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Understanding Middle School Teachers' Use of Instructional Practices for Online Reading Comprehension

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Mississippi Valley State University, 2001

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Standardized test and district benchmark assessment results indicate that middle school students in a rural middle school in central Mississippi are struggling with reading comprehension. Although teachers in a specific school district are equipped with a pacing guide to teach state mandated college and career readiness standards, it is unclear how middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers are teaching reading comprehension in online environments. The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore how middle school teachers at one school use instructional strategies to teach students who struggle with reading comprehension in online environments. The conceptual framework for this study is Leu's new literacies of online research and comprehension skills. Interviews and lesson plan data from five middle school ELA teachers, three learning strategists, and two interventionists were analyzed and coded for themes and patterns using thematic analysis and inductive codes. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling to participate in the study and had a state certification or endorsement to teach ELA. Implementation of instructional strategies were findings that may have a positive social change on the local school district's administrators by providing information about exemplars who are consistent with Leu's new literacies skills to support reading comprehension in online environments, which may lead to adjustments in the district's educational program and instructional practices to meet educational needs of all students.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my parents Kelvin and Rosie Smith. You have been my biggest supporters. Thank you for encouraging me and listening when I needed to vent. I would also like to dedicate this study to my siblings Stacy, Candice, and Kelvin II. You understood when I needed to work to finish sections and make revisions. Thank you for your support, shoulders, and encouragement throughout this process. I love you all infinity!

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I would not have been able to complete this phenomenal task with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave me the wisdom, knowledge, understanding, stamina, and willpower to achieve this goal. A special thanks to my mom and dad for the constant prayers and faith. You have modeled and taught me that through Christ, all things are possible.

Dr. Colleen Paeplow, my committee chair, thank you for the many calls, texts, and rapid response to all my emails. You are truly a gem. To Dr. Deborah Focarile and Dr. Mary Howe, thank you for your feedback. My committee has help me to become a better writer and researcher. I look forward to using the skills that I developed to make positive social change.

To the administration and teachers at the school under study, thank you for your participation. To Dr. K. Peterson, former principal, Mrs. K. Williams, former principal, and Mr. J. Kyles, former assistant principal, thank you for your flexibility and support provided while I collected data. To my participants, thank you for your patience and taking time to meet with me virtually, giving access to your lesson plans, and providing the data I needed to answer questions that will be beneficial to the educational community.

Special thanks to my friends and family for praying for and with me throughout this journey. Your thoughts and prayers sustained, inspired, and encouraged me to keep pushing. Thank you for just believing in me.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem at the research site is that more than half of 508 middle school (grade six through eight) students are reading below grade level (Mississippi Department of Education [MDE] Office of Student Assessment, 2016) and it is unknown how middle school teachers are assisting struggling students in terms of reading comprehension in online environments. Teachers in the district have been trained to implement computer-based reading materials and assessments. They also follow a pacing guide to teach students college and career readiness standards (CCRS) that are assessed biweekly by the district in an online setting. English language arts content standards that are mandated by the state outline skills and knowledge that should be taught to K-12 students. CCRS for each grade level target skills for reading informational text and literature, writing, languages, and speaking and listening. Despite district training efforts, results from state assessments and district benchmark results in 2015 showed that 51.6% of middle school students are reading below grade level (MDE Office of Student Assessment, 2016).

Teachers at the research site have been trained to implement Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR Reading), MindPlay, and Educational Leadership Solutions (ELS) as educational programs. MindPlay is an instructional program that uses technology to teach reading skills in a traditional way. STAR Reading is used to assess traditional reading skills. ELS is an instructional program teachers can use to create student assessments. iReady is an interactive online learning program that is designed to assess students and provide individualized instruction based on the student's unique

learning needs). None of these programs explicitly address best practices in online reading comprehension as set forth by Leu, et al. (2013).

Although state-mandated instructional programs currently used support basic literacy instruction, they do not support best practices in terms of how to identify, locate, evaluate, synthesize, and communicate information in online reading comprehension. As a result, many students are unprepared for online reading because states' reading standards and assessments do not include online research and comprehension skills (Leu et al., 2013). This gap in instructional practices may be contributing to students continuing to fall further behind as measured by the existing testing system.

Students develop successful online reading skills to determine their path to reading and building an understanding of their learning from text (Cho, 2013; Wilson, 2018). Teachers must be knowledgeable of what students can do and their areas of difficulty in terms of online learning (Leu et al., 2013). However, teachers need support if they are to develop teaching strategies that will effectively engage students in reading in online environments (Huang et al., 2019; Sung et al., 2015).

Rationale

Teachers work to help students academically through instructional practices, although some students may experience difficulty with mastering skills. The problem of teaching students how to comprehend text in an online environment using instructional practices is exacerbated because many teachers at the study school site are new to teaching. Furthermore, most of the first-year teachers are non-education majors or teachers who have emergency certification. To address this lack of training, teachers

receive training through professional development from the district and local school site. Teachers meet weekly in professional learning communities (PLCs) to discuss student data and instructional practices. Teachers are aware that students have to be prepared for online assessments by the end of the school year. Some teachers are not equipped with teaching strategies that certified teachers implement with instructional practices to address struggling readers' learning needs.

Table 1 shows percentage scores for grades six through eight for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) for the 2014-2015 school year. Table 2 shows percentages for grades six through eight for the Mississippi Assessment Program (MAP) for the 2015-2016 school year, 2016-2017 school year, and 2017-2018 school year. Averages for grades six through eight were calculated for an overall combined percentage of students who read below grade level.

The school district combined two schools during the 2014-2015 school year because the district was consolidating middle and high schools. Students were assessed by the state using the PARCC. During the next school term, the state assessed students using the MAP. No up-to-date data is available because the elementary and middle schools were separated during the 2018-2019 school year, and COVID-19 occurred during the 2019-2020 school year. Results displayed in Table 1 and Table 2 show that from 2014-2015 to 2017-2018, between a third to a half 61.6% to 53.7% of students had difficulties with comprehension and were not proficient readers.

Table 1

ELA PARCC Assessment Percentages of Students Reading Below Grade Level

Grade	PARCC results 2014-2015
6	72.2%
7	74.6%
8	70.7%
Total	67.15%

Note. Data from the MDE Office of Student Assessment.

Table 2

ELA MAP Assessment Percentages of Students Reading Below Grade Level

Grade	MAP results 2015-2016	MAP results 2016-2017	MAP results 2017-2018
6	67.3%	60.9%	52.0%
7	56.5%	56.3%	51.0%
8	45.5%	67.6%	58.0%
Total	51.6%	61.6%	53.7%

Note. Data from the MDE Office of Student Assessment.

Teachers collaborate regularly about instructional practices and strategies learned during professional development. However, many teachers feel that it is almost impossible to prepare students using technology because availability of technology in the building is limited, or teachers have not been properly trained regarding how to implement technology into their instructional practices to teach struggling students.

Teachers can assist students in becoming better readers by starting with an extensive understanding of students' abilities and sense of self-efficacy and implementing strategies to develop students' understanding as readers using the Internet (Coombs & Edwards, 2013; Lai, 2018). Having technology available in an instructional environment

can be an advantage for struggling students because technologically knowledgeable teachers can easily integrate technology into instructional practices (Rinehart & Ahern, 2016). Computer-assisted instructions can enable struggling students to perform as well as average or higher performing students (Hsu, 2016; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2013). Use of digital technologies in instructional practices have led to significant improvements in students' academics (Dalal et al., 2017).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how middle school teachers implement instructional strategies to assist struggling students in online environments. Findings from this study can be used to explore how instructional strategies can assist teachers in terms of meeting learning needs of struggling students. Findings could show what instructional components from best practices of online environments are missing from current instruction in order to strengthen teachers' instructional practices that will enable students to make positive progress in online reading comprehension. Teachers who explore new technological resources can better prepare students to meet the demands of literacy in online environments (Wertz & Saine, 2014) because online learning has become a significant part of instructional practices in K-12 school systems (Luo & Murray, 2018). Students need to know how to connect information learned through reflecting and evaluating text in online environments to outside sources (Amir, 2020; Bilican & Yilidirm, 2014).

Learning strategies for instruction in online reading comprehension go beyond the basic five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

and comprehension) to include knowledge application and skills, analysis reasoning, and effective communication for identifying, interpreting, and solving problems (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016). These skills are required because the need for students' critical thinking abilities are rapidly increasing through the use of technology in terms of advancement and growth of the online classroom environment, which are part of the CCRS (Sung et al., 2015).

Definition of Terms

Best practices: Individual activities, policies, and programmatic approaches to help students achieve positive attitudes and academic capabilities (Arendale, 2018).

Computer-assisted instruction: Computers and software applications to teach skills and concept (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2013).

Digital literacy: Ability to use technology tools (Clarke, 2014).

Educational technology: Electronic devices to teach learning content and support the learning process (Cheung & Slavin, 2013).

Instructional strategies: Approaches teachers use to drive instruction and engage students in the learning process (Coombs & Edwards, 2013).

Instructional technology: The use of a variety of digital technology such as the Internet, web-based applications, computer devices, online curriculum and more to facilitate and enhance student learning in the classroom (Buhler, 2020).

Online reading: Is the process of extracting meaning from a text that is in a digital format (Nordquist, 2017).

Online reading comprehension assessment (ORCA): An assessment used to measure students' abilities involving online research and comprehension (Leu et al., 2014).

Paper-based (offline) reading: Forms of printed texts (Leu & Maykel, 2016).

Significance of the Study

I explored how instructional practices at the study site are being used to help struggling students who are falling behind or not mastering reading comprehension skills within online environments. By identifying teachers' understanding, comfort level, and use of online instructional practices to assist students struggling with reading comprehension, findings from the study may assist district administrators with planning educational programs to meet learning needs of all students, especially struggling readers. Insights from this study may aid district administrators in terms of developing and supporting instructional systems for teachers. Training from experts during PLCs will aid teachers in terms of assisting struggling students with improving reading comprehension on computer-based assessments using components from Leu's new literacies of online research and comprehension skills that include identifying important questions, locating information, evaluating information, synthesizing information, and communicating information.

Using findings from the study, administrators may be able to leverage exemplar teachers who are using instructional practices consistent with Leu's new literacies of online research and comprehension skills to provide guidance regarding which instructional practices to use with students struggling with comprehension in online

environments. Training that teachers receive for implementing instructional strategies may enable them to create lessons using more effective instructional practices and strategies. Trained teachers are able to incorporate strategies into their instructional practices to help struggling readers strengthen their reading abilities through technology use (Coombs & Edwards, 2013; Sclafani & Wilkes, 2017). Learning how to effectively align and implement components of Leu's new literacies online reading comprehension skills with state mandated educational programs implemented by teachers may be beneficial to struggling students because teachers will be able to help students with comprehension through implementation of instructional strategies. Comprehension has a major influence on struggling middle school readers (Kelley, 2019; Parenti, 2016). Students may be able to use various strategies learned during instructional time to show positive improvement on online assessments. District leaders may use findings from this study to improve methods of training teachers in all subject areas regarding how to integrate best practices to engage struggling readers. Teachers may be able to use findings from this study to improve instructional practices to teach reading standards in online environments.

Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how teachers implement instructional strategies in online environments to assist struggling students. Information gained from this study may be used to provide insight to administrators and teachers regarding how integrating instructional strategies into instructional practices while

teaching comprehension skills will help struggling students with reading comprehension. There is one main research question and five subquestions:

RQ: How do middle school teachers implement Leu's new literacies online skills to assist struggling students in terms of reading comprehension in online environments?

SQ1: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to identify important information?

SQ2: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to locate information?

SQ3: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to evaluate information?

SQ4: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to synthesize information?

SQ5: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to communicate information?

Review of the Literature

Reading comprehension can be difficult, especially for struggling readers (Commbs & Edwards, 2013; Sclafani & Wilkes, 2017). Teaching students how to analyze and break down comprehension tasks using computer-based assessments is vital in education (Golke et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019) because these assessments can help identify why students have comprehension difficulties, which can then help teachers develop appropriate instructions to meet learning needs (Auphan et al., 2018; Carlson et al., 2014). Furthermore, by using technology, teachers can demonstrate various strategies

to help struggling readers strengthen their reading abilities (Coombs & Edwards, 2013; Sclafani & Wilkes, 2017).

This literature review includes information about the conceptual framework for the project study, teachers' experiences and insights involving implementation of best practices, for delivering instructional strategies, integrating technology, and experiences with professional development training and implementing state mandated curriculum in the educational program. I also examine research that addresses instructional strategies for implementing best practices using new literacy strategies for online comprehension.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is Leu's new literacies of online research and comprehension. I selected Leu's literacies skills for this study because components of the skills are designed for challenges of the 21st century. There are differences between reading offline and online. New literacies skills allow me to study how teachers are preparing their students for online reading. The selected framework is related to the study approach because components of the framework are aligned with online literacy skills standards for teaching comprehension skills. The framework was used to develop the research question. Components of the framework were used to develop subquestions for the study to ensure interview questions allowed participants to give responses geared toward each component of the framework. The data analysis instrument was developed based on each component of the framework. Furthermore, Leu's new literacies skills are supported by the Online Reading Comprehension Assessment (ORCA), a performance-based assessment used to measure online research and comprehension abilities. The

ORCA was developed in three stages (1) open ended questions, (2) closed ended questions, and (3) multiple choice questions to test for validity and reliability along with utility and practicality. To ensure validity and reliability during data analysis, the conceptual framework was used to ensure gathered data were relevant to the research question and subquestions.

Paper-Based Versus Online Reading

When reading, students need to understand text, make connections through interpretation and reflection, and possess the ability to use text to achieve life goals (Amir, 2020; Bilican & Yildirim, 2014). Paper-based reading comes in various forms. With paper-based reading, students are often alone while reading, compared to digital reading that can occur with the classroom teacher (Saaris, 2016). Paper-based reading limits the teacher's role in terms of guiding students' reading (Saaris, 2016). This includes delaying conversations and reducing students' ability to make connections between passages and texts (Saaris, 2016). Another difference between paper-based reading and online reading is that when reading online, the reader is generally focused on solving a problem or answering a question (Leu & Maykel, 2016).

Online readers must know how to search and locate information online (Leu et al., 2014; Leu et al., 2016). Online reading often occurs in an environment that is enhanced with integrated and complex processes of inquiry and problem-solving used to answer questions (Leu & Maykel, 2016). Differences between online reading and paper-based reading point to the need for students to have skills beyond those required for offline reading to research information and comprehend text. There are five processes students

can use in an online environment: identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate information, synthesize information, and communicate information through reading and writing (Leu et al., 2014).

Online reading plays a vital role in students' comprehension success. According to Leu et al. (2013), online readers

- identify important problems,
- locate useful information related to the problems that are identified,
- critically evaluate information,
- synthesize multiple sources of online information and evaluate arguments to determine a solution,
- communicate effectively to others with digital technologies, and

monitor and evaluate the results of decisions, modifying these as needed (Cho, 2013; Leu et al., 2013; Leu & Maykel, 2016). Given the complexities and challenges of reading online, new literacies of online reading and comprehension skills can be used to improve student achievement and decrease education achievement inequalities. In the remainder of this section, I set forth five components of the New Literacies of Online Reading and Comprehension Skills.

Identifying important questions

Locating information

Evaluating information

Synthesizing information

Communicating information (Leu et al., 2013).

Identifying Important Questions

The first component of new literacies of online reading and comprehension skills is identifying important questions. Students read online to solve problems and answer questions (Leu et al., 2013). Struggling readers may find it challenging to read offline and online. It is imperative that educational systems prepare students with abilities to use information technology in educational settings. Classroom instructions are heavily influenced by use of information technology by students (Union et al., 2015). Educational technology can be used to support development of online reading skills.

Cheung and Slavin (2013) defined educational technology as "use of electronic tools and applications used during instructions to deliver learning content and support the process of learning, especially for struggling readers" (p. 279). Technology also can be used to teach skills and standards to students that will allow them to have more interactions with content (Dieruf, 2017; Wakeman et al., 2013). Computer-assisted instruction, which is a form of educational technology, can have a positive impact on effectiveness of instruction for struggling students (Kleinsz et al., 2017; Potocki et al., 2014).

