact of being able to provide scholars with opportunities to build their knowledge bank, especially when starting a new lesson, because all students needed an opportunity to access the instruction, which in turn allowed them to be academically successful. Students that had more experiences and a large prior knowledge bank to pull from, performed better academically (Chang et al., 2020). Davis et al. (2020) also shared that student who had a greater base of prior knowledge demonstrated a greater level of comprehension. Student's prior knowledge their ability to comprehend or understand what they were reading, based on their ability to pull from prior experiences.

Comprehension

Before students could engage in conversation or answer question related to what they had read they must first comprehend or have some level of understanding of the material. "Comprehension is to make sense of the information received through reading after it is processed in mind" (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021, p.1). Sur and Ates (2022), define comprehension as the ability to understand what the material is saying and what they may "see or hear," because listening is also a part of comprehension. Building

students understanding is composed of a variety of things, for example as I previously stated prior knowledge and ability to read also impacted a scholar's ability to build connections to gain an understanding. Prior knowledge was such an important step in student comprehension, because when scholars can build on their knowledge or make a connection to what they were reading it helped them understand the information on a deeper level of understanding (Cunha et al.2016). Davis et al. (2020) also shared that student who had a greater base of prior knowledge demonstrated a greater level of comprehension.

Scholars' ability to read also impacted, how they comprehended the information that they were reading. Hashim and Ahmed (2021) shared that one cannot begin to discuss the topic of comprehension if the scholars were not able to read. Sen and Baz (2018) also shared that one of the most important parts of comprehension was students being able to demonstrate fluency as they were reading, because then they would be "reading to learn and understand and not learning to read" which was two different processes. Makebo et al. (2022), conducted a study related to student comprehension and students' reading fluency where they found that students who had higher level of fluency compared to their counterparts had a greater understanding then those who were not as fluent in reading. According to Çiğdemir and Akyol (2022) when comprehension has been identified as an issue there were very specific steps and strategies that should be implemented to help build comprehension. Though there were a variety of strategies that could be used to help students identify what they had read through taking notes, graphic

organizers or even rereading the text, those strategies could only be effectively utilized if students first were able to read the text (Putra & Suzanne, 2022).

Testing Format

Testing format was related to the way in which the assessment questions were arranged, the median in which the assessment was being administered and even the way the tool was being used to assess the knowledge and understanding of those who were taking the assessment. Blumenthal & Blumenthal (2020) also shared that when discussing formatting it could also mean the tools that were being used to assess students for example were students being assessed using paper and pencil, computer-based assessments, or both and if they were being assessed utilizing both was the layout of the assessment the same? There were a variety of ways that assessments can be formatted, for example there could be multiple choice questions, short response questions, fill in the blanks, essay responses and questions that built on one another so it could be a question that has a part A, Part B and so on and even the structure of the actual question. When it comes to formatting of an assessment it could also be tied to the level of the material that the participants were being exposed to when it came to the text that students were asked to read and the way they were asked to engage with the text and the amount of time they must engage with the text.

The way in which an assessment is structure or formatted can impact how students are able to engage with the material. Cor and Brocks (2021) confirmed that the formatting of the test can impact students' performance, especially when the format may be different from what they are used to when it comes to being assessed. When students

were presented with a higher-level text, or different genre than they were used to reading it impacted their overall performance on an assessment, because they were trying to figure out how to navigate the text enough to be able to answer questions about what they had read (Collins et al. 2019). How long the text was also impacting students' achievement. If students were used to digesting shorter text or smaller part of a text at a time it can become overwhelming when they see an assessment that presents them with a long text, and as result this could impact student performance on reading comprehension assessments (Collins et al, 2019). Students level of knowledge related to the formatting of the assessment can also impact their success rate (Sherman et al., 2019).

Project Description

The project is a three-day PD training that could be used during summer orientation or within the first few weeks of school as PDs are being given around the administration and implementation of curriculum of 2023. Each year the study site hosts a two-week PD opportunity for new and returning teachers in which educators have a chance to learn new information and build on their current knowledge. The PD was designed in a way that will allow the information to be presented over three-day period, in which educators would have an opportunity to participate in trainings, gain knowledge from each informational session and complete hands-on activities to improve the way that the curriculum is implemented and to address each of the themes that arose from the data. The main goal of the PD is to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist in the way that the curriculum implementation is approach to improve student success related to their performance on the ELA PARCC. There will also be an opportunity provided for

the participants to actively engage in hands on learning and collaborative activities throughout the professional development that will help educators identify how to make adaptations to their current curriculum and materials to positive impact the learning environment in ELA. Throughout the three days of PD there would be a variety of sessions and each day would have a PD that was geared toward a specific theme allowing the opportunity for information to be shared around the topic, having an opportunity to discuss and collaborate and utilize the skills learned related to them as they prepare materials.

Findings from the study indicated that educators' perceptions were that student's prior knowledge had an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, that the difference in the way the curriculum assessments were formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC assessments and that student's ability to demonstrate comprehension impacted the performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment. The first day of PD would begin with a whole group learning related to student's prior knowledge. The session will be held in the afternoon would focus on looking at module one to identify what the standards and objectives were to be able to identify what prior knowledge scholars needed to be successful. Teachers would work collaboratively to begin to identify and plan out ways to build in additional opportunities to foster and build on scholar's prior knowledge within module one. Day 2 would be focused on learning related to building student comprehension. The group would also have time during the second day to work collaboratively to apply the information that has been thus far to brainstorm and create activities that could be utilized during instruction. Day 3 will be

like the first two days of PD, however during day three there would be more opportunities to collaborate and share out ideas. To ensure that I was effective with the implementation plan of the professional development, it was vital that I clearly stated the roles for each group of participants, along with the materials that would be used through the various sessions. The professional development would be led by the Director of ELA at the study site and supported by the ELA coaches to ensure that teachers were collaborating, and everyone had an opportunity to be supported as they worked collaboratively in their smaller groups throughout the sessions.

Before the PD, access to the projector and gym would be important to make sure that the space is set up and conducive to the PD. The facilitator would also need access to the printer to make copies of the tasks associated with the various sessions. Participants would also need to have access to chart paper, post-it notes, markers, pens, the ELA curriculum, released ELA PARCC questions and their computers. Breakfast would be provided by each day and lunch would be on their own. There would also be water and coffee provided throughout the day. As a result of the PD session taking place during summer orientation, which is a planned two weeks of professional development for the facility, educators would not be given additional pay.

As with any PD there could be potential barriers that arose. One barrier that could arise is the scheduling for the PD, because I knew that the school plans PD in advance and making the additional adjustments to accommodate this additional professional development during the summer orientation. However, a solution for this could be that instead of having all three days of the PD days back to back, the first day and second day

could be held during the first two PD days at the beginning of the year during September and then the collaboration and work time could be done during coaching sessions with their coaches, to ensure that the educators were still having an opportunity to engage, collaborate and gain feedback around the work that they are completed related to the PD sessions. Another solution could be for the leadership team to discuss the current PD plan that they had created to identify if it would be a greater benefit to conduct this three-day development session and move or adjust some of the previous planned sessions to ensure that educators had the knowledge and skills, they needed to begin the year strong.

The main goal of the PD is to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist in the way that the curriculum implementation was approached to improve student success related to their performance on the ELA PARCC. Although the study was geared to third grade ELA educators, all educators would participate in the professional development series, to ensure that all educators had the understanding and the skills needed to strengthen instruction. Having all educators attend the sessions would also help if there were staffing changes throughout the building. To ensure that, stakeholders are clear on the responsibilities related to the PD it would be discussed at the beginning of the PD. The expectations when it comes to the responsibilities of the administrators and educators was that they were fully engaged in each part of the sessions each day, they show up with growth-mindset, they were focused and giving 100% when it came to collaboration and participation.

As I stated previously the PD material would be given to the leadership team at the study site to utilize during the two-week summer professional development for

educators. However, I would also make sure that I was available to provide any support and clarity to ensure that leadership in comfortable and prepared to provide the PD. My level of support would be based on what the leadership identified as an area of support, this may mean that I need to lead a session, being an additional support throughout the sessions, help with making copies etc. To ensure that the PD was created in a way that was most beneficial to the school setting, I have discussed the findings from the study and the desired outcomes for the three-day PD series with the director team at the study site and they communicated full support and agreeance and believe that these sessions can yield a positive impact on student achievement.

Project Evaluation Plan

One of the most essential parts of developing and implementing PD is making sure that there is an opportunity for participants to provide feedback, which can be done through an evaluation form at the end of the session but can also be done through the session by completing check for understandings. I have composed an evaluation plan for the PD that will allow the participants to provide feedback, where they will be asked to identify how helpful the PD was, if they feel they have enough information to make the implementations of the skills they have learned, if they believe that the goals of the pd were met, were the opportunities for collaboration beneficial, do they believe the skills they have gained will impact instruction and learning, and then just a general refection in their own word related to each days pd sessions. The data from each day would be gathered and used to make the necessary adjustments to the following days sessions to ensure that educators are able to engage in meaningful development opportunities.

The feedback forms were composed of questions where participants would have any opportunity to answer by selecting the options of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree or neutral. There will also be an opportunity for the participants to provide a writing reflection. Providing participants with an opportunity to give feedback related to the sessions is an essential part of the PD, because it helps the presenter and leadership gather data related to the goals and outcomes of the pd sessions. Opportunities for feedback help to provide opportunities for clarity, alignment and demonstrates that effort is being made to reach a specific goal, while also foster the type of environment that demonstrates an importance of growth and performance (Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, 2020).

The PD was designed in a way that would allow the information to be presented over three-day period, in which educators would have an opportunity to participate in trainings, gain knowledge from each informational session and complete hands-on activities to improve the way that the curriculum is implemented and to address each of the themes that arose from the data. The main goal of the PD was to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist in the way that the curriculum implementation is approach to improve student success related to their performance on the ELA PARCC. There would also be an opportunity provided for the participants to actively engage in hands on learning and collaborative activities throughout the PD that would help educators identify how to make adaptations to their current curriculum and materials to positive impact the learning environment in ELA. Throughout the three days of PD there would be a variety of sessions and each day will have PD sessions that were geared

toward a specific theme allowing the opportunity for information to be shared around the topic, having an opportunity to discuss and collaborate and utilize the skills learned related to them as they prepare materials. Though the main goal of the PD was to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist in the way that the curriculum implementation is approach to improve student success related to their performance on the ELA PARCC. It was also important to gather information over the three days of development to assess how educators were understanding the information being presented to them and were they able to utilize the information in a meaningful way through opportunities and practice of collaboration.

The stakeholders that will attend the PD sessions are the educators and the leaders or administrators at the study site. These two groups of stakeholders will have the opportunity to engage in the whole group learning sessions as well as having various opportunity to work together and reflect through collaborative conversations. The feedback that is gathered from each of the sessions would be provided to all leaders. Providing the leaders with the feedback from the session would provide additional data to identify how effective the PD sessions were and to assist with making additional decisions when it comes to future professional developments or additional support that groups of educators may need to be successful outside of the development that was provided throughout the three-day professional development sessions.

Project Implications

Based on the findings from the from the study there was evidence presented to support the possible reasons behind the low student achievement of on the ELA PARCC

assessment. The analysis from the data demonstrated a strong need for additional training for educators connected to the strategies used in the classroom when it comes to comprehension skills, alignment, and student prior knowledge. To assist in providing an additional learning opportunity for educators a three-day PD has been created and is ready for implementation during the summer professional development sessions. The PD was organized in a way that will allow the information to be beneficial to leaders and educators at all levels of experience, because there are parts of the sessions that are whole group learning opportunities, collaborative work session and opportunities for individual reflections as well (Appendix A). Through the opportunities of engaging in the various PD sessions educators and leaders will gain additional knowledge to support the improvement of instruction, which in turn will increase student achievement opportunities related to PARCC at the study location.

The deliverables for the PD that was composed for this project can be utilized in any educational setting that provides Elementary ELA instruction and utilizes ELA PARCC as assessment tool starting in 3rd grade and have identified a need for additional learning to begin to improve classroom instruction. Working to improve instruction is essential to the study site, because the goal is improved student performance on the ELA PARCC assessment. A professional development training related to the strategies used in the classroom when it comes to comprehension skills, alignment, and student prior knowledge.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This study focused on exploring the perceptions third grade teachers had about the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum related to student success on the ELA PARCC. Once the data from the interviews were analyzed, it was clear that additional development for educators was needed to ensure they had the tools to assist scholars with being successful academically. From the data gathered, a three-day PD was composed as a resource for the study site. Within the three-day PD, there are daily sessions that are tied to the identified needs regarding students' prior knowledge having an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, the difference in curriculum assessments formatting and ELA PARCC assessments formatting, and students' ability to demonstrate comprehension impacting the performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment. Grossman et al. (2021) shared that one of the greatest benefits of collaboration is having the opportunity to work with another toward a goal in which together more can be gained than from working alone or independently. Throughout the sessions, educators will have an opportunity to collaborate with one another, planning and creating materials to assist in the classroom learning of all students, and learning how to adjust the curriculum assessments to match the format of the ELA PARCC; they will be gaining skills and knowledge that can be used and built upon throughout the school year.