Teachers can integrate technology to assist students' literacy growth in terms of connecting their response to digital text (Clarke, 2014). Online reading involves integrated and complex processes of inquiry and problem-solving in which readers use technology to comprehend and learn what was read (Jose, 2021; Leu et al., 2014). Furthermore, technology integration may be useful because technology intrigues many struggling readers (Dierking, 2015; Yang et al., 2018). Students who use electronic books

to read tend to be engaged and motivated to read (Union et al., 2015; Haas, 2017), and those who have motivation may read both actively and continuously to improve their abilities to comprehend what was read (Chang et al., 2016). Because reading in an online environment is different from reading paper-based texts, various processes and instructional strategies have to be implemented by students in online environments.

Using numerous processes of reading at the same time can create learning difficulties for students that are related to both reading comprehension and information searches in online environments. Students may have a difficult time evaluating online information for quality, credibility, authority, and reliability. However, reading practices in online classroom environments enable students to strengthen their thinking skills through teaching, demonstrating, and explaining (White, 2016). Through digital reading, teachers can create a dialogue between student, teacher, and text in order for guided and focused activities (Lim, 2020; Saaris, 2016).

Locating Information

The second component of new literacies of online reading comprehension is locating information. Locating information online to meet one's need is an ability a reader needs to be successful (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014). Locating information on the Internet is important for reading online (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014), but students who struggle with reading may find it difficult because they lack skills involving efficiently using the internet to locate information (Kiili et al., 2018; Leu et al., 2011). Teaching students how to locate information can be a struggle, especially when some students fail to show mastery or engagement with their learning

(Dieruf, 2017; Wakeman et al., 2013). Asking teachers to use technology to instruct students can be another requirement to add to curricula. However, integration of technology should be implemented into instructions as soon as students begin a literacy program (Leu et al., 2014) because it is through technology implementation that teachers are able to provide a foundation for students to achieve (Union et al., 2015).

Integrating technology may be problematic because of perceived barriers. Dwyer (2013) said, "Barriers some teachers may have to face include: (a) lack of infrastructural and technical support, (b) an insufficient knowledge base, (c) a fear of change, (d) an already overloaded curriculum, and (e) limited opportunities for professional development" (p. 349). To effectively teach students how to locate information, teachers should understand students' experiences using technology (Howard et al., 2016). Teaching skills to students through intentional instructions will enable students to show growth in terms of digital literacy (Clarke, 2014; Mondesir & Griffin, 2020).

Evaluating Information

The third component of new literacies of online reading comprehension is evaluating information. Evaluating information involves having the ability to read and evaluate information for accuracy, reliability, and bias (Leu et al., 2011; Putro & Lee, 2017). There are three influences on the reading process: reader, task, and text factors (OECD, 2016). Reader factors represent how a reader brings motivations, prior knowledge, and other cognitive abilities to the process of reading. The reasons that motivate engagement of readers with text during a reading activity is a function of task factors. Factors include time, constraints, and goals for completing reading activities.

Functions of text factors include reading activities. Format of text, language complexity, and various encounters readers have with text are factors of understanding and comprehending the text. Also, there are five different types of evaluation that occur during online and offline comprehension:

1. Evaluating understanding: Does it make sense to me?
2. Evaluating relevancy: Does it meet my goals?
3. Evaluating accuracy: Can I verify it with another reliable source?
4. Evaluating reliability: Can I trust it?
5. Evaluating bias: How does the author shape it? (Leu et al., 2011, p. 47).

Teachers must know which best practices to use to teach content to students before using technology in instructional practices (Bester & Brand, 2013; Mahaye, 2020). Teachers often need support for making adjustments to instructional practices, especially in online environments (Dieruf, 2017; Wakeman et al., 2013). Teachers can create lessons tailored to students' learning needs using data by merging reading and technology to engage reluctant readers in online environments (Dierking, 2015; Stover et al., 2016; Yang, 2018). Because web technologies are continuously changing how students are reading, teachers can use best practices to actively engage students in online reading.

Synthesizing Information

The fourth component of new literacies of online reading comprehension skills is synthesizing information. Readers synthesize information in two ways: by putting pieces together to see them in a new way and actively constructing texts that are read online (Brun-Mercer, 2019; Leu et al., 2011). Teachers can incorporate best practices to help

improve struggling readers' comprehension by giving selected texts with explicit instructions and information about text and reading tasks (Al-Samarraie et al., 2017; Coscorelli & Coiro, 2014). Teachers can ensure students are synthesizing information by providing them opportunities to work with various texts to apply skills and strategies (Magnusson et al., 2018; Rupley et al., 2009).

Communicating Information

The final component of new literacies of online reading comprehension is communicating information. Communicating information is a process in which online tools are used to ask and answer questions that are linked to online reading comprehension (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014). Students learn how to communicate through online reading via discussions, blogs, and texting (Brun-Mercer, 2019; Leu et al., 2011). Online reading and communicating text are linked on the Internet because the processes of reading and communicating are completed at the same time (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014).

Review of the Broader Problem

Classrooms in the 21st century are influenced by technology to educate students. Teachers are aware of college and career readiness standards for use of technology to teach ELA curriculum, but still there is no current information regarding how to meet that goal of teaching using technology. Students in the US are falling behind in reading compared to students from around the world (Elleman & Compton, 2017). When preparing to teach reading standards, teachers should have a goal of helping students to develop ease and independence using learning strategies.

Information for this literature review was gathered from the following online sources: Walden Library, Google Scholar, Google, ERIC, SAGE Journals, and Thoreau. Keywords used for searching were: *new literacies*, *ORCA*, *struggling readers*, *adolescent readers*, *instructional practices*, *best practices*, *technology integration*, *student achievement*, *computer-based testing*, *digital reading*, *paper-based reading*, *online reading*, *learning strategies*, *instructional practices*, *instructional strategies*, *comprehension*, *online environments*, *reading comprehension*, *instructional strategies*, *instructional practices*, *educational platforms*, *struggling readers*, *educational websites*, and *research-based strategies*. A total of 90 articles were reviewed. Articles published prior to 2018 were excluded unless they were seminal studies.

The literature review is organized into the following sections and parallel Leu's new literacies of online reading comprehension: (a) identifying important questions, (b) locating information, (c) evaluating information, (d) synthesizing information, and (e) communicating information.

When reading online, students need to know how to identify and answer questions (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014). A reader has to focus on the purpose of reading text to answer questions while identifying key terms for searching for information (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018). Readers read online to solve problems and answer questions (Leu et al., 2007). A problem-solving task occurs through online research and comprehension where a question leads to the reading of information online (Leu et al., 2016). Teachers have responsibilities during instructions to teach students how to identify problems using the following techniques:

- focus the purpose for reading,
- articulate answerable questions,
- identify and model the development of key terms,
- provide scaffolding experiences,
- provide opportunities for online reading,
- support readers,
- monitor reading progress, and
- extend readers (Kervin et al., 2016).

Teachers can teach students how to focus on and identify important questions when reading online through use of best practices (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014). Students must be provided with various forms of text to be motivated and encouraged to read (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). To provide students with different textual forms, teachers must be aware of their students' interests (Vaugh et al., 2015). Struggling students who can choose from a variety of texts tend to read more frequently and are motivated to read (Savitz & Wallace, 2016). Teachers can encourage students to read through the use of technology-based materials (Haymon & Wilson, 2020; Laverick, 2014). Technology can give students more access to select from various texts and genres (Ertem, 2013; Prince, 2021).

Engaging students with technology can be used to enhance traditional reading skills for students (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). Teachers who use digital tools and devices can engage and motivate the struggling students to read (Haas, 2017; Union et al., 2015). Digital devices provide opportunities for students to engage

with text (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). Students who are skilled and avid online readers may find it easier to maneuver through online text (Castek & Coiro, 2015). In contrast, struggling readers may find online reading difficult because of vocabulary in the text (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014), and children tend to lose their place when reading online text (Ertem, 2013; Prince, 2021). However, online reading can be beneficial for struggling readers because word font can be enlarged and the screen can be lightened by readers (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014) and new characteristics of online text can have a significant impact on a struggling readers' comprehension. An essential part of reading motivation for struggling students is to have a purpose for reading (Jackson-Austin, 2020; Richardson, 2016).

Reading online for information can serve as a gateway skill for students; if readers can not locate information when reading, the problem cannot be solved (Leu et al., 2011; Putro & Lee, 2017). Students need to be purposeful and focused on the information they need to solve a problem (Coiro, 2015). For struggling readers, identifying and analyzing text online can be a difficult task (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014). Using best practices to teach students how to locate information is important to better assist students to focus on information that matters the most (Coiro, 2015).

Researchers noted that technology can be used to improve instructional practices (Brenner & Brill, 2016; Clarke, 2014; Colwell & Hutchinson, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2016). Technology has changed the way students interact with text (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). Students can show growth academically with the use of higher-level technology with best practices in online environments (Hsu, 2016).

Teachers can use best practices to structure how technology can be integrated into instructions (Brenner & Brill, 2016). Teachers must determine what the students learn daily by examining the state's standards (Fisher & Frey, 2016; Flores, 2018). When planning learning goals, teachers must keep in mind how technology will help the students instructionally (Clarke, 2014; Mondesir & Griffin, 2020). Teachers must create lessons integrating technology that will ensure all students will master the taught standards (Fisher & Frey, 2016; Flores, 2018).

Researchers observed that digital devices can be used as instructional tools in the classroom (Clarke, 2014; Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Conradi, 2014; Laverick, 2014). Teachers can provide students with learning opportunities to be engaged with technology using digital tools (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). Use of technology can provide teachers with new ways to instruct students that can replace overused and outdated activities (Haymon & Wilson, 2020; Laverick, 2014). Use of digital devices can make learning easier for students and can provide more opportunities to differentiate instruction (Conradi, 2014; Ojo, 2021). Students are motivatd and eager to learn when technology is used in the classroom (Clarke, 2014; Haymon & Wilson, 2020; Laverick, 2014;). Digital devices give students opportunities to be engaged and able to interact with text (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020).

Researchers also found that technology use can have a positive effect on student engagement (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Leu et al, 2014; Rice & Greer, 2014; Union et al., 2015; Savitz & Wallace, 2016). When teachers use technology in the classroom, students become more engaged and involved in instructions (Savitz & Wallace, 2016)

and their comprehension, vocabulary, and achievement improve (Hsu, 2016; Union et al., 2015). Teachers must determine when use of technology can enhance or inhibit classroom instructions (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). Having instructional practices in place to teach students in online environments will allow teachers to develop learning experiences using technology (Leu et al., 2014). Demonstrating how to use strategies for online comprehension is crucial for assisting students to be successful in online environments (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014). In this way, teachers can create learning opportunities for reading in online environments (Leu & Maykel, 2014; Wilson, 2018).

When reading online, students have to evaluate information for accuracy, reliability, and bias (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014). For struggling readers, it can be a challenge to critically evaluate information online (Brun-Mercer, 2019; Leu et al., 2011). There are five different types of evaluation that occur during online comprehension:

1. Evaluating understanding: Does it make sense to me?
2. Evaluating relevancy: Does it meet my needs?
3. Evaluating accuracy: Can I verify it with another reliable source?
4. Evaluating reliability: Can I trust it?
5. Evaluating bias: How does the author shape it? (Leu et al., 2007).

Struggling readers need effective reading instruction in the classroom environment when learning how to evaluate information (Stover et al., 2017). Teaching students new literacies when reading online can be difficult (Barone & Wright, 2009; Karchmer-Klein

et al., 2017), however, teachers can use learning strategies to help students evaluate text such as:

- identify author of an information source,
- evaluate author's knowledge to the information,
- identify and consider context or setting within the information,
- identify document information, and
- identify purpose (Al-Samarraie et al., 2017; Coscarelli & Coiro, 2014).

All teachers have a vision of where their instructional practices should lead their students (Vaugh et al., 2015; Vaugh, 2019). Having clear learning intentions for students can help teachers to meet learning needs of the students (Fisher & Frey, 2016). Teachers who understand what technological resources are available can provide struggling students support when learning online (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014). Giving students opportunities to work together on online assessment activities will motivate them to engage in collaborations and discussions (Castek & Coiro, 2015; Wilson, 2018). Struggling students can benefit from in-depth activities of specific areas of comprehension (Spear-Swerling, 2015; Strong et al., 2018).

Preparing students to understand and comprehend text using new literacies in online environments is important (Barone & Wright, 2009; McTigue & Uppstad, 2019). Researchers noted that teachers must plan lessons with technology that will engage students and help them master skills (Castek & Coiro, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2016; Leu et al., 2013; Savitz & Wallace, 2016; Spear-Swerling, 2015; Strong et al., 2018). Knowing what skills students can master and have a difficult time mastering allows teachers to plan

effective instructions to meet their learning needs (Leu et al., 2013; Wilson, 2018). Creating informal classroom assessments will create opportunities for content-area learning in the classroom which is not explored on large-scale assessments (Castek & Coiro, 2015; Wilson, 2018). Students' daily performances in class lead to the results on formative assessments (Fisher & Frey, 2016); however, for struggling students, long testing practices can be exhausting (Spear-Swerling, 2015; Strong, et al., 2018). Teachers can prepare students for assessments by providing support, teaching, and modeling how to use technology to respond to questions because all students' learning experiences should lead them to become life-long learners (Savitz & Wallace, 2016).

Reading from multiple online sources for understanding can be difficult for struggling readers because struggling readers do not know they did not comprehend text (Ciampa, 2017; Rice & Greer, 2014). When reading to synthesize information, a student is required to generalize information, predict and draw conclusions, and use existing ideas to create new ideas about text (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018). The most challenging comprehension strategy is synthesis (Altay & Altay, 2017; Castek et al., 2014). A process of putting together ideas from various sources to create new ones is synthesis (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018). Readers synthesize text in two ways; by synthesizing meaning of texts and actively constructing texts that were read (Leu et al., 2007; Putro & Lee, 2017). In addition, students need to contrast and understand ideas while building knowledge from multiple online sources (Al-Samarriaie et al., 2017; Coscarelli & Coiro, 2014).

Struggling readers can be taught to read through thoughtfully organized instruction (Stover et al., 2017). When teaching students how to synthesize information, teachers have responsibilities during instruction such as:

- Guide students through planned examples of synthesis
- Use examples of effective and less—effective online texts
- Demonstrate how to extract information from texts
- Provide opportunities for synthesis of online texts
- Support for readers
- Monitor reading progress
- Extend readers (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018).

Teachers can integrate digital technology to instruct students how to synthesize to interact with various forms of text (Al-Samarriaie et al., 2017; Colwell & Hutchison, 2015). Researchers found that integration of technology can have a positive effect on students (Caver, 2016; Haas, 2017; Lysenko & Abrami, 2014; Union et al., 2015). Use of technology in the classroom can increase student motivation, behavior, participation, and attitude (Carver, 2016; Christ et al., 2019). In comparison, a higher-level use of technology in the classroom can enhance students' educational process in all subject areas (Hsu, 2016; Jack & Higgins, 2019). Also, teachers are able to create a collaborative learning community among students by integrating technology (Haas, 2017; Union et al., 2015) where students can work independently or with peers while engaged in learning opportunities (Lysenko & Abrami, 2014; ter Beek et al., 2018). It can be a challenge to create and provide instructional strategies to engage students in effective technology

instruction (Huang et al., 2019; Sung et al., 2015). Teaching methods should be tailored to suit the learning styles of students (Chang et al., 2016). Teachers must plan before introducing new concepts to students in order to prepare them to be academically successful (Dieruf, 2017; Wakeman et al., 2013).

In similar studies, researchers found that technology is a major part of instructional practices in some school districts (Brown, 2016; Savitz & Wallace, 2016; Union et al., 2015). To aid teachers with integrating technology, some districts issue electronic devices such as e-book readers for instructional purposes (Brown, 2016). Integrating technology in the classroom can be beneficial to the students' success and learning (Haas, 2017; Union et al., 2015). In today's technology-driven society, students need to know how to ask and answer questions using technology (Savitz & Wallace, 2016) because students are being assessed more through technology.