Though a very detailed, aligned, and data-supported PD has been created for implementation at the study site, there are still other factors that could impact the

implementation of the skills taught through each of the professional development sessions. One of the most important factors that could impact the implementation is the mindset of the educators and the leadership team. Wardana et al. (2020) presented evidence that when the correct mindset is present, it impacts the way one would approach the task, the amount of time a person is willing to put into the task, and how much effort they are willing to put into learning and gathering knowledge about each of the topics. Fostering a positive mindset begins with leadership exemplifying what a positive mindset looks like and sounds like amongst the staff. The PD does not address the mindset of educator or the impacts of mindsets.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

It is essential for educators to be continual learners by engaging in PDs and other skill building opportunities to assess and activate students' prior knowledge, build comprehension, and create opportunities for alignment. A different approach that could be taken is for an academic coach to develop coach cycles around the areas of need, so that educators have another opportunity to engage in the process of learning, while also having opportunities for feedback and collaboration with their coach. Providing educators with an opportunity such as this one would grant them access to various levels of knowledge to engage in a learning process that is meaningful to them as professionals. Within the PD, there are already opportunities for educators to learn within a whole group, as well as have an opportunity to collaborate; so providing this additional or alternative option would still allow the same opportunities on a different level of engagement.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

As an educator, I have always considered myself to be a lifelong learner, always seeking out ways to learn more information to perfect my craft and be able to share what I am learning with my colleagues. Education is a field that is ever-changing, and the only way to ensure that you are fully prepared to be an educator is to be a seeker of knowledge; ways to do this include attending professional developments, collaboration opportunities, and even obtaining additional degrees. Learning to conduct research has allowed me the opportunity to show others how to do the same, to participate in deeper levels of conversation related to education, and to support what I am saying related to specific topics. This journey has not been easy for me by any means; however, the feedback from my committee has helped me to become a more focused scholar and allowed me the opportunity to grow through collaborative conversations.

As a professional, I have grown so much. I have learned how to research and support the claims that I am making by engaging in various levels of research. I have also become a deeper thinker and analyzer when it comes to not only identifying problems but being able to fully articulate the problems and their possible solutions. Throughout my doctoral journey, I have become more confident in myself as both a student and a professional. One of the things that helped to keep me focused and dedicated to the process is knowing the study's findings would help create opportunities for social justice at the study site, and that the study that I conducted could one day be used by another scholar as they conduct research in education.

As an educator, the discrepancy in achievement related to high-stakes testing has always been near and dear to my heart; however, I was not sure how to help or what steps I could take as a professional or student to improve the problem. Creating this professional development to assist educators in identifying ways to positively impact student achievement on the ELA PARCC is an amazing feeling. The methods of evaluation that are embedded within the PD will help provide data related to the effectiveness of each of the sessions based on the issues identified by the educators in our interview sessions.

As I embarked on this journey, I have had multiple opportunities for self-reflection and that has helped me to grow in many ways. Through reflection, I have learned that with consistency, feedback, and dedication I can complete any goal I set for myself. I have also been able to implement the process of self-reflection in my everyday life and within my professional life as well. Learning to be reflective has improved my ability to be a leader, because I am able to reflect on situations and then move forward with an action to solve the situation at hand and even be able to advocate for feedback to ensure that I am continually growing as a leader and professional. I truly feel that because of this process, I can make a valuable contribution to the field of education.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Having the opportunity to participate in a doctoral process has given me many opportunities to identify ways to overcome academic hardships, provided me with various moments of clarity in which I was able to gain the wisdom needed to complete this journey. Though there were times in which I was I felt uncertain or challenged,

through continued determination and dedication, it was all worth it as I am now in the last stretch of completion. The skills that I have learned throughout this journey will continue to be of value even after the completion of my programs, because they are skills that will help me be a continual learner in my professional journey in education through additional opportunities for academic research. I have become more confident in my ability to conduct research to support the claims that I am making within my current profession.

Throughout this journey of being a doctoral student I have also learned how to engage in academic discussion related to each part of my research study from the problem of the study, the steps I was going to take to gather the data needed to solve the identified problem, the research question that was guiding the study and even ability to craft a proposal and final dissertation. I also learned to depend on myself and my abilities more and to not be afraid to utilize the relationships, and resources I have as I search for clarity on various steps as I approached each section of my study. Though it was my passion for education and student success that sparked my initial interest in beginning the study, it was the possibility of creating social change within the study site that kept me motivated to consistently move toward completion and being a continuous learning throughout my learning process.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The PD project that was composed based on the study presented a possible outline for solving the concerns identified by the educators (see Appendix A). The data gathered from the study was utilized to compose the professional development

plan, which will be implemented over a three-day period. The goal of the PD is to provide educators with knowledge and tools to begin to address the current identified problem of third grade students consistently scored low on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC) assessment in English Language Arts (ELA), through collaborative activities and whole group learning sessions. The positive implications for this pd are for educators to gain the knowledge needed to improve the student comprehension, activation of prior knowledge and opportunities of alignment. If educators at the study site can utilize and implement the information presented in the PD, the study site will have an opportunity to positively impact student's achievement in the ELA PARCC assessment. Positive social change may impact each group of stakeholders through the implementation of the strategies discussed in the study, along with using the data from the study to make the necessary academic and teaching adjustments. As the leadership team reviews the data the findings could be used to improve the current perspectives of the teachers and educators around PARCC, the strategies used in the classroom may improve, which can impact student's success with high-stakes testing. Therefore, creating an opportunity for social change also has the potential to improve the learning opportunities experienced by students and improving the standing of a neighborhood school based on PARCC scores.

The PD deliverables for my project study were created to provide educators with the tools and knowledge to ensure that they are utilizing a variety of strategies during the implementation of the curriculum to ensure that students prior knowledge is activated, there is alignment related to testing formatting and additional skills to assist with student

comprehension. Additional research could be conducted to provide data and research related to the impact of skills taught during the professional development impact student achievement on ELA PARCC. The data could be gathered using observation, additional interviews to gather feedback from educators. Data from PARCC can also be used to compare student data from year to year to identify how and if student achievement has been impacted. Based on the goals of the PD and the nature of the problems that has been identified at the study site, there can be additional information added to the composed pd, or even split the pd sessions up to differentiate the information based on the information and support that various educator made need based on the current level of knowledge.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of third grade teachers about the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum and the relation student success on the ELA PARCC. The problem of third grade students at ML Charter Academy in Washington DC are consistently performing below standards around English Language Arts according to the PARCC assessment (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2019), was explored to gain insight into third-grade educators' perceptions regarding the causes of the low ELA PARCC achievement in relation to the existing instructional practices?" As a result of the research, I conducted I was able to identify that educator felt that they are a variety of facts that impact third grade student achievement related to the ELA PARCC and then compose a professional development that was driven by the following goals:

Goal 1: Teachers will gain a deep understanding of ways to implement additional opportunities to assess and activate students' prior knowledge.

Goal 2: Teachers will backwards plan using ELA PARCC and the ELA curriculum to create opportunities of alignment between the formatting of the two.

Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way.

Goal 4: Teachers will understand a variety of instructional practices that can be utilized to deliver the ELA instruction and build student comprehension.

Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process of developing alignment.

The PD would provide an opportunity for the study site to have an initial training for educators related to student achievement on ELA PARCC, that then could be built onto as they work to continue to provide opportunities for additional support for educators and leaders at the site.

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Appendix A: The Project

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions third grade teachers about the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum and the relation student success on the ELA PARCC. Findings from the study indicated that student's prior knowledge had an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, that the difference in the way the curriculum assessments were formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC assessments and that student's ability to demonstrate comprehension impacts the performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment. The project was constructed based on the findings that were presented in Section 2 to resolve the research problem. The project included components that will help support educators' concerns related to prior knowledge, formatting concerns and ways to address concerns related to student comprehension. The goal of the professional development was to provide educators with knowledge and tools to begin to address the current identified problem of third grade students consistently scored low on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment (PARCC) assessment in English Language Arts (ELA) (Appendix A). Throughout the Professional Development teachers will have opportunities to engage in in discussions and collaborative sessions as well as have independent work to practice utilizing the skills and tools that are being discussed within the Professional Development sessions (Appendix A).

In section three the project is presented. This section is composed of a detailed layout of the project including the project description, the goals of the project and the purpose of the project. Within section three there was also a detailed literature review

that was aligned with the findings from section 2. There is also an outline provided related to how the Professional Development (PD) would be implemented, the supports that would be provided, the time that would be allocated for each session, possible barriers that arise during the implementation of the PD plan, and the responsibilities of the school leaders and teacher participants (Appendix A). At the end of section 3 there will also be a project evaluation and additional informational related to the social change at the location of the study.

Description and Goals

The PD was created as a guide for the study site to support the third-grade educators and students to make ensure that they are creating opportunities within the learning environment for scholars based on the themes that were identified from their interviews. The PD provides materials that includes an overview, including each part of the PD and the benefits of the materials and skills presented. There was also an opportunity provided for the participants to actively engage in hands on learning and collaborative activities throughout the PD that will help educators identify how to make adaptations to their current curriculum and materials to positive impact the learning environment in ELA. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions third grade teachers about the learning opportunities provided within the curriculum and the relation student success on the ELA PARCC. Findings from the study indicate that educators reported that student's prior knowledge has an impact on their level of success on the ELA PARCC assessment, that the difference in the way the curriculum assessments are formatted in comparison to the format of the ELA PARCC

assessments and that student's ability to demonstrate comprehension impact the performance on the ELA PARCC Assessment.

The composure of a PD was decided after speaking with my committee chair related to my findings based on the data. The skills discussed and the materials introduced will be useful to all educators in the building however, the PD will be geared toward third grade educators. The skills, discussed within the PD, however, will be transferable to other grades. The main goal of this project will provide teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully create opportunities to build on and assess students' prior knowledge, build comprehension skills and opportunities, and create alignment between the way student are assessed through the curriculum in comparison to ELA PARCC through aligning the format of the tests or assessments.

The project is a three-day PD training that could be used during summer orientation of 2023 or within the first few weeks of school as professional developments are being given around the administration and implementation of curriculum of 2023. The PD was designed in a way that will allow the information to be presented over three-day period, in which educators would have an opportunity to participate in trainings, gain knowledge from each informational session and complete hands-on activities to improve the way that the curriculum is implemented and to address each of the themes that arose from the data (Appendix A). The main goal of the professional development is to provide educators with the tools and skills to assist in the way that the curriculum implementation is approach to improve student success related to their performance on the ELA PARCC. Goals for the PD are as follows:

Goal 1: Teachers will gain a deep understanding of ways to implement additional opportunities to assess and activate students' prior knowledge.

Goal 2: Teachers will backwards plan using ELA PARCC and the ELA curriculum to create opportunities of alignment between the formatting of the two.

Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way.

Goal 4: Teachers will understand a variety of instructional practices that can be utilized to deliver the ELA instruction and build student comprehension.

Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process of developing alignment.

Rationale

In section two the findings from the study were shared. Those findings supported a need for initial and ongoing supports needed to for educators at the study site. There was a variety of information and perceptions shared by third grade educators through the various interviews that were conducted. There were three themes that arose based on participant responses which were related to components that will help support educators' concerns related to prior knowledge, formatting concerns and ways to address concerns related to student comprehension. The project type was selected to address and support the findings related to the research problems and each of the identified themes, as well as support the continual learning if the educators at the study site.

Designing a PD opportunity for educators; where they would be able to gain a deeper understanding of how to address concerns related to prior knowledge, formatting concerns and ways to address concerns related to student comprehension. Through collaboration and learning sessions can help educators begin to gain the experiences needed to successfully approach the current curriculum along with their concerns. Martin et al. (2019) shared that when a PD is implemented successfully it can “transform beliefs and practices of educators” (p.3).

The audience of the project will consist of third grade educators, who needed to deepen their understanding, knowledge, and skills when it came to the implementation of the curriculum related to the identified themes. Throughout the PD there will be opportunities for educators to learn in a whole group setting as well as an opportunity for educators to collaborate with one another related to the learned information and creation of classroom resources. The findings from the study demonstrated that there was a need for educators to have opportunities to learn how to create occasions for students related to prior knowledge, create prospects to align curriculum questions to the PARCC format and explore ways to collaborate with one another to identify additional opportunities to build student comprehension. Educators would also have a chance to practice the skills they would be introduced to through the three-day professional development. The outcomes created to guide the professional development were composed based on the identified concerns of the participants.

Day One

Session Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1: Teachers will gain a deep understanding of ways to implement additional opportunities to assess and activate students' prior knowledge. • Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way. • Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process of developing alignment. 	
Session Materials	
Facilitator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projector screen • Computer • PowerPoint • Coffee • Water • Breakfast (fruit salad, muffins) • Sticky Notes • Extension cords • Individual packs of skittles • Projector 	Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charged laptop • Planning document • ELA Curriculum • Pens
Agenda	
8:30 – 9:00	Breakfast provided for participants
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Introduction
9:15 – 9:30	Team Building Activity
9:30 – 10:30	Learning Sessions
10:30-10:40	Break
10:45-11:30	Collaborative Work Time
11:30-11:45	Share Time
11:45-12:45	Lunch
12:50-1:50	Learning Session Part 2
1:50-2:50	Collaborative Work Time
2:50-3:10	Reflection and Share Outs
3:10-3:30	Closing and Session Evaluation Completion

Evaluation Survey - Day One

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's sessions.