Communicating information online is a way for students to show how reading and writing is fused on the internet (Leu et al., 2007; Putro & Lee, 2017) and it is impossible to separate both (Brun-Mercer, 2019; Leu et al., 2011). Online reading also becomes tightly intertwined with writing because students communicate with others to learn more and communicate their understandings (Leu et al., 2014; Rice & Deschaine, 2020). In online communications, a reader demonstrates online skills they have mastered while identifying problems and synthesizing information (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018). Being able to communicate information online requires students to have skills to write messages and participate in discussions (Brun-Mercer, 2019; Leu et al., 2011).

There are various responsibilities teachers have when instructing students how to communicate information in an online environment such as:

- model creation of multimodal text in response to a problem,
- demonstrate skills and resources,
- deconstruct and model increasingly complex online and multimodal genres for response,
- support for readers (individual and small group),
- monitor reading progress, and
- extend readers (Kervin et al., 2016; Kiili et al., 2018).

Implications

The primary reason for conducting this research is to determine how middle school teachers use best practices for online reading comprehension. Findings indicate that best practices in online environments are essential for teaching the components of Leu's new literacies of online reading comprehension skills. Additionally, the literature shows that implementing components of the new literacies can help teachers to incorporate technology to teach the process of reading to students (Brown, 2016).

Data gathered from interview responses during the study suggest that teachers can use best practices in online environments to instruct students using components of Leu's new literacies online reading comprehension skills. Teachers can teach students how to apply comprehension strategies when working online through modeling, guided practice, and independent practice (Ness, 2016). Findings may show how best practices and technology integration with instructional practices can improve struggling students'

reading comprehension. Findings may also be used to create instruction to target specific learning needs through best practices in online environments. Findings from the study will be used to create a curriculum plan to be implemented throughout the school year to improve comprehension in an online classroom environment.

Summary

The literature review covered best practices, instructional practices, and technology integration in an online instructional environment. Findings from the literature review support this research study into the problem that use of best practices to teach components of Leu's new literacies of online reading comprehension skills can improve the comprehension of struggling readers. For example, existing research indicates that best practices and integration of technology can have a positive effect on closing the gap in struggling readers' comprehension (Carver, 2016; Hsu, 2016; Union et al., 2015). The problem mentioned in section one at the study site is it is unknown how middle school teachers are assisting struggling students in reading comprehension in online environments. Having a balanced instructional program that includes explicit instruction on literacy skills and strategies, modeled lessons and practices, and opportunities to interact with text in online environments can be beneficial to all students (Elleman & Compton, 2017; Stover et al., 2017). To effectively reach struggling readers in online environments and help them to grasp and master comprehension skills, best practices for integrating technology should be incorporated with instructional practices (Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Funcheon, 2020; Rice & Greer, 2014).

Teachers determine what skills to teach students and how to teach them with technology through instructional practices (Brenner & Brill, 2016; Clarke, 2014; Colwell & Hutchison, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2016). Through instructional practices, teachers can integrate educational technology to teach the new literacies skills using electronic devices (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Kim & Smith; 2017) which will engage and motivate students (Howard et al., 2016). By engaging students using best practices and technology, teachers can teach students using various forms of text (Colwell & Hutchinson, 2015; Funcheon, 2020). As mentioned in Section 1, students are assessed by the state using technology. Educational technology will also allow teachers to prepare struggling readers to understand and master skills by assessing them in online environments (Dierking, 2015; Stover et al., 2017). Using best practices to teach comprehension skills in an online environment can allow teachers to tailor instructions for students' learning needs (Stover et al., 2017).

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how middle ELA school teachers implement instructional strategies to assist struggling students in online environments. Findings from this study can be used to provide insight to administrators and teachers about how best practices and technology integration with instructional practices can help struggling students with reading comprehension. The guiding question for this project study is as follows: How do middle school teachers implement instructional practices to assist struggling students in terms of reading comprehension in online environments? This section includes a discussion of the research methodology, including descriptions of participants, setting, sample, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design and Approach

I used a qualitative intrinsic case study design. Qualitative research is appropriate because teachers were able to give their insights about best practices that are used in online environments to teach comprehension. According to Lodico et al. (2009), a case study is a form of qualitative research used to determine meaning, examine processes, and gain an understanding of the subject of the study. A case study is different from other methods of qualitative research due to its focus on a particular context or bounded system (Merriam, 2009; Queiros et al., 2017). A bounded system is defined as a specific situation, population, phenomenon, or program (Merriam, 2009; Queiros et al., 2017). The purpose of qualitative research was to gain an understanding of people making sense

of their lives, processes of meaning-making, and people's interpretations of their experiences (Merriam, 2009). For this research, the case or bounded system is the situation of teachers at the study site.

An intrinsic case study was appropriate for the project study because intrinsic case studies involve exploring a specific case that is considered to be important in its own right. The primary goal was to gather data that reflects reality of the situation as an observer views it in an accurate and natural way. Thus, an intrinsic case study allowed me to gather participants' insights about the overall problem. Participants in the study gave their insights through one-on-one interviews by responding to questions about their instructional practices and implementation of instructional strategies in online environments. Participants also submitted lesson plans with specific information that pertained to how comprehension skills are taught through use of technology.

There are many approaches to qualitative research such as phenomenology, ethnography, narrative research, and grounded theory. These forms of research are not appropriate for the project study. Phenomenology involves focusing on lived experiences of social and psychological perspectives of participants (Lodico et al., 2010). This study is not phenomenological because I did not focus on lived experiences. Ethnography involves human society and culture (Merriam, 2009). This study did take place within the culture of schools in the US, but school culture was not the focus of this study. Narrative research involves description and retelling of experiences of people in a particular setting or context (Lodico et al., 2010). This study does not involve describing educational experiences of participants. This study was conducted to gain knowledge about how

teachers assist struggling readers using Leu's new literacies. Finally, grounded theory involves building theory that is useful for addressing questions about how something changed over time (Merriam, 2009). Although the study used methods consistent with the grounded theory, it was not intended to build theory. This study was conducted solely to gather data to gain an understanding of how middle school ELA teachers implement instructional strategies from Leu's new literacies to assist struggling readers.

Participants

I conducted this study as a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school ELA teachers use instructional practices in online environments to enhance reading comprehension of struggling readers. Participants for this study were chosen through purposeful sampling. Participants consisted of five ELA teachers, three ELA learning strategists, and two ELA interventionists for grades 6-8. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed that they would not be treated differently if they decided not to participate in the study, and they could withdraw at any time. No participant chose to not participate or withdraw from the study.

Sources of data collection were interviews lasting no longer than 20-30 minutes and document analysis of lesson plans. Data collected from this study were tracked via journals and participants' interview question transcripts. As documents were received, dates and participants were recorded on a Microsoft Word chart. All participants' names and data were kept confidential on a password-protected computer and jump drives. All documents and paper copies of data were kept in sealed envelopes and locked in a file

cabinet. Collected data will be kept for no longer than 5 years after the conducted study. All hard copy documents will be shredded and any recordings will be deleted from flash drives. Pseudonyms were used for all participants within reported findings to ensure anonymity of participants.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through two methods: interviews and document reviews. A semistructured interview protocol was the primary method of collecting data from participants. Semistructured interviews allow participants to respond to previously prepared questions which provide consistency across interviews and allow the interviewer flexibility to include additional questions for clarification during interviews (Lodico et al., 2009). Interviews were conducted to gather information from participants about their experiences with using best practices and technology integration, instructional practices associated with technology integration, and teaching reading skills in online environments. Documents such as planning documents were collected and triangulated with interview and classroom observational data.

Interviews

A valuable data collection tool during research is interviews. According to Merriam (2009), the main purpose of an interview is to obtain a specific kind of information such as participants' insights.

Interview questions were designed to gather information about ELA teachers' beliefs about best practices and integrating technology to teach components of Leu's new literacies online reading comprehension skills to improve struggling readers'

comprehension. Interview questions were designed to explore how teachers use learning strategies with instructional practices in an online environment to teach reading skills and new literacies. Interview questions required participants to explain their use of best practices for teaching and using components of Leu's new literacies online reading comprehension skills through technology integration. As part of the consent process, participants were asked to give permission for interviews to be audio recorded. Consent was given by all participants, and each interview was audio recorded. All interviews were transcribed in preparation for data analysis. Interviews were scheduled to last 20-30 minutes and conducted virtually after school. Interviews were video and audio recorded using Zoom. After each interview, I transcribed all participants' responses.

Document Review

Document review is another strategy that can be used to collect data. According to Lodico et al. (2009), documents are printed or electronic records that may have existed before the start of the study or were created during or after the interviews and observations occurred. For this study, documents collected consisted of a set of teachers' electronic lesson plans. Copies of lesson plans were gathered before interviews and were reviewed for details of how instructional strategies and technology are used during instructional practices (see Appendix C). Along with related interview questions, these documents provide insights into how teachers are using strategies from Leu's new literacies and technology integration to increase struggling students' comprehension. These documents were used as a means of triangulation to verify, support, or disconfirm statements made by participants to the interview questions.

Role of Researcher

I am a seventh-grade general education English Language Arts teacher in the district. This is my 21st year of teaching and my third year as a seventh grade ELA teacher. Prospective participants are my colleagues. Although it would be ideal to conduct the study in a building other than the one in which I teach, this project study could not be conducted at the second middle school in the district because of low student population and a small teacher to student ratio. Currently, there is only one ELA teacher for each grade 6-8 at the other school site. Risk of coercion was minimized at the study site because I am not in a position of leadership or supervision. I do not have any contact with any other ELA teachers. According to the chairperson of Walden's Institutional Review Board candidates of the Educational Doctoral Program are allowed to conduct a project study at their work site (Endicott, 2018). Information and data for this study was gathered from participants during agreed upon scheduled times. As researcher and a teacher at the research site, I could have experienced bias by misinterpreting responses during interviews or making assumptions about information documented on lesson plans. To minimize researcher bias, I used multiple sources of data, quoted participants' interview responses, and used member-checking and peer debriefing.

Participants

Participants for the study were selected through purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers select persons, places, or things that can provide a wealth of detailed information that will help answer the research question (Lodico et al., 2009). Purposeful sampling is a group of participants a researcher can learn the most

from because these participants are able to provide the most information about the research problem (Merriam, 2009). Criteria to be a participant in the study were having a state certification or endorsement to teach English Language Arts. When inquiring about participants, the maximum number I was looking for was fifteen and a minimum of ten. I did not want to have under ten participants because the pool to gather data would be insufficient. Individuals invited to participate in the study were five English Language Arts (ELA) grades 6-8 teachers, three learning strategists, and two interventionists which represented the total population of participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Individuals were invited to participate because they teach ELA and are responsible for supporting reading comprehension. Their insights and practices about teaching reading in online environments beyond the use of the existing programs offered by the district can enhance development of other teachers.

To conduct the study, approval had to be granted by the superintendent of the district and by the principal of the site approximately two months before the study was started. Written consent from the Assistant Superintendent of the school district was sent via email. Principal of the site granted permission for potential participants to be contacted via their district email. In the initial email to the potential participants, a brief introduction was made and information about the study was given. I assured the potential participants that their participation would be kept confidential. I explained that my role in the study would be researcher collecting data, and their role as participant would be to give information about the topic and documents-lesson plans that pertained to the topic of the study. A consent form was emailed to each potential participant for review; each

potential participant was asked to reply to receipt of the email whether they agreed or not agreed to participate in the study. All participants agreed to participate in the study by sending an electronically signed consent form back to me.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct research in the school district under study was obtained via email from the school district before the research began (see Appendix D). Additionally, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (07-27-20-0540488) before inviting participants and beginning data collection. Before the study was conducted, a letter was emailed to each participant to explain the purpose and objective of the study, participant selection criteria and expectations as well as how ethical behavior would be followed.

Participants' interview responses were de-identified and color-coded so that the participants' identities were not revealed. Each participant was given a specific color and number. Participants' documents and interview transcript were labeled with their color and number. A confidential arrangement via email was made with each participant to help curtail any unforeseeable problems that could have occurred. To stay within the code of ethics, the three tenants of Belmont Report respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were used. I ensured autonomy by making clear that all participants had the right to refuse participation or withdraw from participation without negative consequences through written and oral communication. All potential participants agreed to participate in the project study. With beneficence, researchers should do no harm; maximize benefits and minimize risks. I demonstrated beneficence by ensuring that no participant would

come to harm by participating in the study. I did so by protecting the confidentiality of all participants by removing person identifiers and labeling each participant with a specific color and number for identity purposes. With justice, the researcher must use distribution of both benefit and burden. I maintained justice by inviting all individuals who were eligible to participate in the project and treat all participants equally. By participating in the study, the participants were able to explain their knowledge and teaching experiences used to inform the instructional practices in the educational setting.

Setting

The research site is the largest middle school in the district. It has a population of approximately 450 students all of whom are African American students receiving free or reduced lunch. The school offers a variety of subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Education, Art, Information and Communication Technology I, and Information and Communication Technology II. The school is the larger of the two middle schools in the district. The school is fed by one elementary school and feeds the only high school in the district. Staff for the school consists of 37 certified teachers, 14 non-certified teachers, 22 paraprofessionals, a principal, assistant principal, dean of instructions, secretary, and Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) clerk. The school is funded through the state government and federal programs. Based on state test scores, the school was labeled as a Focus school site. In the state of Mississippi, a Focus School is defined as a Title I school that has room for improvements in areas that are specific to the school (Mississippi Board of Education, 2017). Students are taught college and career readiness standards from the state mandated curriculum.

Students can participate in extra-curricular activities such as clubs & organizations, musical activities, and/or athletic activities; (e.g., football, basketball, cheerleading, and band).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used during data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within data set (Braun & Clarke, 2013b; Nowell et. al, 2017). Thematic analysis was an appropriate method to use for this qualitative study based on the type of collected data. Creswell (2013b) described a six step process:

1. Data were prepared and organized for analysis.
2. The coding process involved the initial exploration of the data.
3. Codes were applied to develop a more general picture of the data descriptions and themes to support Leu's et al, (2011) conceptual framework to understand how instructional strategies were used in online environments.
4. Findings were represented through narratives and visuals.
5. An interpretation of the meaning was maintained by the considered results and the literature that guided the findings.
6. Procedures were conducted to confirm the accuracy of the results (pp. 237-238).

Data were collected during personal interviews with participants which were recorded with a digital recorder. Documents that were collected during the project study were participants' lesson plans. Lesson plans for the participants' were collected prior to

the interview. The lesson plans were reviewed for alignment of the new literacies online skills. I conducted multiple readings of the data. I applied a combination of *a priori* codes developed from the conceptual framework (see Appendix F) and inductive codes to the data. An a priori code was developed before examining the gathered data. A priori code was applied during data analysis to ensure the gathered data were accurate and relevant to the study. Using the constant comparative method (Kolb, 2012), I refined my codes and developed categories with each reading of the data. The constant comparative method was used to ensure that the a priori codes and inductive codes were accurate and aligned with the collected data.

Initial Data Analysis

The process of coding the interview transcripts included printing copies of each transcript and writing notes in the margins of each document. During my first reading, I highlighted words and phrases essential to the purpose of the study. I wrote memos of my interpretations for the highlighted words and phrases. Researchers rely on written notes or ideas to help sort data into categories, define their properties, and make sense of the data (Azungah, 2018; Suter, 2014). After transcribing the data, I read each interview transcript while viewing the video to ensure accuracy of the transcript. I compared the transcripts to my notes to ensure accuracy. Data from the teachers' lesson plans did not need to be transcribed. I used a manila folder to organize the data for each participant. The folder included the interview protocol, transcript, and lesson plans. The number and color coded label assigned to each participant was written on the outside of each folder. I used a priori coding generated from Leu's new literacy skills and College and Career

Readiness Standards to categorize the participants' responses. The a priori codes were using technology to read, using technology to solve problems, identifying information, technology integration, critically evaluating text, monitor, and evaluate decisions, use of multiple sources, text interactions, and online tools. A priori codes were categorized, and during the hand-coding process, participants' responses were listed in the proper category. The a priori codes were categorized based on the components of Leu's New Online Skills: identifying information, locating information, synthesizing information, evaluating information, and communicating. Participants' responses gathered during the interviews supported one or more of the components and were placed in the proper category during the hand-coding process. A priori codes established beforehand can be categorized and made consistent within categories (Elliot, 2018).