1. The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to prior knowledge.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to activate student's prior knowledge through ELA instruction.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit on student achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Having an opportunity to participate in collaborative work time was beneficial to me as a professional.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Explain: _____

6. How could you use the information from today's session to inform the instruction in your classroom?

7. What recommendations do you have to improve today's professional development sessions?

Day One Slides

How Can We Help Our Scholars Strive Toward Success Related to ELA PARRC?

Melissa Smith

Team Building - Skittle Game (Let's Get To Know Eachother)

- 
- S** What is your favorite food? Why?
 - S** What is your favorite TV show?
 - S** What is something you do well? Tell us about it.
 - S** What is your favorite book?
 - S** What is something you did over summer break?

Welcome and Day 1 Professional Development Schedule

8:30-9:00 Breakfast (provided for participants)

9:00-9:15 Welcome and Introductions

9:15-9:30 Team Building Activity

9:30-10:30 Learning Session

10:30-10:40 Break Time

10:40-11:30 Collaborative/Share Time

11:30-12:30 Lunch

12:30-1:30 Learning Session Part 2(I Do, You Do)

1:30-2:30 Collaborative Work Time

2:30-3:00 Reflection and Share outs

3:00-3:30 Closing and Session Evaluation

Professional Development Topics

Day 1: Student Prior Knowledge

Day 2: Building Student Comprehension

Day 3: Creating alignment through formatting



Day 1: Learning Session Prior Knowledge

When you hear the phrase "Prior Knowledge" what do you think about?

Click the picture below and share your thoughts!



What is Prior Knowledge ?

Prior knowledge refers to the information, no matter how limited, a learner has at the start of learning a new topic. This knowledge will likely have been gathered over time in a variety of ways. If the prior knowledge is correct and consistent with the new information being taught, the effect on learning is positive.



How to activate Prior Knowledge

Purposeful activation of Prior Knowledge

“Purposeful activation of prior knowledge during reading occurs when the explicit goal is activating knowledge and necessitates the use of metacognitive knowledge” (Hattan and Dinsmore, 2019, p.25).

How to activate Prior Knowledge

Purposeful activation of Prior Knowledge

-An example of purposeful activation is when a person or students are asked to complete a chart where they are asked to jot down all of the things they know about the topic before the learning begins (Hattan and Dinsmore, 2019).

-Through this activity students can recall knowledge or experiences related to the topic to make a connection between what they already know and what they will be learning about.

How to activate Prior Knowledge**Ancillary
activation of
Prior Knowledge**

Ancillary activation of prior knowledge allows student the opportunity to use their prior knowledge to develop inferences, develop opinions or even construct questions based on their knowledge and experiences (Hattan and Dinsmore, 2019).

How to activate Prior Knowledge**Ancillary
activation of
Prior Knowledge**

-Through this activity students can develop questions and opinions related to the topic that they are going to be discussing.

Benefits of Activating Students Prior Knowledge

- Using strategies to activate Prior Knowledge helps educators identify what their scholars already know.
- Provides scholars with an opportunity to build on the information or experiences they may already know or have had.
- When prior knowledge is activated it impacts the rate at which scholars are able to understand or comprehend.

Break Time

**I'M MORGAN FREEMAN. IT'S TIME
FOR A 15 MINUTE BREAK...**

**... AND YOU JUST READ THAT IN
MY VOICE**

Let's Collaborate and Share Out

1. We are going to take 10 minutes to silent reflect and share all of the way you current activate scholars prior knowledge using padlet..
2. Participate in a strategy called a Block Party
 - a. When the music starts you will do you best dance moves until the music stops.(We will repeat this 5 times)
 - b. You will have 30 seconds to find a partner to share your current strategies with. Each person will have 3 minutes to share. There will be at time to let you know when to switch partners.
 - c. Once we have gone through this process will will come back together and share out reflections from the activity related to what we may have learned or a strategy we may share,



How Do You Activate Prior Knowledge?



Some additional strategies to activate Prior Knowledge

Activating Prior Knowledge		
<p>Quick Write - Quick Draw</p>  <p>Take a few minutes to draw students "show what they know"</p> <p>Think-Pair-Share</p>  <p>Think on your own - partner with another student to share and discuss ideas</p> <p>Write-N-Draw Connections</p>  <p>Write ideas or questions on sticky notes. Share & compare in large group</p> <p>Yes/No Cards</p>  <p>Students hold up cards in response to questions. Cards then placed in one bin.</p>	<p>Response Journals</p>  <p>Independent writing to make connections & reflect on learning</p> <p>Storyboarding Sketch</p>  <p>Small group brainstorming after independent think time.</p> <p>Popcorn Puffs or Chart Carousel</p>  <p>Students take 1 min. to write what they know before rotating puffs to next student to add on.</p> <p>Discussions</p>  <p>Generate connections through small and large group discussions.</p>	<p>Think & Talk</p>  <p>Turn and share ideas with a partner</p> <p>Maps of Understanding</p>  <p>Use of graphic organizers to visually map ideas</p> <p>Graphic Web</p>  <p>Students use an a web chart of what they know & add to it throughout unit.</p> <p>Handout</p>  <p>What do I know? Visual organization</p> <p>How do I survive this?</p>



Lunch is from 11:30 -12:30
Please be back promptly at 12:30!

Curriculum Dive

- We are going to look a lesson one of Module One together to identify what prior knowledge student need in order to be successful with the lesson?
- We will then identify ways in which we activate students prior knowledge or introduce they knowledge they may need to be successful with the reading material.
- I will first model through an (I Do) activity (We Do) activity and then a (You Do) activity.
- Once we have had a chance to practice you all will then have an opportunity to work collaboratively to complete the same task for lesson 4-10 of Module One Unit One

Learning Session Part 2-I DO (Module One Lesson One)

Lesson One

Click the
picture to go to
padlet.



Learning Session Part 2-We DO(Module One Lesson One)

Lesson Two

Click the picture to
go to padlet.



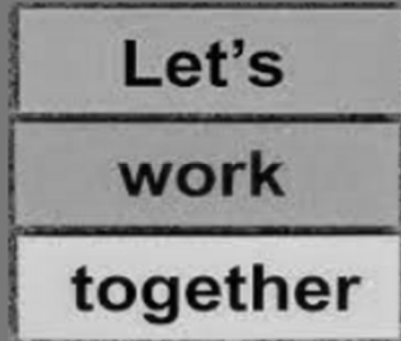
Learning Session Part 2-You Do(Module One Lesson
Three)

Lesson Three

Click the
picture to go to
padlet.



Collaborative Work Time



Now you will have the opportunity to work in pairs to collaborate on lessons 4-10. You will walk through the same steps we just used. For this activity you will utilize a note catcher.

Click the picture to enter the google doc. Please make a **COPY** before you start working in the do.