I examined lesson plans to determine whether instructional strategies and practices were aligned with Leu's (2014) new literacies online skills. Analyzing lesson plans with other sources of information can satisfy the principle of triangulation to cross-check information and increase trust in the validity of the findings (Suter, 2014).

Coding Process

Coding provides an overview of data that allows the researcher to make sense of the data in relation to the research question (Elliott, 2018). Coding is a process of identifying various segments of data using categories (Lodico et al., 2009). I used the a priori list of codes (see Appendix E) and inductive codes that emerged during analysis. I applied the a priori and inductive codes to segment data from the interviews. I hand-coded the data after transcribing the interviews. First, I put the participants' responses on

a Microsoft Word document chart I created for each interview question. I used different colored highlighters to color code the data and wrote the emerged code in the margin. Using another Microsoft Word document with three columns, I organized the codes. The columns were labeled raw data, preliminary codes, and final codes. I had an initial list of 46 various codes. After recoding, I was able to reduce the number of codes to 10. The themes were derived from multiple perspectives. I combined the themes because I had two different modes of inquiry. I analyzed interview data and documents. Some a priori codes that emerged from the interview transcripts were using technology to read and solve problems, identifying information, evaluating information, using multiple sources, interacting with text, and using online tools. Once data were coded from an interview, I coded the corresponding lesson plan. During document analysis, I examined lesson plans to identify instructional strategies the teachers documented they would implement during instructional practices. Some a priori codes that emerged were identifying information, integrating technology, using online tools, evaluating information, and interacting with various texts. I read and analyzed the data from the two sources for each participant to compare the inductive codes. I continued to analyze data until I reached saturation. After a final review of the data from both data sources, the a priori codes that were present in the data included: using technology to read, using technology to solve problems, identifying information, technology integration, critically evaluating information, using multiple sources, text interactions, and online tools.

I applied a color-coding strategy to the data that answered each interview question by the participants (see Appendix F). Each participant was given a specific number and

color code to differentiate the responses. Data addressing the questions were placed in categories that developed from the interview questions. Through multiple readings of the data, I highlighted information that went into the same categories, and data for each question were categorized for each participant based on the relationships I saw between the codes. The categories were examined and compared to develop themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Thematic analysis was used to make sense of the shared meanings in the data. Braun and Clarke (2012) identified a six-phase approach to thematic analysis:

Phase 1. Familiarizing yourself with the data

Phase 2. Generating initial codes

Phase 3. Searching for themes

Phase 4. Reviewing potential themes

Phase 5. Defining and naming themes

Phase 6. Producing the report

I created a table in Microsoft Word into which I placed the data and expedited coding and analysis. Rows and columns were designated for the emerging categories and corresponding participants' responses. As I placed the responses in the columns, I labeled each participant's response with various colors for each participant and noted where to find it on the original document. Finally, I read through the reduced data to look for patterns and themes in responses to the interview questions. I read through the color-coded data and wrote a summary of that theme using specific statements from the chart.

Evidence of Quality

Member Checking

Member-checking with the participants was conducted to ensure that my analysis reflected their experience and allowed them to make any changes that they deemed necessary. Member checking is a technique used by researchers to explore the credibility of results (Brit et al., 2016). After writing the summary of the interviews and observations, a copy of the summary was emailed to the participants. Allowing the participants to review their responses in the summary of the interview can enhance the data accuracy (Brit et al., 2016). A copy of the final transcript was sent to the participant via email. The participants were given seven days from receipt of summary to make notations about changes and return those changes to me. Participants were able to request revisions to their responses that did not accurately reflect their experiences (Brit et al., 2016). If any changes have to be made, another copy of the summary will be emailed to the participants for review with suggested changes. Each participant received an electronic copy of their interview transcript for review. All transcripts were accepted as documented, no revisions were necessary.

Triangulation

According to Merriam (2009), triangulation is the process comparing and cross-checking across multiple sources of data using various methods. Triangulation of data adds thoroughness, richness and depth of understanding to the study (Lodico et al., 2010). The use of multiple sources of data such as interviews and document analysis allowed me to cross-check the data for similarities and discrepancies thus demonstrating the validity

of the research. To triangulate the data from multiple sources, I inputted the data into a qualitative analysis software. The software helped to facilitate the process of description, analysis, and interpretation of the research data. The first qualitative software I considered was Atlas.ti because it is a software tool used for qualitative analysis to arrange, reassemble, and manage data in systematic ways (Atlas.ti, 2019). Another type of qualitative software I considered was HyperResearch because it is a powerful qualitative analysis tool that can be used for coding, retrieval, analysis, and reporting of data (Researchware, 2019). I decided to use QDA Miner to input my data. QDA Miner qualitative text analysis software can be used for the analysis of textual data such as interview and news transcripts, open-ended responses, etc. as well as for the analysis of still images (Provalis Research, 2019). All of the collected data were stored on a password-protected computer and jump drives. All documents collected were sealed in envelopes and locked in a file cabinet. All of the participants were given a specific numeric code and color to protect their identities.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) there are three criteria that are essential to quality research credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined “Credibility as having the confidence in the truth of the findings; transferability as showing the findings have applicability in other contexts; dependability as showing the findings are consistent and could be repeated; and confirmability as a degree of neutrality to which the findings are shaped by participants and not the research’s bias, motivation, or interest” (p. 1). Using triangulation of multiple data sources, credibility of the data was

established (Merriam, 2009). I gained different perspectives of integrating instructional strategies in online environments to increase struggling readers' comprehension by using these multiple sources. I corroborated the findings by having supporting documents that will provide support that the data were accurate. I used other sources to ensure that the responses from the participants are accurate. For instance, when a specific website was mentioned about instructional strategies, I reviewed the website for validation purposes. Transferability was achieved through clear descriptions of the context of the study. Information that was included in the narrative was the participants' responses from the interviews and field notes written during the interviews pertaining to the project study. Confirmability was shown using quotes from the participants as well as the use of memos that allowed me to bracket my position as a researcher and minimize researcher bias.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend peer debriefing as one way to establish credibility. Peer debriefing involves working with a disinterested peer to explore aspects of the research that might otherwise remain implicit. I ensured the trustworthiness of my study by having my data analysis checked by a peer. All data shared with this peer was de-identified, and the peer signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix H). The peer was a colleague with a doctorate who has no connection to the research site. The colleague had knowledge of qualitative research that has occurred through an accredited university. The colleague has conducted qualitative research that is similar to the topic of this study. The colleague is knowledgeable in data analysis for qualitative research. Areas of disagreement in data analysis and interpretation were discussed with the peer and

shared with my committee chair. After the discussion, any revisions that needed to be made in the document occurred.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Discrepant or disconfirming cases are those data that do not match the predominant findings that emerge during analysis. Disconfirming evidence is a process that can play an important role in interpreting qualitative data (Antin et al., 2015; Hilton, 2020). I did not have any disconfirming data to refine the findings and consider alternative answers to my research question. No discrepancies occurred, I did not have to recode the data to resolve any issues.

Limitations

There are always limitations in qualitative research. According to Chetty (2016) & Hoogendoorn (2019) some limitations of qualitative research are that the process is time consuming, there is no result verification; the approach is labor intensive, and it is difficult to investigate causality. Merriam (2009) noted that limitations of case studies include the sensitivity and integrity of the investigation; reliability, validity, and transferability. There are some limitations of purposeful sampling. For example, there can be errors in judgement by researchers, differences in levels of reliability and bias, and being unable to conclude about research findings (Dudovskiy, 2018). The limitations for this study were the use of purposeful sampling and interviews. Purposeful sampling selects a small sampling group which included only five ELA Teachers, three ELA Learning Strategists, and two ELA Interventionists for the study. Interviews were the primary method of data collection for the study. As the interviewer, I relied mainly on the

interviewees to accurately recall and articulate information pertaining to the interview questions.

Data Analysis Results

The analysis and interpretation of data can be conducted through many methods. Data analysis is the process of searching and arranging data to come up with findings from accumulated materials (Bogdon & Birklen, 2007; Hatmanto, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, data analysis in qualitative research occurs throughout the study and guides the ongoing process of data collection (Lodio et al., 2010). I hand-coded the data and used a software as a way to verify and support the codes that emerged. Hand-coding can be tedious and become messy when a researcher has hundreds of pages to code (Lodico et.al, 2010). I used QDA Miner, a qualitative online computer software program as a means of verifying the process of description, analysis, and interpretation of the research data I collected through interviews and documentation review. I found a qualitative analysis computer software program, QDA Miner, to be a resourceful tool during the difficult process of analyzing, organizing, sorting, and searching for information within the collected data as a data check.

During the first stage of data collection, I familiarized myself with the data. I started the process by transcribing the interviews for each participant. Once interview data were transcribed, it is imperative that you review the transcripts for accuracy -based on the video recordings. Through the process, I was able to pause and rewind the videos and make notations of the participants' responses to the questions to ensure the transcripts were accurate based on the video recordings. After transcribing the interviews,

I placed the labeled participants' responses on the coding sheet for each question. I read through the responses several times to look for similar responses to identify topics based on the conceptual framework and research questions. Next, I reviewed the electronic lesson plans to gain an understanding of the planning process for each participant. While I read through the lesson plans, I made notations of instructional strategies and techniques that could serve as categories for the data. The topics that were noticed in the lesson plans included instructional strategies, digital devices, graphic organizers, comprehension, online platforms, and modeling/demonstrating lessons. I examined the lesson plans for a priori codes and the following codes were present in the data: identifying information, using technology to read and answer questions (problems), technology integration, using multiple sources, interacting with text, and evaluating information.

After finalizing the hand coding processes, I uploaded the uncoded created charts with the participants' responses into QDA Miner to confirm the accuracy of the codes that were generated by the hand-coded process. Once all data had been uploaded into QDA Miner, I begin coding the uploaded responses. I created inductive codes using specific words and phrases from participants' interview responses and categories in QDA Miner based on the examination of the data. Through another thorough examination of the data using the inductive coding process, I identified themes. Codes were sorted into themes that related to the research questions. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of the codes generated by QDA Miner which also matched the codes that emerged during the hand-coding process. Figure 1 displays the frequency of the codes appearance in the

uploaded and hand-coded data based on the participants' responses from the least number of time-smallest words to the greatest number of times-largest words.

Figure 1

Display of Code Frequency

In the final step of coding, I matched similar codes that appeared in the data based on the color codes from QDA Miner, a Priori codes, and my handwritten data codes. From the similar codes, themes emerged. The themes were matched to the appropriate research question for the project study and are displayed in Table 3. I reviewed the electronic lesson plans to look for evidence of alignment with the research questions. The evidence were matched to the appropriate research question for the study and are

displayed in Table 4. The data from the transcribed interviews and lesson plans were matched with the appropriate a Priori code for the study and are displayed in Table 5.

Table 3

Summary of Findings

Research Questions	Themes	Strategies
RQ 1: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to identify important information?	Direct instruction • Demonstrating Modeling Monitoring students' Learning	Read questions before reading the passage Using the five W's
RQ 2: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to locate information?	Direct instruction • Demonstrating Modeling Monitoring students' Learning	Highlighting/underlining features Identify keywords Using text structures and story elements
RQ 3: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to evaluate information?	Direct instruction • Demonstrating Modeling Monitoring students' learning	Teach students how to analyze (breakdown) text Teach Process of Elimination Use various online tools (websites or programs)
RQ 4: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to synthesize information?	Monitoring students' learning Providing feedback	Summarizing Using graphic organizers Online platform (Nearpod)
RQ 5: How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online	Monitoring students' learning Providing feedback	Teach students to use their own words Teach students how to communicate (orally and written)

environment to communicate information?	Use collaborative discussion boards

Themes indicated varied responses of participants toward the role of implementing instructional strategies in online environments to improve comprehension. Themes emerged from the data that indicated that through direct instructions the teachers incorporate various instructional strategies, use online educational platforms, and educational resources that could be implemented to improve comprehension, monitor students' learning, and provide feedback to students. The data showed evidence that the implementation of instructional strategies allow teachers to instruct students through modeling on how to use techniques that would allow them to strengthen their comprehension.

Table 4

Research Questions Alignment Table

Research Question	Lesson Plans	Interviews	Representative Quotes
How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to identify important information?	All plans include essential questions about the taught standards.	Specific instructional strategies were explained by the participants.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I demonstrate for students how to identify important information by reading the questions first and then reading the passage." **Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "With 75% accuracy, the student will read passages to identify the theme, determine

			word meaning(s), and write an objective summary."
How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to locate information?	Information present in plans that allowed students to locate information.	During the interviews, the participants explained how students used various strategies to locate information.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I model students how to locate information by using the highlighter or underline features on the platform to identify important information in the text as they read." **Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "With 75% accuracy, the student will cite evidence from the story to respond to questions in a Google Classroom assignment."
How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment evaluate information?	No evidence of specific strategies presented in lesson plans.	Participants explained the various educational platforms used to teach students how to evaluate information.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I model for the students how to evaluate information by using an educational platform such as Nearpod because it helps breakdown the skills."
How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to synthesize information?	Lesson plans included evidence of how the students would synthesize information.	Participants explained how the students are taught to synthesize information.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I model for the students how to synthesize information by showing them how to summarize reading assignments to help them understand."

			Lesson Plan: One participant wrote, "With 75% accuracy, the student will read given passages independently to identify important details to write an objective summary."
How do teachers use Leu's new literacies online skills to teach comprehension in an online environment to communicate information?	Participants explained in the lesson plans how the students would communicate responses.	Participants explained how students were able to communicate their responses about the skills.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I model for the students how to communicate information by orally asking and answering questions using online platforms." **Lesson Plans**: One participant wrote, "The students will utilize Nearpod to give feedback for the lesson and respond to exit tickets."

The information written in the daily lesson plans was aligned with the research questions and the participants' responses from the interviews. All of the participants taught the same standards at different levels using similar instructional strategies. The lesson plans included detailed information about the objective/standard(s), learning target, prerequisite skill, essential question(s), formative assessment, procedures for the day, instructional strategies, technology/21st Century skills, closure interventions, and homework. The information outlined in the lesson plans displayed expectations of the students once the lesson was completed each day.

Table 5

A Priori Code Alignment Table

a Priori Code	Lesson Plans	Interviews	Representative Quotes
Using technology	Information in plans that allowed the use of technology to read.	During the interviews, participants explained how technology is used to read.	**Interview**: One participant said, "We use various online platforms such as Nearpod and Google Classroom to demonstrate how to read and analyze passages to gain a better understanding of text." **Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "TTW play an audio version of a story as the students read an uploaded version from Google Classroom to respond to discussion questions."
Using technology to solve problems	Evidence in plan that allowed the use of technology to solve problems (answer questions).	During the interviews, participants explained how technology is used to solve problems (answer questions).	**Interview**: One participant said, "I use direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, and student choice boards during instructional time to show students how to answer questions." **Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "TTW ask the students questions about a pre-read online text. TSW utilize Nearpod to answer the questions and give feedback."
Identifying information	Information in plans shows how students will identify information while reading text.	Participants explained how they demonstrated to students how to identify information	**Interview**: One participant said, "I model for the students as I orally read and analyze the text by reading the questions first and then scanning through the text for evidence to respond to the questions."

		when reading texts.	**Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "TTW utilize Nearpod.com to help instruct students how to identify key details to respond to multiple choice questions."
Technology integration	Evidence in plans that shows technology will be integrated with classroom instructions.	Participants explained how technology is integrated with classroom instructions to model and instruct the students.	**Interview**: One participant stated, "I use technology as a tool to support and enhance reading comprehension skills." **Lesson Plan**: One participant wrote, "TTW use a powerpoint to explain how to determine the theme of the text and write an objective summary."
Critically evaluating information	Details in plans explaining how information will be critically evaluated while independently reading text.	Participants explained how they showed the students how to evaluate the text by analyzing (breaking down) the text to find the correct answer.	**Interview**: One participant said, "I demonstrate the process of elimination for multiple choice questions for students as I orally read through the question and text. I also model for the students how to go back into the text to find evidence." **Lesson Plans**: One participant wrote, "TTW orally read a short story and demonstrate how to determine the theme of a passage and how to write and objective summary."
Use of multiple sources	Details in plans of multiple sources usage in the online setting.	Participants spoke about the various sources utilized to instruct their classes.	**Interview**: One participant stated, "I use multimedia texts to demonstrate a concept to help support vocabulary development." **Lesson Plans**: One participant wrote, "TTW check for students' understanding using oral

			questions, Google Forms, ZOOM reactions, Quizziz, and/or Kahoot."
Text interactions	Details in plans of text interactions through demonstrations and independent activities.	Participants explained how they interacted with the text by modeling (showing) students how to find evidence.	**Interview**: One participant stated, "I model for students through a live demonstration for to use editable graphic organizers to breakdown texts." **Lesson Plans**: One participant wrote, "TTW demonstrate through Nearpod how to analyze a passage highlighting and underlining details to help determine the theme and word meanings."
Online tools	Details in plans of various online tools implemented through classroom instructions and independent activities.	Participants explained the various online tools used to instruct the students in a virtual setting.	**Interview**: One participant said, "During guided practice, I use different editable graphic organizers to provide visual aids to ensure my struggling readers understand what is being taught." **Lesson Plans**: One participant wrote, "TTW utilize Nearpod.com to help instruct students to decode and write words with vowel teams."