**As you are working coaching will be circulating to provide assistance and feedback.


Let's Reflect and Share Out



1. Count off by threes. Once you have your number all of the ones will get in a group, all of the twos will get into a group and all of the threes will get into a group.
2. Once you get in your group, each person will have two minutes to share something they have learned during today's session.



Feedback Time



Dear One

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's session.

1. The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to prior knowledge.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to activate student's prior knowledge through E.L.A. activities.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit my student achievement.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Having an opportunity to participate in collaboration work time was beneficial to me as a professional.
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Engage _____

6. How could you use the information from today's session to inform the activities in your classroom?

7. What recommendations do you have to improve today's professional development session?

EXIT TICKET

Day Two

Session Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way. • Goal 4: Teachers will understand a variety of instructional practices that can be utilized to deliver the ELA instruction and build student comprehension. • Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process of developing alignment. 	
Session Materials	
<p>Facilitator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projector screen • Computer • Projector • PowerPoint • Coffee • Water • Breakfast (muffins) • Sticky Notes • Extension cords 	<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charged laptop • ELA Curriculum • Pens
Agenda	
8:30 – 9:00	Breakfast provided for participants
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Introduction
9:15 – 9:30	Team Building Activity
9:30 – 10:30	Learning Sessions
10:30-10:40	Break

10:45-11:30	Collaborative Work Time
11:30-11:45	Share Time
11:45-12:45	Lunch
12:50-1:50	Learning Session Part 2
1:50-2:50	Collaborative Work Time
2:50-3:10	Reflection and Share Outs
3:10-3:30	Closing and Session Evaluation Completion

Day Two Slides



Welcome/ Today's Agenda

- 8:30-9:00 Breakfast (provided for participants)
- 9:00-9:15 Welcome and Introductions
- 9:15-9:30 Team Building Activity
- 9:30-10:30 Learning Session
- 10:30-10:40 Break Time
- 10:40-11:30 Collaborative/Share Time
- 11:30-12:30 Lunch
- 12:30-1:30 Learning Session Part 2
- 1:30-2:30 Collaborative Work Time
- 2:30-3:00 Reflection and Share outs
- 3:00-3:30 Closing and Session Evaluation

Team Building- This or That



This or That



This or That



This or That



This or That



This or That



This or That



SET
GOAL

MAKE
PLAN

GET
TO
WORK

STICK
TO IT

REACH
GOAL

😊

Goals

SET
GOAL

MAKE
PLAN

GET
TO
WORK

STICK
TO IT

REACH
GOAL

😊

Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way.

Goal 4: Teachers will understand a variety of instructional practices that can be utilized to deliver the ELA instruction and build student comprehension.

Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process.

Day 2: Learning Session Building Student Comprehension

When you hear the phrase “Student Comprehension” what come to your mind?

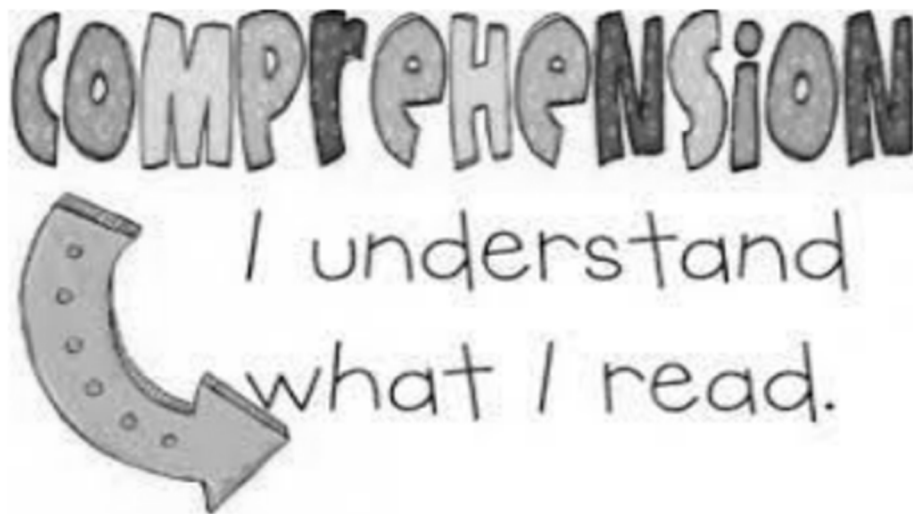
Please grab some post-its from the center of the table and write down your thoughts



What is Comprehension??

“Comprehension is to make sense of the information received through reading after it is processed in mind” (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021, p.1).

Sur and Ates (2022), define comprehension as the ability to understand what the material is saying and what they may “see or hear”, because listening is also a part of comprehension.



What impacts Student Comprehension

Prior Knowledge

- When student are able to pull from their prior knowledge and experiences helps them make connects to the new information which allows them to gain an understanding.

Reading Fluency

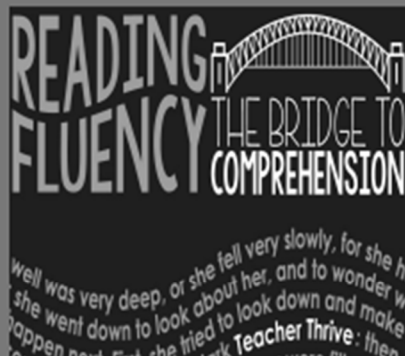
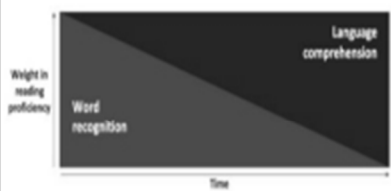
- When student are able to read fluently the move from a space of learning to read and reading to learn which also impact how they are able to understand.

Day 2: Learning Session Building Student Comprehension

"The more content you've learned in school, the more topics you've been exposed to outside school, the more language you've heard, the more books you've read, the more you know about the world around you, the better your overall reading comprehension. Why? Because new knowledge builds on prior knowledge, so all of us are better at comprehending when we already know something about the subject. Students wh topical knowledge have an advantage in reading at grade level." (Weiss, 2019)

How Does Prior Knowledge and Fluency Impact Comprehension

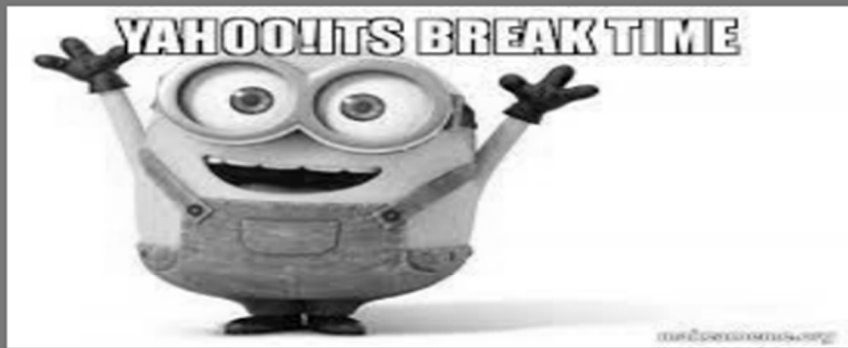
As students master decoding and start encountering more complex texts, reading comprehension becomes increasingly dependent on background knowledge and vocabulary.