The information written in the daily lesson plans was aligned with the a Priori codes and the participants' responses from the interviews. The participants all taught their classes using direct instruction, monitoring students' learning, and providing feedback. The lesson plans included detailed information about how the participants used various strategies during direct instruction of their classes.

Theme 1: Direct Instruction

Interview data were the primary source for the findings that addressed this study's research questions. Participants' responses regarding their instructional practices centered on one key theme *direct instruction*. Several of the participants strongly support using the strategy of reading the questions before reading the passage. One participant said:

> When it comes to identifying important information, I model for students how to go over the questions first before we read. So, once we get to reading the text, the students will know what questions are asked; and they will not have to spend that much time going back and forth. That helps the students get a better understanding of what is asked of them.

Another participant said, "I demonstrate for the students how to identify important information in text by looking at the questions or giving them essential questions to look at as they read. The students are able to focus more on the text because they know what was asked in the questions during independent practice."

My research also showed that the teachers use various teaching methods on how to identify important questions. One participating teacher said, "I model for students how to identify important information in text by using the five W's to identify (who, what, when, where, why, and how) in the passage. During independent practice, the students are able to read through the text using the five W's to find the answers to the questions we previewed before reading the text." Another participating teacher said, "I demonstrate for students how to identify important information in text by reading and annotating the passages. I model for students how to write notes within the margins of the text that

shows where the answers can be found. I model for student how to refer to their notes when answering questions with multiple choices or open-ended."

One participating teacher strongly felt that the structure of the text is important when identifying important information.

> I think that looking for important information in the text is like looking at the structure of the text. Especially, if you are looking at the reading portion of the ACT. We look for proper nouns, dialogue, and the italicized clip of the text. The questions are going to come from those places. It's basically is the same thing when looking at informational text. I demonstrate for the students how to look at how the passages are set up will help with identifying important information.

The interview questions provided insight into how the teachers use direct instruction to teach their students how to locate information. One of the participating teachers said:

> I teach the students how to locate information by modeling for them to look at the questions first because their passages are so long. I read the questions for keywords and read with a purpose. During independent practice, the students are able to read with a purpose because they have identified keywords that will help them locate important information to answer the questions.

Locating important information can be overwhelming while reading. Several of the teachers explained that using online tools to locate information is important. One

participating teacher said, “I model for the students how to use the online cursor to locate and highlight information. When the students are trying to locate information, the students can use their cursor to highlight important information. That makes it easier for the students to go back in the text.” Another participant said, “I model for the students how to locate information by using Jamboards to show them how to use highlight features to highlight information. During independent practice, the students are able to show their work on a live board whether working individually or in a group.” Another participating teacher said, “I demonstrate for the students how to locate information by using the highlighter or underline features on the platform to identify important information in the text as they read. Working independently, the students are able to use the tools just by clicking on the tool bar. The students are able to refer back to the highlighted or underlined information when they answer the questions.”

When locating important information, the reader needs to know the format of the text. A participant said:

> With locating information, we know that if it’s at the beginning, it is going to give you a short summation about what is going to happen or introduce you to the text. If we are looking for the title, we know that it will be at the top in the middle and will be bold printed. Most of the time, if you are looking for a thesis statement, you will find if in the first paragraph. It will generally be at the end of the first paragraph or the first two sentences of the second paragraph. Knowing the format or structure of the text will help the students to locate information.

Another participant said, “I model for the students how to locate information by using text structures and/or elements of the text. When the students know how the text is organized; they find it easier to locate the information to answer the questions.

Theme 2: Monitoring Students’ Learning

The data from the interview responses indicate that the teachers monitor students’ learning when the students evaluate information when reading various texts. One participating teacher said, “I model for the students how to evaluate information by showing students how to pull out what’s important to our protagonist/antagonist; to pull out key details from the text. I monitor the students during independent practice, because it is important the students know how to analyze break apart the text before evaluating the information.” A second participant said:

> It is how to break down the text. How do we look at whose important? How do we look at what is important? How do we look at what do you feel is happening when you look at your plot? Who’s the protagonist? Who’s the antagonist? What’s the rising action? What’s the climax, the falling action? What’s the problem/solution? We can write down those things, even if it’s informational text. There is still a conflict or pondering question you should still be able to identify. When evaluating information, the students can ask themselves numerous questions to help lead them to the correct answer. During independent work time, I monitor how the students evaluate the text to identify the correct responses for questions.

A third participant spoke to teaching students how to evaluate information using similar strategies.

> I teach the students how to evaluate information by modeling for them how to evaluate information by showing them how to analyze the text. I explain to them that text evidence is very important. If they do not have textual evidence, nine times out of ten, their answer is incorrect. They have to have explicit strong textual evidence to support their responses. Teaching the students how to analyze text will help them when they have to evaluate information.

Finally, another participant shared on teaching students how to evaluate information using similar strategies

> I model for the students how to evaluate information by showing them how to analyze text. During independent practice, I monitor students as they analyze text, they are able to use the process of elimination for multiple choice questions. I always ask the students to reread the questions and replace the answer. If the answer does not make sense, most of the time, that is not the correct answer. So, teaching the students how to evaluate information will allow the students to use the process of elimination when there are multiple choices. I am able to see whether the students understand or need extra practice with evaluating information.

Theme 3: Providing Feedback

The participants' responses about providing feedback to student when synthesizing information indicated that graphic organizers, summarizing information, and online educational websites are important components for improving comprehension. One participant said, "I model for students how to synthesize information by showing students how to use various graphic organizers. The students are able to use graphic organizers to break the text apart pulling out important details. Then the students can use those details to write a summary. As the students work independently, I monitor and provide feedback to ensure the students understand the task." Another participant said:

> I model for students how to synthesize information by using an online platform called Nearpod. The students are able to type or write their responses about the text in an online graphic organizer. I can see their responses as they are responding in their documents. Feedback can be given to the students about their work while they are working. Once the students finish filling out their graphic organizer, they can write their summary about the text.

The data from the study yielded various responses from the participants about communicating information. A participant said:

> I demonstrate for students how to communicate information by modeling how to communicate using my own words. The students need to know when they are communicating about a text, they must put their responses in their own words. They need to know that when they are citing textual

> evidence, not to write what is actually written or stated in the text. As I model for the students, I talk through the steps I take to respond to a question using my own words and paraphrasing. When the students work independently, I provide feedback to them about their responses.

Majority of the participants also use discussion boards to provide feedback and allow the students to communicate information. One participant stated, "I model for students on a live discussion board how to communicate information. The students are able to see my response as I write in the discussion board. I discuss with the students how to communicate information and allow them to respond orally or written in a discussion to explain what they have learned." Another participant reported

> I use discussion boards to teach students to write how they say it. I noticed lately with the kids that they do not respond the way we as teachers look for a response. We have to look at their response and then learn how to translate it to what we want to hear or what we want to see. If they have the gist of it or understanding, all we have to do is translate their expressions to be more understandable for the classroom setting. I also provide feedback to the students about their response on the discussion board. The students are able to use the feedback to make revisions to their current and future assignments.

Discussion

The interview process was instrumental in identifying what instructional strategies the teachers implement to improve students' comprehension in online

environments. Overall the participants seemed welcoming and comfortable in sharing their teaching experiences about instructional strategies, therefore I trusted that their responses were honest and appropriate for the questions. The majority of the teachers felt that Leu's new online comprehension skills are similar to the College and Career Readiness Standards, but they are catered to be used in an online environment. Instead of there being 10 College and Career Readiness Standards, there are five key components in Leu's New Literacies Skills. Some of the participants stated that they are able to incorporate Leu's New Literacies Skills with the curriculum they are currently teaching. A few of the participants stated that they are new to teaching, and they are learning about the skills through their instructional practice implementing various instructional strategies.

The responses of the participants were supported by the conceptual framework that guided the study. Leu's (2014) new literacies of online research and comprehension skills were evident in that the participants' implementation of instructional strategies to improve comprehension. All participants were certified and qualified to teach in the content area of ELA. Each participant was willing to step up to the plate especially during a pandemic to ensure that the students were able to learn and improve their comprehension in an online environment.

In addition, I noticed during the interviews how each participant was able to respond to the questions with no hesitation. Some of the participants stated that they are teaching in a different atmosphere because of the current COVID-19 pandemic. The participants who have been in teaching in brick-and-mortar buildings said that

demonstrating how to implement a strategy in a virtual setting is totally different from face-to-face teaching and learning. Even though they are teaching in a remote setting, they were able to see some improvement with the students' comprehension capabilities.

Validating Findings

Qualitative research is how people make sense of the world and interpret what they have experienced (Merriam, 2009). For these reasons, it is imperative a process is followed to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings through member-checking, triangulation, and trustworthiness. Member-checking was facilitated by providing each participant with a copy of their interview transcript to ensure that I understood and accurately captured their responses to the questions. I wanted to know whether I had accurately transcribed and interpreted the responses from each participant. I did not receive any requests to make changes to the transcribed data from the participants. Additionally, I allowed for triangulation of data in the design of the study to compare and cross-check the data sources. I collected data through audio/visual recorded interviews via ZOOM and electronic lesson plans. I examined the data to identify themes to produce a repost that would be accurate and credible based on the findings. I reviewed ten interview transcripts and seven teachers' lesson plans looking for common patterns. I identified three themes from the two data points. Triangulation allowed me to establish the validity of my study. Finally, to strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings, an external audit was conducted by soliciting an overview of the study by someone not associated with the research to help identify the strong and weak points of the study. This person assisted with determining if the findings were grounded in the data, if researcher

bias were mitigated, and strategies were used to ensure credibility of the findings (Lodico et.al, 2010). I did not receive any feedback for revisions from the external auditor. These checks for validity are essential in providing evidence of credibility and accuracy of the qualitative study.

Conclusion

This section presented the methodology and findings of this qualitative study. The research conducted was an intrinsic case study of middle school teachers implementing instructional strategies in online environments to improve comprehension. The purposeful sampling procedures for participant selection and the process to protect human subjects were explained. The data collected came from interviews and document analysis. The audio/visual recorded interviews provided insight to the participants' instructional practices. Document analysis was conducted by reviewing electronic lesson plans submitted by the participants for evidence of the type of instructional strategies that would be implemented in the virtual setting. The interviews and lesson plans provided insight into how the participants instruct their classes using various evidence-based reading instructional strategies. Three themes were identified from the collected and analyzed data: direct instruction, monitoring students' learning, and providing feedback. The next section of this study presents details of the curriculum plan including an introduction, rationale, review of literature, project description, project evaluation plan and project implication of the plan for local stakeholders and for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how middle school ELA teachers implement instructional strategies to assist struggling students in online environments. To accomplish this purpose, I used a qualitative intrinsic case study design to gain insight regarding how middle school ELA teachers and interventionists implemented Leu's new literacies of online research and comprehension into instructional practices to assist struggling students to improve their comprehension while reading online. The project described in this section was developed based on results of this in-depth qualitative case study. The main data source was virtual interviews via Zoom with each participant. Additional data resulted through examination of electronic lesson plans from each teacher. I thoroughly examined data, analyzed results, and weighed my findings against current research.

This section of the project study includes a rationale for the study, review of literature to support the study, and project description. The project evaluation plan includes methods of data collection and data analysis to ensure quality of research. Research questions are listed, and findings for each research question are presented. Finally, I address project implications to explain how findings are important to instructional practices.

Genres of Project

I considered various options prior to deciding the genre of this project. The qualitative intrinsic case study design allowed for an in-depth exploration of how middle

school teachers implement instructional strategies for reading comprehension in an online environment to assist struggling readers. My motivation was to discover how instructional strategies implemented by teachers improve comprehension abilities of struggling students.

Rationale

As I reviewed participants' interview responses and lesson plans, data revealed that instructional strategies are a major part of teachers' instructional practices in online environments. Teachers did not state any preferences for professional development training sessions. Creating a curriculum plan was appropriate for the project study because research questions focused on using instructional strategies to teach reading comprehension in online environments.

Literature included a variety of instructional strategies that might be used to improve comprehension in online environments. Teachers can implement instructional strategies in online environments to engage students and enhance their ability to read and learn (Sidik, 2019). The ability to read is an important skill for students because reading plays an important role in understanding and comprehending the text that was read (Kurniaman, 2019). During the project study, participants were able to elaborate on instructional strategies that were implemented to help improve reading comprehension for struggling readers in online environments.

Review of the Literature

Results of this case study were used to identify strategies and techniques that may have a positive impact on student comprehension in online environments. These findings

derived from several themes. First, participants identified some of the same reading instructional strategies: reading the questions first, using process of elimination, and graphic organizers that are implemented with their style of instructional practices. Second, participants identified specific educational online platforms such as Nearpod, jamboards, Kahoot, and Quizziz that are implemented to engage students with reading difficulties. Finally, participants stated their apprehensions with teaching using instructional strategies because they are novice teachers and did not have experience teaching in an online environment. Literature reviewed for this project is supported by information gathered from participants. From participants' responses, keywords were used to search for peer-reviewed articles which were used to strengthen the content of the project study.

Key themes in this literature review were (a) instructional strategies implemented to teach comprehension during direct instruction and (b) educational platforms implemented in online environments to monitor student learning and provide feedback. A particular problem identified by participants was middle school students have difficulties comprehending what was read. I focused on peer-reviewed articles published between 2018 and 2022. Information for this literature review was gathered from online services such as Walden Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, SAGE Journals, and Thoreau. Keywords used for searching were: *new literacies*, *ORCA*, *struggling readers*, *adolescent readers*, *instructional practices*, *best practices*, *technology integration*, *student achievement*, *computer-based testing*, *digital reading*, *paper-based reading*, *online reading*, *learning strategies*, *instructional practices*, *instructional strategies*, *comprehension*, *online*

environments, *reading comprehension*, *instructional strategies*, *instructional practices*, *educational platforms*, *struggling readers*, *educational websites*, and *research-based strategies*. A total of 90 articles were reviewed. Articles published prior to 2018 were excluded unless they were seminal studies. I focused on reading instructional strategies and educational platforms. As appropriate, I searched for articles referenced in literature that were relevant to the study and met search criteria.

Instructional Strategies

The purpose of instructional strategies is to help students learn or gain a better understanding of the standards/skills the teachers are teaching. According to Persaud, 2018, instructional strategies are defined as:

> Techniques teachers use to help students become independent, strategic learners. These strategies become learning strategies when students independently select the appropriate ones and use them effectively to accomplish tasks or meet goals. Instructional strategies allow teachers to make learning more fun and practical and can also encourage students to take more of an active role in their education.

There are many types of instructional strategies teachers can implement into instructional practices effectively. Instructional strategies teachers can implement into instructional practices can allow students to make connections between in-class learning and real-life situations (Persaud, 2018). They can be use in both traditional and virtual classroom settings. Many of the traditional strategies for printed text can be applied to digital text (Pilgrim et al., 2018); however, traditional strategies differ in the way they are applied to online teaching and learning (Pace et al., 2020).