Additional Strategies To Improve Student's Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Strategies		
Re-read the Text <small>more information = more understanding</small>	Activate Prior Knowledge 	Use Context Clues
Infer Meaning 	Think Aloud 	Summarize the Story <small>Character</small> <small>Problem</small> <small>Solution</small>
Locate Key Words 	Make Predictions <small>Book</small> → <small>share</small>	Use Word Attack Strategies <small>re-read - ing</small> <small>graph</small> <small>blast</small> <small>start</small>
Visualize 	Use Graphic Organizers 	Evaluate Understanding <small>How did I feel?</small>

Break Time



Let's Collaborate and Share Out

1. We are going to take 10 minutes to on the strategies you currently use during instruction to assess students comprehension.
2. Participate in a strategy called a Block Party
 - a. When the music starts you will do you best dance moves until the music stops.(We will repeat this 5 times)
 - b. You will have 30 seconds to find a partner to share your current strategies with. Each person will have 3 minutes to share. There will be at time to let you know when to switch partners.
 - c. Once we have gone through this process will will come back together and share out reflections from the activity related to what we may have learned or a strategy we may share.





Learning Session Part 2 (We Do)

The second part of our session is going to look very similar to our afternoon session from yesterday.

- 1) You are going to have an opportunity to first collaborate as a whole group to look at lesson one to identify how many time the lesson currently checks for student comprehension.
 - a) Using the highlight highlight all of the current opportunities within the lesson.
- 2) Then we are going to identify additional opportunities when can infuse into the lesson to check for students understanding and addressing or clarify and point where student may have a misunderstanding or a gap in knowledge.
 - a) Using post-it identify where you would add an addition opportunity and the strategy you will use.

Learning Session Part 2 (You Do)

The second part of our session is going to look very similar to our afternoon session from yesterday.

- 1) You are going to have an opportunity to first collaborate as a whole group to look at lesson two to identify how many time the lesson currently checks for student comprehension.
 - a) Using the highlight highlight all of the current opportunities within the lesson.
- 2) Then you are going to identify additional opportunities when can infuse into the lesson to check for students understanding and addressing or clarify and point where student may have a misunderstanding or a gap in knowledge.
 - a) Using post-it identify where you would add an addition opportunity and the strategy you will use.

**As you are working coaches will be circulating to assist and provide additional support !

Collaborative Work Time

The second part of our session is going to look very similar to our afternoon session from yesterday.

- 1) Now you are going to have an opportunity to collaborate as pairs to look at lessons three-ten to identify how many time the lesson currently checks for student comprehension.
 - a) Using the highlight highlight all of the current opportunities within the lesson.
- 2) Then you are going to identify additional opportunities when can infuse into the lesson to check for students understanding and addressing or clarify and point where student may have a misunderstanding or a gap in knowledge.
 - a) Using post-it identify where you would add an addition opportunity and the strategy you will use.

**As you are working coaches will be circulating to assist and provide additional support !


Let's Reflect and Share Out



1. Count off by threes. Once you have your number all of the ones will get in a group, all of the twos will get into a group and all of the threes will get into a group.
2. Once you get in your group, each person will have two minutes to share something they have learned during today's session.



Closing and Session Evaluation



EXIT TICKET

Evaluation Survey
Day Two

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's session.

1. The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to building student comprehension.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to activate student's prior knowledge through ELA instruction.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit on student achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Having an opportunity to participate in collaborative work time was beneficial to me as a professional.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Explain: _____

Evaluation Survey -Day Two

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's sessions.

1. The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to building student comprehension.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to assess students comprehension through ELA instruction.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit on student achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Having an opportunity to participate in collaborative work time was beneficial to me as a professional.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Explain: _____

6. How could you use the information from today's session to inform the instruction related to building student comprehension in your classroom?

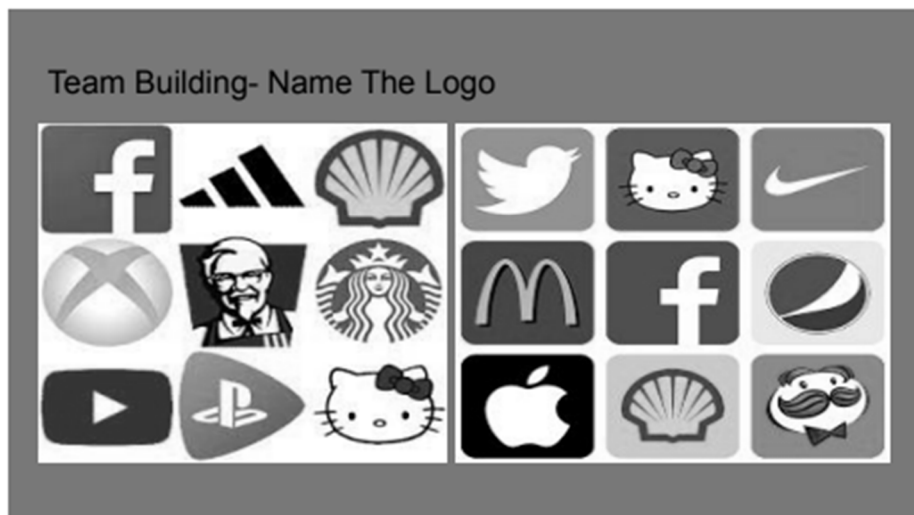
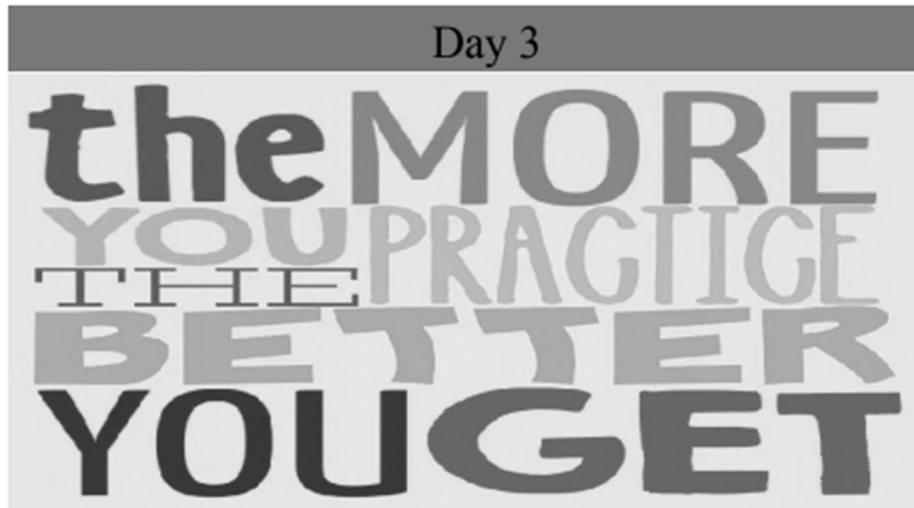
7. What recommendations do you have to improve today's professional development sessions?