Online learning requires students to be strategic thinkers as they apply strategies to develop their learning (Wilson et al., 2019). Teachers can help students through instructional practices by matching instructional strategies with classroom curriculum to areas of literacy they have difficulty comprehending (Northrop & Kelly, 2018). In order to comprehend text, students need to understand the text by establishing connections between literal and explicit pieces of information and producing missing information or inferences (Villesseche et al., 2019).

Teachers can use a variety of instructional strategies across grade levels and subject areas with an extreme range of learning styles. Creating meaning is the essence of comprehension (Coiro, 2007; Ming Lai, 2018). Table 6 displays a selection of key comprehension strategies identified by researchers to strengthen struggling readers' comprehension.

Table 6

Key Comprehension Strategies to Strengthen Struggling Readers' Comprehension

Strategy	Process
Predicting	• Skim over the text and predict what you will read • Identify keyword or topics to activate prior knowledge • Establish a purpose for reading
Monitoring	• Self-monitor your understanding of the text • Identify what you do not understand • Use appropriate strategies to resolve problems in comprehension
Graphic organizers	• Help students focus on text structures differences • Provide students with tools to examine and show relationships in a text • Help students write well-organized summaries of a text

Confirming/Answering Questions	• Gives students a purpose for reading • Focus students' attention on what they are to learn • Help students to actively think as they read • Encourage the students to monitor their comprehension • Help students to review content and relate to what was learned to what they know
Summarizing/Reflecting	• Identify or generate main ideas • Connect main or central ideas • Eliminate unnecessary information • Remember what was read
Elaborating	• Analyze, integrate and elaborate on your reflections • Apply what was read to other readings and situations (Adler, 2007, Coiro, 2007, Amin, 2019; Parrish, 2020)

Reading digital-text can be a challenge for struggling readers; however, teachers can help students improve their comprehension by providing sufficient comprehension strategies (Brun-Mercer, 2019). Researchers have noted that a small number of strategies taught over a period of time is more effective for students' comprehension of text (Magnusson et al., 2018). Reading online information to learn requires skills and strategies for locating, evaluating, synthesizing information, and communicating what one has learned (Kanniainen et al., 2019). With time and practice, using instructional strategies, teachers will enable students to select the appropriate strategies on their own and effectively use them to complete online tasks (Persaud, 2018).

Educational Platforms

Educational platforms are instructional tools teachers can implement to help elevate classroom instruction (Ascione, 2019). Using educational platforms to teach

research-based strategies can strengthen a reader's comprehension ability (Crawley, 2017). Students are empowered and educated using various tools of digital learning platforms (Loveless, 2020). An increase in vocabulary, language development, and familiarity with a variety of writing styles through educational platforms, allow students to have more reading skills (Priyanti et al., 2019). Compared to learning in a traditional classroom setting, students must take an active role in applying comprehension strategies in online environments to be successful (Tindle et al., 2016). To enhance comprehension abilities of struggling readers, teachers can support the students' learning of skills through educational platforms (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2016).

In online environments, teachers can implement various platforms to teach students comprehension skills. In education today, students need various types of skills and knowledge to think critically and evaluate their work (Loveless, 2020). Online educational platforms are composed of tools and media that enables students and teachers to collaborate and communicate (Balasubramanian, 2017). Some of the various forms of online educational platforms teachers implement to teach comprehension skills are Nearpod, Quizziz, Kahoot, online graphic organizers, ZOOM, Google Classroom, and discussion boards (see Table 7).

Table 7

Educational Platforms

Platform	Description
Nearpod	an app where teachers can upload context and create checkpoints in presentation in the form of multiple choice questions, polls, short answer prompts, or discussion boards.

Kahoot	an online platform used as a supplemental teaching tool where students can play game-based quizzes, participate in discussions and surveys.
Quizziz	an online platform that allows teachers to conduct student-paced formation assessments in a fun and engaging way for students of all ages.
ZOOM	a cloud-based video conferencing service used to virtually meet with others-by video-or-audio-only or both, live chats can be conducted, and sessions can be recorded for later viewing.
Google Classroom	a free web service developed by Google for schools that aims to simplify teaching and learning, move students forward, strengthen student connections, and keep data protected.
Discussion boards	support the 5 Cs of education, communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and curation. Students can brainstorm, research, organize information, show work, create illustrations, concept maps, timelines, flowcharts, emoji story writing, sketch notes, and digital storytelling components.
Graphic organizers	visual learning tools used to help students organize their ideas, clarify or simplify complex concepts, help with problem solving on decision making, or used to plan research or brainstorm ideas.

Today in education students are reading more on digital devices (Schwartz, 2016). Teachers can engage students in reading through virtual educational platforms with simple instructional practices (Starke, 2020) and can even help boast student achievement (Ascione, 2019). Through instructional strategies with online educational platforms, teachers can get students deeply engaged with difficult text which also provides them with strategies for text comprehension and strengthen other reading skills (Schwartz, 2016).

Project Description

Participants in my study indicated that instructional strategies are essential when teaching the students how to analyze text and respond to questions in an online environment. Based on the results of this study, a curriculum plan was developed. The

goal of this curriculum plan is to provide teachers with instructional strategies that can be used to facilitate the reading achievement of struggling readers. The curriculum plan can be used as a supplemental resource instructional guide throughout the school year by the classroom teachers along with the district's curriculum pacing guide. The curriculum plan will include instructional strategies that can be used to teach students comprehension skills in both traditional and online environments.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The implementation of the project requires input and active participation from the administrative staff, the ELA teachers, ELA Learning Strategies teachers, and Interventionists. The administrative staff will need to discuss the criteria and implementation of the curriculum plan. The assistant principal will meet with the ELA departmental team to discuss implementing the curriculum plan as a supplemental resource with the district's curriculum pacing guide. There will not be a cost to the school to implement the curriculum plan because the district provides the curriculum pacing guides to the school. Any other resources that are needed are provided by the district or school administrative team.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

I do not anticipate many barriers that will keep the curriculum plan from being implemented. Two possible barriers could affect the curriculum plan from being fully implemented. Time is a barrier that might affect implementation. Teachers are constantly under time constraints because of various duties and responsibilities. Teachers are called upon to attend scheduled and unscheduled meetings/conferences, plan programs, sponsor

clubs/organizations, and create lesson plans. To minimize some of the duties, the teachers should communicate with the administrative staff to ensure they have adequate time to create lessons that will allow implementation of the curriculum plan. Lack of collaboration is another barrier to consider. During staff or departmental meetings, teachers may not want to discuss, speak, or share their experiences about the curriculum plan. Administrative staff cannot force the teachers to participate in any discussions; however, they can ensure that the teachers have enough time to plan lessons that include implementation of the curriculum. In order to avoid/eliminate the potential barriers, a possible solution could be, administrators reduce the teachers' extra duties/responsibilities to ensure teachers have adequate time to prepare classroom instructions. To overcome lack of collaboration, administrators can encourage teachers to actively participate in professional learning communities by orally responding, discussing, and giving feedback on the various discussion topics which will allow the teachers to learn from one another.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The curriculum plan will be implemented each nine week period through classroom instruction. The teachers will be able to incorporate the appropriate instructional strategy with the literacy skill and/or standard that is to be taught. Teaching the comprehension strategies over the course of each nine week period will enable students to repeatedly practice the strategies. The constant practice of the strategies on their own will enable students to internalize and apply the strategies when reading various types of text (Magnunon et al., 2018). The use of instructional strategies over

time causes students to slow their pace of reading and analyze the text in-depth (Schwartz, 2016). Reading is the act of constructing meaning, to support students teachers need to provide students with instructional strategies to understand and comprehend text (Ferguson, 2020).

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the researcher was to propose the administration presentation to inform and educate the stakeholders on the importance of teaching comprehension strategies in online environments to struggling readers to address the gap in reading proficiency in the district. It was also important to create a curriculum plan that included some potential instructional strategies that could be incorporated with classroom instructional practices. The role of the principal is to meet with the administrative team to discuss incorporating the curriculum plan with the district's pacing guide and monitoring the implementation for strengths and weaknesses. The teacher's role is to incorporate the curriculum plan and implement the strategies with instructional practice. The teacher's role is also to present comments to the administrative staff about the curriculum plan.

Project Evaluation Plan

This project was developed to solve the problem of how middle school teachers assist struggling students in reading comprehension in online environments. The goal of this project was to improve how the teachers use instructional strategies to assist students in reading comprehension. Overall, this project may help bring all struggling readers up to proficient readers if implemented consistently. A formative and summative evaluation will be used for this project study. Formative evaluation involves qualitative feedback for

students and teachers focusing on details of content and performance; and summative evaluation focuses on the outcome of a program (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). During class discussions and instructional time, teachers give students feedback for the work the students are working on or have submitted. The students are able to use the teacher's feedback to modify their work. The end of the year state assessment is a form of summative evaluation. The students are assessed on the standards and skills that were taught during the current school year. The curriculum plan evaluation consists of observation 'traditionally and/or virtually' by administrative staff and teachers.

The project evaluation period could be the 2021-2022 school year. The key stakeholders in the project are the administrative staff and teachers. The administrative staff can review the teachers' lesson plans for documentation of the curriculum plan implementation with the district's pacing guide. Classroom observation can be performed by the administrative staff to ensure the curriculum plan is being implemented as written in the teachers' lesson plans. Teachers can conduct observations of other teachers to watch demonstrations of how students are instructed using instructional strategies listed in the curriculum plan. Teachers have the expertise of how to scaffold reading skills and engage students in supportive reading practices that results in significant gains in comprehension skills and reading achievement (Rasinki et al., 2017).

Project Implications

The curriculum plan has the potential to bring positive social change for the students, teachers, and administrative staff on a local level. The curriculum plan can help to enhance the instructional practices of the teachers which can lead to academic success

for struggling students. Teachers will have access to research-based instructional strategies that are aligned with the standards that are to be taught during the course of each nine-week period. The students will be able to apply the strategies, skills, and knowledge gained during classroom instructions to become proficient readers. Administrators can support the teachers with implementing the curriculum plan by modeling instructions for novice teachers, giving insightful feedback to improve instructional practices, and encouraging students to use the strategies that are taught. Overall, the curriculum plan has the potential to bring positive social change in the local school by strengthening instructional practices and improving struggling students' comprehension capabilities.

The curriculum plan has the potential to have a positive impact on struggling students in a broader spectrum. Other schools in the local school district and state can use the curriculum plan as a supplemental resource in addition to the districts' pacing guides. The curriculum plan can be used to enhance instructional practices to assist students with using techniques to help improve comprehension of text.

Conclusion

The proposal project for this study is a curriculum plan. Section 3 discussed the project. The section included the rationale for choosing a curriculum plan as the project genre, review of the literature on instructional strategies and educational platforms, the project description, potential resources and existing support, potential barriers and solutions, proposal for implementation and timetable, roles and responsibilities, project evaluation plan, and project implications. Section 4 is the final section of the project

study. In section 4, I reflected on the project study. The section included a discussion of project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternatives approaches, scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change, reflection on importance of the work, implications, applications, and directions for future research, and conclusion.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine how middle school ELA teachers implement instructional strategies to assist struggling students in online environments to improve comprehension. Teachers' experiences with implementing instructional strategies as well as insights regarding what strategies have a positive impact on students' comprehension abilities were used to address how to proceed with a curriculum plan. I learned about instructional strategies teachers implement and how educational platforms are incorporated into instructional activities for students. Data from the study can be valuable to stakeholders to ensure educational needs of students are being met in online environments through implementation of instructional strategies to improve comprehension. In Section 4, I evaluate strengths and limitations of the project, make recommendations for alternative approaches, explain scholarship, project development, and evaluation, describe leadership and change, reflect on the importance of work, and provide recommendations for continuing research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

This qualitative study provided an opportunity to better understand how middle school teachers implement instructional strategies to teach comprehension skills to struggling readers in online environments. Data for the project were grounded in the literature review in Section 3. The project study has been designed to address the problem of teaching struggling readers comprehension skills in online environments. While most participants are experienced ELA teachers, a few were new to the profession and

expressed concerns about being inexperienced with teaching in an online environment. The project provides research-based strategies teachers can implement with their current instructional classroom practices to assist students with strengthening their comprehension abilities. Various online educational platforms were also identified that can be used to give struggling students additional practice. This project provides a list of research-based instructional strategies and online educational platforms teachers can use as a resource throughout the course of the school year to teach comprehension skills. Participants will have to work diligently to ensure students are taught effectively using instructional strategies to teach comprehension skills. Novice teachers may need training from administrators regarding how to implement instructional strategies. Limited funding and time constraints may be barriers that hinder teachers from receiving proper training. In order to properly train teachers, administrators can include training sessions in teachers' PLCs. Teachers will be able to receive training during regularly scheduled work hours. Training during PLCs will alleviate use of any additional funds and cut down on teachers having to give up additional time to receive training. Overall, the project supports the school and district's goal of increasing reading proficiency of students.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This study did not involve evaluating individual instructional strategies to determine which are most likely to be successful in terms of delivery of online reading comprehension skills. An evaluation of instructional strategies that are implemented with fidelity in all ELA courses by a committee of ELA teachers would be one alternative approach. Other effective instructional strategies may be found that may not appear on

the curriculum plan teachers use as a resource. Another alternative approach would be to bring in an instructional strategies consultant to work specifically with ELA teachers. The consultant would be able to work with teachers on specific instructional strategies that cater to comprehension skills, model lessons for teachers, and create lessons to meet learning needs of all students. The challenge of this approach would be finding financial resources to recruit an instructional strategies consultant to work with teachers.

Scholarship

Conducting a qualitative study was a challenge. I found that there are many steps in the research process. While conducting this study, I found myself identifying a problem, creating research questions, and selecting a framework to drive the process of data collection. I had to determine how data would be gathered and analyzed. Learning how to analyze data, interpret and transcribe interview transcripts was enlightening. Use of QDA Miner software to analyze data was beneficial because it enabled easy recognition of codes, theme, and patterns in collected data. QDA Miner proved to be an effective resource during the data analysis process because it provided various ways to organize and manage inputted data, color code themes, graph features of codes, and compare and contrast qualitative statements and themes.

Quantitative data were not appropriate for the study; thus, a qualitative design was implemented. The qualitative design was more appropriate to address the problem due to the type of data gathered during the project study. Completing a qualitative study was a task in terms of reflecting on the problem and gaining a more in-depth understanding of patterns of responses gathered from participants during the interview process. I learned

through the interview process to listen carefully to participants and keep my opinions and emotions out of the study. This helped to reduce bias in terms of data collection from participants during the interview process. I also found that transcribing interviews right after conducting them helped to organize data more efficiently because discussions and responses were clearer and easier to recall. Finally, I learned that being organized and keeping documents in order helped me to maintain a system and follow a timeframe for completion.

Project Development and Evaluation

A description of the project was given, and realistic goals were set. An appropriate genre and scholarly rationale were provided. Through the data collection and analysis process, findings of the study were analyzed. A rationale was provided to address a specific problem. Then, I conducted an extensive review of literature to gather up-to-date research to support the project study and guide recommendations. I found research on the topics of new literacies, instructional strategies, and online educational platforms. I considered potential participants, resources, data collection methods, and potential barriers. I was conscious of the school schedule at the beginning of the project study and had to make changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of conducting in-person interviews, interviews had to be conducted virtually, and other data had to be collected electronically from participants. I also considered challenges in terms of developing this project based on the process of implementation and time needed to complete it. I designed a curriculum plan for the project study that can be used as a resource with the district's current curriculum pacing guide. I found this process required

consideration of current instructional practices of teachers, time needed for implementation of the project study, and benefits to stakeholders in the school district.

Leadership and Change

Conducting this project study has helped me to see the need for change in the educational process. Over the course of this study, I developed a passion for scholarly leadership and change. Throughout my teaching experience, I have held several roles of leadership where I was responsible for leading students and various organizations such as Girl Scouts and National Junior Beta Club. Currently, I am in a leadership role where I mentor novice teachers who are getting their start in the educational realm. I found that I enjoy working with the teachers helping them to develop their crafts in becoming effective educators. Being a positive and proactive leader will help to create a change in the way the students are educated which will lead to academic success.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Conducting this project study has opened my mindset a little more about the educational process. I learned somethings about myself and increased my wealth of knowledge through the process. I learned at a young age that I have a love for reading that blossomed into a passion for teaching and educating children. For some time now, I have been in search of ways to get students interested in reading. I have found that many of them do like to read but in some way may have a difficult time reading and comprehending what was read which made them lose interest. Through the course of my teaching career, I have encountered many students who have come to me struggling with reading and reading way below grade level. Working with those students fed my desire of

wanting to learn more about teaching them how to read to help them close their reading gaps. Working on this project study helped me to see that I am a life-long learner because I am always seeking ways to increase my base of knowledge so that I can help the students.

It was important to have a system in place while conducting this project study. Keeping documents and resources organized enabled me to keep up with data. Whenever I needed a particular piece of data, I was able to place a finger on it. To keep my peer-reviewed articles organized, I used various colored bins for the different topics related to the project study. I also kept my recorded interview recordings in a labeled folder on a flashdrive which enabled me to quickly locate the participants' responses during data analysis. Having an organization system in place helped me to stay within the timeframe I had set for specific tasks during the study. Setting goals to reach by a specific date is very important because the time can pass so quickly especially while working full-time.

I also learned that researching can become exhausting and overwhelming. During the course of the study, I encountered writer's block. I had to put the researching, reading, and writing aside to enable my mind to rest. Even when I wanted to write, I could not get my thoughts together. My writer's block lasted for various periods of time, but once it passed, I was able to approach the study with a clear mind and finalize my thoughts in writing. As I continued to analyze findings and research materials to develop the project study, I saw the importance of instructional strategies and how classroom instructional practices can strengthen or hinder a student's academic performance. Through the use of effective evidence-based instructional strategies, students will be able

to master standards which will have a positive impact on instructional practices of the school as well as the district. I also learned through my participants' responses that they too are concerned about the students' comprehension abilities. The compassion the participants had for the education of their students gave me encouragement that what teachers do are not done in vain. I feel confident in the participants' capabilities of teaching comprehension skills to the struggling readers through the implementation of research-based instructional strategies.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study contains work that has significance and relevance for the education of the students today. Students have to be prepared to compete in society when they enter the world. Reading and comprehension abilities are essential because both are key components in building the students' base of knowledge. Whether text is printed or digital, Students need to be able to read and comprehend what they have read. Teachers play a major role in preparing the students to enter society. Having proper training, teaching experience, and instructional strategies will enable teachers to prepare all students.

When conducting a project study, researchers will have barriers or obstacles to overcome. The implications of methodology were physical on-site space availability for conducting in-person interviews and internet access for some participants due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews for the project study were conducted via the internet using a communication platform. Through the interviews for this project study, I learned that the participants love what they do as educators and have a passion

for teaching ELA. I was not surprised that some of the participants missed having one-on-one in-person interactions with their students, due to COVID-19. The participants also noted that they have become emotional, because they did not know if they were truly making a difference in a virtual setting.

In order to generate significant changes in the students' reading proficiency levels, the project will take 3 or more years. The long term implications of success for this project would be measured improvements in the students' reading levels based on results from state assessments. By enhancing the classroom practices in ELA, the students' comprehension abilities should improve and increase their overall reading achievements.

The implications for social change were corresponding improvements of instructional practice of ELA teachers through implementation of instructional strategies and improvements in student's comprehension abilities in online environments. As noted earlier, teaching struggling readers how to use comprehension strategies in online environments can have a positive impact on the students' learning experiences. Overall, improving struggling readers' comprehension abilities will enable them to become better readers which can lead to academic success.

The recommendations for future practice are the district should establish a team of ELA teachers from each school to review evidence-based strategies and monitor existing instructional strategies implemented with classroom instructional practices throughout the district to see which are most successful in improving student achievement. District leaders and administrators should work with lower elementary ELA teachers to ensure

that similar instructional strategies are incorporated into instructional classroom practices daily. Ongoing teacher collaboration and networking can be beneficial for the teachers' instructional practices because the teachers will be able to gain insight about specific instructional strategies and how the strategies can enhance the teachers' craft and the students' comprehension abilities. By implementing similar instructional strategies in lower and upper grade levels, the teachers will be able to give students a regular routine of using the strategies when reading text; the students will know which strategy to use when reading various types of text. District leaders, administrators, and other stakeholders will see the benefit of having research-based instructional strategies in place for instructional purposes; teachers will be able to cater instructional practices to meet the learning needs of all students.

Conclusion

Working to close the proficiency gaps among struggling readers is a critical goal to change the students' academic success. Achieving this goal could have a positive impact and improve the lives of all stakeholders in the district. To accomplish the goal, all stakeholders have to be on board and fully support the educational process. The board members, administrators, and parents should have knowledge of the various instructional strategies that are implemented by teachers in ELA classroom instructional practices. Also, teachers have to be willing to collaborate with other ELA teachers to ensure instructional strategies are being implemented with fidelity, and students are able to comprehend the text using the comprehension strategies. The district will not see immediate success because this cannot be fixed overnight, but over time and through

sustained implementation, the district will see positive impacts. Working with the comprehension strategies on a regular basis will have a positive impact on the comprehension abilities of the students which will help to increase their reading proficiency.

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Appendix A: The Project

ELA Curriculum Plan

Learning to read is one of life's most important achievements. A student's success in reading comprehension enhances learning in all subject areas, helps create a love of learning, and paves the way for future economic success and a rewarding life. Therefore, as educators, we must commit to ensure that all children can read and comprehend. All teachers contribute to a vision for students' comprehension. Competent, caring, and committed teachers create the conditions for learning.

Vision

To assure quality for all children, all teachers receive a foundational knowledge about comprehension learning and the latest research findings about learning. The principal ensures high quality instruction supported by strong comprehension frameworks. This includes the opportunity for peer coaching, classroom visitations, and video reviews. Parents and/or guardians play a major role in comprehension as well. Parents and/or guardians read to their child, provide a variety of enriching experiences, and value and encourage the importance of homework.

Goals

It is the goal of the General City Schools ELA Curriculum Plan to implement the developmental, accelerated, and preventative reading program requirements that will help ensure that students can read on grade level and to diagnose and accelerate comprehension performance of all students. The goals of the curriculum plan are to enable teachers to:

- Align instruction to the standards and emphasize the commitment to teach children, not books.
- Collaborate from class to class, grade to grade, school to school, and home to school.
- Engage students and allow time on task that is critical.
- Teach reading in a manner which reflects quality evidence-base instructional strategies.
- Assess regularly to plan for instruction and intervention to ensure that students demonstrate progress toward mastering the standards.
- Ensure that students will read fluently at grade level.
- Offer appropriate intervention and remediation services as needed.
- Teach strategies for reading complex content area texts.
- Improve performance in ELA on district, state, and federally mandated tests.
- Implement the writing process in the classroom, emphasizing writing applications and conventions.

A balanced approach combining language and literature-rich activities develops proficiency in reading and writing. In order to implement this plan the district must provide staff focused on effective comprehension instruction at all grade levels. Staff development will focus on evidence-based instructional strategies and a balanced/comprehensive approach to reading comprehension.

A consensus on the research from the 2020 National Reading Panel Report presents several key findings about text comprehension instruction strategies:

- Comprehension monitoring – Students learn to monitor how well they comprehend.
- Cooperative learning – Students learn to focus and discuss reading materials. Students learn reading comprehension strategies and do better on comprehension tests.
- Graphic organizer – Students improve memory and comprehension for text.
- Prior knowledge – Students improve memory and comprehension for text.
- Questions answering – Students improve answering questions.
- Questions generating – Students learn to generate and answer inferential questions.
- Story structure – Students improve memory and identification of story structure.
- Summarization -- Students improve memory and identification of main ideas.
- Vocabulary-comprehension relationship -- Students learn word meanings and improve comprehension.

Curriculum Plan

Subject: English Language Arts

Standard Number	Standard	New Literacy Skill(s)	Research-based Instructional Strategies
RL 7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Communicating information	• **Activating**: priming the cognitive pump" in order to recall relevant prior knowledge and experiences from long-term memory in order to extract and construct meaning from text. • **Inferring**: bringing together what is spoken (written) in the text, what is unspoken (unwritten) in the text, and what is already known by the reader in order to extract and construct meaning from the text. • **Monitoring-Clarifying**: thinking about how and what one is reading, both during and after the act of reading, for purposes of determining if one is comprehending the text combined with the ability to clarify and fix up any mix-ups. • **Questioning**: engaging in learning dialogues with text (authors), peers, and teachers through self-questioning, question generation, and question answering. • **Searching-Selecting**: searching a variety of sources in order to select appropriate information to answer questions, define words and terms, clarify misunderstandings, solve problems, or gather information.
RL 7.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an accurate summary of the text.	• Locating information • Synthesizing information • Communicating information	
RL 7.3	Analyze how particular elements of a literary text interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).	• Evaluating information • Identifying questions	
RL 7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choice (e.g., alliteration) on meaning and tone.	• Identifying questions • Locating information • Communicating information	
RL 7.5	Analyze how a drama or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.	• Evaluating information	
RL 7.6	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.	• Evaluating information • Communicating information	

			• **Summarizing**: restating the meaning of text in one's own words—different words from those used in the original text. • **Visualizing-Organizing**: constructing a mental image or graphic organizer for the purpose of extracting and constructing meaning from the text. • **Think aloud**: reflecting on one's behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes regarding what have been read and speak thoughts aloud while responding to questions. • **Context Clues**: using words surrounding and unknown word to determine its meaning. • **Drawing Conclusions**: using written or visual clues to figure out something that is not directing stated in the reading. • **Evaluating**: encouraging the reader to form opinions, make judgements, and develop ideas from reading. • **Predicting**: guessing what will happen next through Think-Pair-Share. • **Rereading**: giving the reader another chance to make sense out of a challenging text. • **Restating**: Retelling, shortening, or summarizing the meaning of a passage or chapter, either orally or in written form.
RL 7.7	Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Communicating information	
RL 7.8	Not applicable		
RL 7.9	Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Synthesizing information	
RL 7.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6- 8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	• All Literacy Skills	

			• **Setting a purpose**: providing focus for the reader by having students read directions for a reading task and list the requirements. • **Skimming**: used to get a quick "gist" of a section or chapter. • **Scanning**: reading quickly to locate specific information
RI 7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Communicating information	**REST Method** • R-read two different sources about a topic and record ideas. • E-edit notes and combine concepts that are similar. • S-synthesize by combining notes with what you already know about the topic. • T-think about your new ideas and connect them to what you already know. **RACES Strategy** • Restate the question • Answer the question • Cite evidence • Explain and elaborate • Sum it up **UNRAVEL Strategy** • Underline the tile • Now predict what the passage is about • Run through the passage and number the paragraphs
RI 7.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an accurate summary of the text based upon this analysis.	• Locating information • Synthesizing information • Communicating information	
RI 7.3	Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).	• Identifying questions' • Evaluating information	
RI 7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.	• Identifying questions • Locating information • Communicating information	

RI 7.5	Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.	• Evaluating information	• Are you reading the questions and circling important words • Venture through the passage • Eliminate wrong answers • Let someone know where you found the answer **UNWRAP READING STRATEGY** • Underline the Title • Number the Paragraphs • Walk through the Questions • Read the Passages 2 times • Answer the Questions • Prove your Answers with Ps (paragraphs) & Qs (questions **ADD Method** • A-what the student already knows about the topic. • D-what the student learned during the reading on the same topic. • D-what the student learned during the discussion of the topic. **Online Website Resources** www.kahoot.it www.quizziz.com www.nearpod.com www.peardeck.com www.whiteboardchat.com www.youtube.com www.edpuzzle.com www.commonlit.org www.newsela.com
RI 7.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.	• Evaluating information • Communicating information	
RI 7.7	Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Communicating information	
RI 7.8	Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.	• Locating information • Evaluating information • Synthesizing information • Communicating information	
RI 7.9	Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.	• Locating information • Synthesizing information • Communicating information	
RI 7.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding	• All Literacy Skills	

	as needed at the high end of the range.		www.sites.google.com (graphic organizers)

Instruction

The district will adopt common reading material for all grade levels.

- ☆ Collaboration within/between grade levels and schools needs to occur.
- ☆ Teachers will have necessary materials to support teaching the state academic standards.
- ☆ Teachers will maintain a record of student progress through individual folder.

Key Component/Strategies	Administrative Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
1. The district had adopted and provided a common reading program for all grade levels. The board adopted program is to be utilized in the regular education classrooms. (Special Education teachers may need to use different materials or programs to meet the needs of their students.)	1. Support and monitor the teaching of the scope and sequence of the adopted curriculum series. 2. Engage teachers in curriculum conversations. 3. Check instructional folder regularly.	1. State indicators for each grade level are to be taught. 2. Use the adopted curriculum as the main reading program, scope and sequence to be followed. 3. Limit use of worksheets; student generated authentic work is expected.	On-going	1. Formative assessments based upon the common reading program 2. Achievement, diagnostic test scores, and standardized test scores. 3. Observation during administrative walk-throughs
2. Accelerated Reader will be used to promote independent reading and book selection. AR will not supplant reading instructions.	1. Assist in acquisition of books, tests, and STAR tests.	1. Use AR as independent reading material. 2. No grades are to be taken from AR. 3. Librarians will maintain an appropriate AR collection of tests within budgeting considerations.	On-going	1. Informal notes and AR reading data.
3. Literacy/Bookrooms	1. Assist in space, time, and organization to maintain the literacy/bookroom. 2. Use available funds to add to the literacy/bookroom.	1. Title I and classroom teachers will maintain bookrooms and inventory. 2. Title I and classroom teachers will	On-going	1. Inventory maintained 2. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 3. Observations

	3. Highly encourage teachers to use books in guided reading groups at all grade levels. 4. Add magazine subscriptions to increase number of upper level articles for students.	assist in ordering materials. 3. Classroom teachers will use and return books appropriately to the bookroom. 4. Title I teachers will in-service teachers on use of literacy/bookroom and available technology to find materials.		
4. Supplemental instruction programs will be analyzed and redefined to insure they support the district reading plan and employ instructional strategies identified in research.	1. Director of Curriculum, principals, and a committee of teachers will review programs.	1. Use district-supported materials	on-going	1. Lesson plans/walk-throughs
Instruction will be comprehensive and balanced. ☆ Data will be collected and used to drive instruction. ☆ A strong systematic phonics component taught in a meaningful context will be included in each classroom. ☆ Word attack skills, sight words, using context clues, structural analysis cues, and reading strategies will be taught. ☆ Vocabulary development will be intense and meaningful. ☆ Comprehension skills and strategies will be explicitly taught. ☆ Fluent reading will be promoted in all grade levels. ☆ Technology will be implemented in classroom instructions. ☆ Writing skills will be taught including writing process, spelling, grammar, and handwriting, Mississippi Academic Indicators will be taught for each grade level.				
1. Each school will use the district-adopted language arts program as a resource to teach	1. Administrators will ensure teachers' adequate and thoughtful planning.	1. Assess, plan, teach, assess, and then adjust and remediate. 2. Participate in on-going	On-going	1. State/Federal mandated tests 2. Lesson plans/walk-throughs

state mandated standards.	2. Support and monitor. 3. Check instructional plan folders regularly.	professional development. 3. New teaches to the district will receive training at teacher orientation.		3. Observations
2. Phonics instruction will be taught as articulated in the district-adopted reading series.	1. Observe and check lesson plans.	1. Literacy time will include the teaching of the phonics scope and sequence found in the reading series. 2. Include more phonics work in small groups as found necessary by assessments.	On-going	1. Assessments 2. Lesson plans/walk-throughs
3. All teachers will incorporate writing instruction, writing process, writing applications, and writing conventions in ELA and across all content areas.	1. Support and monitor. 2. Use staff meetings to encourage discussion across grade levels and examine writing samples.	1. Write in all content areas. 2. Encourage students in authentic writing tasks. 3. Keep a writing portfolio or collection of samples. 4. Support students in the different stages of the writing process by conferencing individually and in small groups. 5. Participate in on-going professional development.	On-going	1. Student writing samples 2. Mandated district, state and federal tests