Day Three

Session Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 2: Teachers will backwards plan using ELA PARCC and the ELA curriculum to create opportunities of alignment between the formatting of the two. • Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way. • Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process. 	
Session Materials	
Facilitator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projector screen • Projector • Computer • PowerPoint • Coffee • Water • Breakfast (muffins) • Sticky Notes • Extension cords 	Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charged laptop • Planning document • ELA Curriculum • ELA PARCC Assessment (released questions)
Agenda	
8:30 – 9:00	Breakfast provided for participants
9:00 – 9:15	Team Building Activity

9:15 – 10:15	Learning Sessions
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Collaborative Work Time
11:30-11:45	Share Time
11:45-12:45	Lunch
12:50-2:50	Collaborative Work Time
2:50-3:10	Reflection and Share Outs
3:10-3:30	Closing and Session Evaluation Completion

Day Three Slides



Welcome and Schedule

8:30-9:00 Breakfast (provided for participants)

9:00-9:15 Team Building Activity

9:15-10:15 Learning Session

10:15-10:30 Break Time

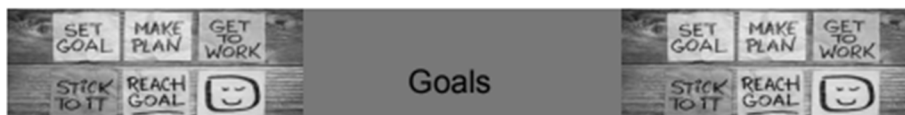
10:30-11:45 Collaborative/Share Time

11:45-12:45 Lunch

12:50-2:50 Collaborative Work Time

2:50- 3:10 Reflection and Share outs

3:10-3:30 Closing and Session Evaluation



Goals

Goal 2: Teachers will backwards plan using ELA PARCC and the ELA curriculum to create opportunities of alignment between the formatting of the two.

Goal 3: Teachers will begin to develop collaborative relationships that can support them throughout the implementation process of the ELA curriculum in a meaningful way.

Goal 5: Teachers will engage in feedback protocols to improve instructional consistency of ELA units during the planning process.

Day 3: Creating alignment through formatting

- Testing format is related to the way in which the assessment questions are arranged, the median in which the assessment is being administered and even the way the tool is being used to assess the knowledge and understanding of those who are taking the assessment.
- Blumenthal & Blumenthal (2020) also shared that when discussing formatting it can also mean the tools that are being used to assess students for example are students being assessed using paper and pencil, computer-based assessments, or both and if they are being assessed utilizing both is the layout of the assessment the same?

Day 3: Creating alignment through formatting

- There are a variety of ways that assessments can be formatted, for example there could be multiple choice questions, short response questions, fill in the blanks, essay responses and questions that build on one another so it could be a question that has a part A, Part B and so on and even the structure of the actual question.
- When it comes to formatting of an assessment it can also be tied to the level of the material that the participants are being exposed to when it comes to the text that students are asked to read and the way they are asked to engage with the text and the amount of time they must engage with the text.

Day 3: Creating alignment through formatting

1. As we work to identify alignment related to formatting we are going to plan backward. We will first look at the End Of Module Assessment for Module One to see how we can make some adjustments to the question format to better align with PARCC. (I will model what this looks like).
2. We will then move to the Mid-Module Assessment for Module One to make the same adjustments.
3. Lastly we will then look at the exit tickets within lessons 1-10 to see how we can make adjustments within the lesson and the questions we are asking to engage scholars in the learning.

Day 3: Creating alignment through formatting (I DO)

EL Curriculum End of Module 1 Assessment

1. What does **dampen** mean in this context? (RL.3.4)
 - A. make slightly wet
 - B. make less strong
 - C. make much worse
 - D. make more dry
2. If **agreeably** means pleasingly or pleasantly, what does **disagreeably** mean? (L.3.4b, L.3.4c)
 - A. more pleasingly
 - B. unpleasantly
 - C. incorrectly
 - D. impossibly
3. What does **fortunate** mean in this passage? Use a dictionary and write the definition in your own words. (RL.3.4, L.3.4d)

Third Grade ELA PARCC Assessment

English Language Arts/Literacy

1. Part A

What does **cross** mean as it is used in paragraph 26 of "Johnny Chuck Finds the Best Thing in the World"?

- excited
- lost
- upset
- scared

Part B

Which statement **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- "... ran this way and ran that way . . ."
- "... hadn't found the Best Thing in the World."
- "... they started up the Lone Little Path . . ."
- "They didn't hurry now . . ."

Collaborative Work Time

We are going to work in collaborative pairs to work through completion of this activity

Directions:

1. As we work to identify alignment related to formatting we are going to plan backward. We will first look at the End Of Module Assessment for Module One to see how we can make some adjustments to the question format to better align with PARCC. (I will model what this looks like).
2. We will then move to the Mid-Module Assessment for Module One to make the same adjustments.
3. Lastly we will then look at the exit tickets within lessons 1-10 to see how we can make adjustments within the lesson and the questions we are asking to engage scholars in the learning.

**Coaches will circulate during this activity to provide support and assistance.



KEEP
CALM
it's
Lunch
Time

KeepCalmAndPosters.com

Lunch is from 11:30 -12:30
Please be back promptly at 12:30!

Closing and Session Evaluation



EXIT TICKET

Evaluation Survey Day Three

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's session.

1 The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2 The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to the importance of question formulation?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3 As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to make adjustments to current practices within ELA instruction to create alignment related to formulating.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4 I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit my student achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5 Having an opportunity to participate in collaborative work time was beneficial to me as a professional.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Evaluation Survey -Day Three

Please circle the response that correlates with your experience with today's sessions.

1.The objectives for the day were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2.The activities I engaged in supported my learning related to the importance of question formation?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3.As a result of my learning, I feel more confident in my ability to make adjustments to current questions within ELA curriculum to create alignment related to formatting.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4.I will be able to utilize the information that I learned in the session within the classroom to directly impact or benefit on student achievement.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5.Having an opportunity to participate in collaborative work time was beneficial to me as a professional.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Explain: _____

6.How could you use the information from today's session to inform the instruction related to building alignment related to question formatting in your classroom?

7.What recommendations do you have to improve today's professional development sessions?