4. All teachers will demonstrate a conscious and on-going effort to systematically teach word study. (Methods such as: word walls, word sorts, reference aids, anchor charts, and visuals will be used to teach vocabulary).	1. Support and monitor. 2. Help provide materials.	1. Assess, plan, teach assess, and then adjust and remediate in whole and small group. 2. Use a variety of hands-on materials. 3. Participate in on-going professional development. 4. Teach vocabulary directly and indirectly.	On-going	1. Mandated district, state, and federal tests. 2. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 3. Observations
5. Instruction in comprehension strategies will include background, meaning structure, and graphophonics.	1. Support, monitor, and observe the teachers using verbal prompts and scaffolding.	1. Explicitly teach these strategies. 2. Assess and use small group intervention as needed.	On-going	1. Running records
6. Comprehension strategies will be taught in order for students to: self-monitor comprehension, use visualization, be able to answer higher level questions, generate questions, recognize text structure, use reference skills, make inferences and summarize (key ideas).	1. The district will provide professional development on comprehension strategies. 2. Understand reading instruction. 3. Support, monitor, and observe.	2. Explicitly teach these strategies, directly explaining the strategy, modeling it for the student, give guided practice with the strategy, give repeated opportunities to apply and use these strategies as they work through test.	On-going	1. Informal tests (i.e. short answer response, retelling, graphic aids) 2. Mandated district, state, and federal tests
7. Fluency needs to be explicitly taught by repeated, monitored, and reading practice.	1. Encourage and monitor 2. Provide professional development opportunities for	1. Provide students with a fluid model of what the text sounds like.	On-going	1. Observations 2. Informal assessments 3. Words per minute from

	fluency instruction for teachers.	2. Give students many opportunities to read the same instructional passage orally. 3. Demonstrate the need to adjust fluency with the genre and purpose for reading.		running record assessments.
8. A wide variety of texts will be used for reading instruction.	1. Encourage teachers to use a wide variety of materials.	1. Use of reading series. 2. Use of bookroom (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, etc.) 3. Library materials 4. Magazines, etc.	On-going	1. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 2. Observations
9. All teachers will demonstrate a conscious and on-going effort to systematically implement technology. (Methods such as: laptops, smartphones, tablets, white boards, eno-boards, online platforms, etc.).	1. Support and monitor. 2. Help provide materials and devices.	1. Use a variety of technological resources. 2. Participate in on-going professional development	On-going	1. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 2. Observations
10. The Mississippi ELA Standards will be the standards used for student outcomes.	1. Ensure all teachers have a copy of the MS State Standards and follow the district standards calendar.	1. Teach grade-level indicators following the standards calendar.	On-going	1. Diagnostic tests and achievement test results
Each school/classroom will set aside "uninterrupted time" for the teaching of ELA. ☆ A time goal will be 90 minutes daily of uninterrupted, organized time for all grade levels. Reading and writing, working with words, and explicit skill instruction will occur during this time period.				

☆ ELA skills and themes developed during this reading/writing time will be extended throughout the day into other content areas.				
1. Schools will review schedules to identify and remove any obstacles to an ELA block.	1. Facilitate uninterrupted time. 2. Monitor and observe time management.	1. Be aware of time management and engaged time on task.	On-going	1. Schedules 2. Observations
2. Teachers will plan for extensions of reading/writing in each content area.	1. Observe 2. Allow common team and vertical planning time	1. Teach reading and writing across the curriculum. 2. Team members will share instructional goals and objectives with each other.	On-going	1. Observations 2. Lesson plans 3. Team meetings attendance
3. Schools will refrain/limit from scheduling "special" exceptions that conflict with the ELA block.	1. Value ELA block schedules.	1. Keep ELA block schedules free of interruptions.	On-going	1. School schedules and newsletters
4. In buildings with Title I funds, the Title I teacher will focus on instruction as determined by build instructional needs.	1. Review grade level data. 2. Discuss scheduling needs with the Title I teachers.	1. Weekly team planning with Title I teachers and classroom teachers.	On-going	1. Schedules

Assessment

All schools will implement an on-going ELA assessment plan, including formative and summative measures. All teachers will use assessments to plan appropriate intervention strategies.

- ☆ The district will monitor success of each school's reading/writing program through summative data. When indicators show students are not making adequate progress, administration will meet with principals and staff to ensure needed changes. Summative testing will include Federal, state, and district mandated tests.
- ☆ School and classroom on-going formative assessments will drive instructional decisions. Assessments will include the following: writing samples, phonemic awareness assessment, running records, ELA benchmarks, and reading intervention tests.
- ☆ Intervention will include the teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies.
- ☆ A folder will be maintained for all students with their formative assessments tests.

Key Component/Strategies	Administrative Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
1. Federal and state mandated tests: Achievement tests and diagnostic tests	1. Review and analyze the test results 2. Share and discuss the data. 3. Provide lists to the teachers of students who are below grade level.	1. Use data to guide and alter instruction as needed for students 2. Use the list identifying the below grade-level students for making intervention plans. 3. Include parents in forming intervention plans.	As noted on assessment district calendar	1. Building grade-level strengths and weaknesses, according to the data, will be reported and used as part of the intervention plan.
2. District mandated tests: benchmarks and diagnostics.	1. Test results will be reviewed and analyzed by the district. 2. The data will be shared	1. Meet as grade level and vertical teams to analyze data. 2. Use the data to guide and alter instruction.	As noted on district assessment calendar	1. Informal notes and AR reading data.

	and discussed with building principals and staff.			
3. Collection of writing samples quarterly.	1. The principals will monitor and support. 2. The principals and teachers will meet, analyze writing samples, and male interventio n plans.	1. Meet and analyze the writing samples. 2. Plan interventions needed by individuals or small groups 3. Maintain the student's folder/portfolio	As noted on district assessment calendar	1. Student folder/portfolio
4. Administration of district benchmark and diagnostic tests.	1. The principals will support and monitor.	1. Administer and interpret the results as noted on the assessment chart to guide instruction and intervention.	As noted on district assessment calendar	1. District calendar
5. STAR Accelerated Reading Tests	1. The principals and librarians will support the use of AR.	1. Provide time for the STAR tests to be given and assist students in using the results in book selection.	As noted on district assessment calendar	1. AR reports and STAR tests results

***All staff, including learning strategists, resource teachers, and interventionists are to provide differentiated instruction based on formative and summative assessment data.**

Intervention

All staff, including learning strategists, resource teachers, and interventionists, will provide differentiated instruction based on formative and summative data. This differentiation will include those needing remediation and those needing enrichment activities.

- ☆ Staff will analyze data on an on-going basis to monitor student progress to assure intervention or enrichment is appropriate and successful.
- ☆ Schools will develop and use flexible delivery models to meet student needs.
- ☆ Instructional plans will include short-term and long-term goals for students.
- ☆ Intervention students will need additional assessments to help plan instruction.

Key Component/Strategies	Administrative Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
1. Flexible skill(s) groups	1. Principals will discuss with teachers periodically the rationale for their groupings. 2. Observations of flexible instructional groupings.	1. Use assessment tools to frequently restructure skill groups.	On-going	1. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 2. Student gains on informal and formal tests.
1. Learning strategist, interventionist, and resource teachers conference weekly.	1. Principals will monitor and support.	1. The team will discuss diagnostic tools and student progress in planning weekly instruction.	On-going	1. Lesson plans/walk-throughs 2. Student's data record sheet
2. Additional instructional time in small groups for those students who are below grade level.	1. Principals will be aware of the students that are hard to accelerate and offer support.	1. Using data, the team will add additional small group time for students below grade level so they have extra instruction as needed. This	On-going	1. Student/teacher records 2. Assessment data

		could be a small group or 1:1.		
3. Phonemic awareness support and intervention	1. Support the Speech Pathologists in sharing classroom strategies	1. Teachers will team with the speech pathologists for some of the phonemic awareness activities. 2. Teachers will incorporate phonemic awareness activities in their lessons.	On-going	1. Student gains 2. Informal assessments 3. Lesson plans/walk-throughs
4. Phonics instruction will be included as part of the intervention plan.	1. District will provide staff development in phonics instructions as needed by teachers. 2. Principals will support and monitor.	1. Identify student weaknesses in phonics using informal assessments.	On-going	1. Student records 2. Assessment results
5. Before/after school tutoring as finances allow.	1. Provide tutors and location.	1. Refer students that could benefit from additional support. 2. Keep tutors informed of students' needs and progress.	On-going	1. Tutor and volunteer records 2. Student gains

Professional Development

All teachers, administrators, and district staff will participate in staff development emphasizing evidence-based instructional practices in ELA instruction.

- ☆ A district-coordinated program of staff development will ensure each teacher access to needed information.
- ☆ District and school administration and teachers will become readers of current research and children's literature. Program decisions will result from this reading and discussion.
- ☆ Staff development will include an on-going component of demonstration teaching provided by district personnel.
- ☆ Use of district personnel with reading expertise to provide in-service and classroom support.

Key Component/Strategies	Administrative Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
1. Continue the implementation of the curriculum plan.	1. Walk-throughs, evaluations, and professional conversations to ensure the curriculum plan is being implemented. 2. Administrators will wee that new personnel will be trained.	1. Attend professional development opportunities, read, and keep current with research best instructional strategies. 2. Implement curriculum plan in classrooms.	On-going	1. Attendance sign-in sheets 2. Schedules 3. Lesson plans 4. Observations
2. Demonstration of teaching and/or class visitations may be scheduled throughout the year.	1. Schedule and encourage teachers to observe other classrooms and use peer coaching.	1. Volunteer and take advantage of opportunities to peer coach and observe. 2. Try strategies and ideas observed in other classrooms.	On-going	1. Schedules 2. Observations
3. Learning strategist, resource teachers, and interventionist will work with	1. Offer staff meeting time for learning strategists, resource teachers, and	1. Analyze the formative assessments and use it to guide instruction.	On-going	1. Observations 2. Attendance sign-in sheets

general education teachers and administrators in administrating and analyzing assessment data.	interventionist to work with general education teachers. 2. Support and encourage.			
4. Take part in the district and state offered reading and writing professional development.	1. Encourage staff attendance at the workshops.	1. Attend workshops if possible. 2. Incorporate learned skills and knowledge in teaching.	On-going	1. Registration confirmation 2. Attendance sign-in sheets
5. To be data driven, teachers will receive in-services on interpreting data.	1. District and building level administrators will support and help with providing data. 2. Principals will provide staff meeting time to read and analyze data.	1. Plan instruction based on data from formative and summative assessments.	On-going	1. Attendance sign-in sheets 2. Observations and assessments 3. Lesson plans
6. Staff development opportunities will be offered in research-based instructional practices.	1. Buildings will assess needs, choose from district-approved topics and speakers, and schedule professional development for staff meetings.	1. Attend and implement instructional strategies.	On-going	1. Attendance sign-in sheets 2. Observations and assessments 3. Lesson plans
7. Administrators and teachers will engage in study groups to read and discuss current research.	1. Principals will encourage and facilitate discussions.	1. Read and participate	On-going	1. Attendance sign-in sheets

8. Encourage professional memberships.	1. Provide information about personal and building memberships and professional magazines.	1. Consider memberships and read journals provided.	On-going	1. Materials available in libraries and teacher workrooms

Parental Involvement

Schools will assist parents in becoming active partners with their schools to support their students' comprehension growth.

- ☆ Schools will be a resource for parents to help their student become a better reader.
- ☆ Teachers will share timely, meaningful information with parents about their child's progress.
- ☆ Parents will support the school instructional program by participation activities, meetings, communication, and assignments regarding their child's progress.

Key Component/Strategies	Administrative Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Timeline	Evaluation
1. Schools will have a plan to encourage and track student's independent reading.	1. Plan, as a school staff, the consistent tracking of independent reading. 2. Encourage parents to take an active role in reading with their child nightly.	1. Encourage and provide time and materials for nightly reading. 2. Discuss with parents the need for nightly reading.	On-going	1. Tracking sheets
2. Schools will disseminate information in regards to comprehension to all parents.	1. Obtain comprehension information and have available to teachers and parents.	1. Assist in dissemination information and locating information.	On-going	1. Examples of information
3. Schools will communicate student progress to parents on a regular basis.	1. Actively communicate with parents.	1. Use clear and regular communication tools to keep parents informed.	On-going	1. Examples of student progress communications, such as report cards, letters, interim reports, phone calls, etc.
4. Schools will initiate support to parents who have children reading below grade level. Support could include materials, information, extra	1. Encourage and support teachers in making contact with parents. 2. Communicate community resources	1. Provide necessary remediation ideas and support materials as possible.	On-going	1. Examples of support materials

instructional time, special programs options, etc.	providing support to parents.			
5. Schools will provide parent information sessions	1. Schedule parental meetings. 2. Provide speakers and resources for parental meetings.	1. Support and encourage parents to attend parental meetings.	On-going	1. Agendas 2. Attendance sign-in sheets
6. Schools will actively recruit parents to participate in all school/home activities	1. Actively communicate and recruit parents.	1. Help in recruitment of parents.	On-going	1. Lists of parents participating in school/home activities.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How do you use technology to teach basic reading processes?

2. Tell me about any specific instructional strategies you use to teach reading comprehension.

3. Are there any specific types of digital devices used in class? Please explain.

   ____ Laptops ____ Tablets _____ I-pads

   ____ Smartphones ____ Other(s) _____

4. How do students use digital devices for reading assignments in online environments?

5. What specific instructional strategies do you use to teach reading comprehension in online environments?

6. Which instructional strategies used had the most influence on your students' progress and why?

7. What types of instructional activities do you use to ensure that the struggling readers master the standards in online environments?

8. Leu's new literacies online skills include strategies such as identifying important questions. Can you tell me how you use identifying important questions to teach comprehension in an online environment?

   _____

   Can you tell me how you use locating information to teach comprehension in an online environment?

   _____

   Can you tell me how you use evaluating information to teach comprehension in an online environment?

   _____

Can you tell me how you use synthesizing information to teach comprehension in an online environment?

_____

Can you tell me how you use communicating information to teach comprehension in an online environment?

_____

9. How has technology changed the way you assess reading in online environments?

10. Tell me about your students' progress (especially your struggling readers) in your class this year and how instructional strategies played into the growth or lack of growth that you observed.

11. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make regarding using instructional strategies in online environments to enhance comprehension?

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Form

Teacher: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Subject: _____ Grade: _____

Literacy Skill	DESCRIPTOR
Identifying important questions	Teacher used a variety of instructional practices to teach how to identify important questions.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
	Teacher used Leu's new literacies online reading comprehension skills throughout the lesson.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
Locating information	Teacher used technology to model to students how to locate information in an online environment.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
	Teacher used online instructional strategies that are different from traditional reading strategies to assist struggling readers.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
Evaluating information	Teacher ensured the students are engaged in the lesson using instructional strategies to evaluate information.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
	Teacher used instructional strategies to teach students how to evaluate online text for accuracy, reliability, and bias.
□ Yes	Comment(s):

□ No □ Not certain	
Synthesizing information	Teacher ensured that the activity is appropriate for the students using the multiple sources.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
	Teachers ensured the students are engaged in the activities while synthesizing the text.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):
Communicating information	Teacher modeled how to use online tools to communicate information.
□ Yes □ No □ Not certain	Comment(s):

Appendix D: Letter of Approval

July 17, 2020

Dear Institutional Review Board at Walden University:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Carla Smith permission to conduct the research titled *Understanding Middle School Teachers' Use of Instructional Practices for Online Reading Comprehension* within the Holmes County Consolidated School District. Ms. Smith has permission to recruit teachers employed within this school district to be participants in her study. She also has permission to ask participants to complete a questionnaire. This also serves as assurance that this school district complies with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

James L. Henderson, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

313 Olive Street Lexington, MS 39095 662.834.2175 holmesccsd.org

Appendix E: A Priori List of Codes

Code	**Conceptual Framework Category**
Using technology to read	Identifying Questions
Using technology to solve problems	Identifying Questions
Identifying information	Locating Information
Technology integration	Locating Information
Critically evaluating information	Evaluating Information
Use of multiple sources	Synthesizing Information
Text interactions	Synthesizing Information
Online tools	Communicating Information

Appendix F: Data Coding Sheet

Participant Number	**Question**
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
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Appendix G: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Peer Debriefer:

During the course of my activity in acting as a peer reviewer for this research: "Middle School Teachers Use of Instructional Strategies for Supporting Online Comprehension" I will have access to data that is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the data must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:

Date: