


2015

The myON'Reader Program and Reading Proficiency Among High School Students

Tommie Kuykendall
Walden University

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Tommie Kuykendall

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Dr. Alia Sheety, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Anja Zwingenberger, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

The myON[®] Reader Program and Reading Proficiency Among High School Students

by

Tommie Gail Kuykendall

MS, New Mexico State University, 1998

BBA, New Mexico State University, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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June 2015

Abstract

In the United States, educators have struggled with low student achievement in reading proficiency, which affects student success in school and leads to higher dropout rates. To address low reading proficiency scores, a local charter high school implemented the myON[®] reader program. The myON reader program is an electronic library that allows students to choose their own reading based on their reading level and interest. The program tracks students' reading habits and level of reading, so teachers can determine students' progress. Guided by self-directed learning and social constructivism, the purpose of this study was to review available data to determine if the program increased students' reading assessment scores. This study used a mixed-methods design and 3 sets of data: a reading assessment (n = 39), the myON[®] reader program itself (n = 39), and a semi-structured interview (n = 2). A paired-samples *t* test determined a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest data in assessments of students using the myON[®] reader program. Pearson's correlation coefficient determined a statistically significant correlation between the difference in the reading test scores and hours the students read, as well as a statistically significant correlation between reading test scores and Lexile level of reading. Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted to determine the teachers' opinions of the program providing additional data for triangulation. The interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded to determine common themes. The positive social change implications included the improvement of student reading ability at the local charter high school, which over time will develop students better prepared for success.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of my wonderful mother, whom I lost to breast cancer 20 years ago. She made me who I am today, and she always told me that I would be a professional student. I believe she may have been correct. I love and miss you, Mom.

Also, I want to dedicate this to my husband for his love and support as I worked through this endeavor. Last, but not least, to all of my fantastic family and friends out there that encouraged me at times of doubt and for just listening to my whining, in general, thank you!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Research has shown that low reading scores coincide with low scores in other subjects in school and contribute to high school dropout rates (Hernandez, 2011; Hurst, Franklin, & Scales, 2010; Schimke, 2011). In a report from the Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University researchers discussed the long-term implications of low reading achievement on students as they leave school and move into society (Gifford, Evans, Berlin, & Bai, 2011). The study showed such individuals had a lower earning potential, which affects productivity in the workplace as well as global competitiveness for the United States (Gifford et al., 2011).

In 2007, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that 26% of United States students in eighth-grade were not reading at a basic proficiency level (Fitzgerald, Kaffar, & Miller, 2008). New Mexico has a large population of people with English as their second language (ESL), creating a challenge in the area of reading proficiency. Apparently, these are not the only students struggling with this problem. The staff of ABC Charter High School, located in central New Mexico, found through standardized testing that the incoming freshmen had below-proficient reading scores and that the problem continued through graduation (ABC Charter High School principal, personal communication, August 17, 2012). Based on the assessment data and an evaluation of reading levels at their school, the staff decided to focus on implementing a reading program to improve reading levels.

The ABC Charter High School staff looked at several reading programs to determine which would work best for its curriculum and school charter. They conducted research on several products and finally decided to purchase and implement a new reading program called myON[®] reader, a Capstone Digital product. The program provides a large online library from which students choose. The reading materials come in the form of books, publications, and other types of documents to read. myON[®], in conjunction with the teacher, creates a reading program based on the student's interest and reading level. It further allows the teacher to map a program that will encourage the students to challenge themselves and foster the movement towards reading proficiency (Sanford-Moore, 2013). The school staff is also working with the parents to encourage their participation in the myON[®] reader program at home by providing access to the entire household. The teachers and administrators believe if the student and his or her parents work together in this endeavor, reading behaviors will change and learning will take place. The scope of the current study was to investigate whether the students using the myON[®] reader program increased their reading proficiency score at ABC Charter High School in New Mexico.

Section 1 will include a detailed definition of the problem both locally and nationally. I have gathered data from publically available resources, which includes data specific to ABC Charter High School, the state, and the nation.

The NAEP (2013) provided a common metric to evaluate schools across the nation, making it an excellent resource for current and historical data for reading proficiency in the United States. The NAEP is managed by the National Center for

Education Statistics as part of the United States Department of Education and is the largest continuous assessment of how students are doing in American schools (NAEP, 2013). Consequently, I used this source extensively to compare New Mexico student performance against other states to determine where the state stood. The reading proficiency data for several years for New Mexico has been evaluated to see if there were any apparent trends.

Definition of the Problem

Based on the charter school's investigation of the reading assessment data, the school administration and staff knew there was a problem with students' below-proficiency reading levels throughout their high school years. These low scores are what led the school staff to focus on improving students' reading proficiency. As the staff began looking into programs that would fit their population, they ran into some unforeseen challenges. One in particular was that the student population of the charter school came from all areas of the city, and there was a lack of specific reading program data on these particular students. Subsequently, the teachers and administrators decided to look at programs that fit these criteria: computer access, home use, and tracking of reading habits and data, which fits into the current academic structure of the charter school. As a result, they implemented the myON® reader program.

The program was implemented at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year for ninth through 12th grades. The principal asked me to examine the impact of the program on reading achievement at ABC Charter High School (See Appendix B). This examination was completed by reviewing data obtained from the program and their

corresponding assessment data to determine if there were any significant changes in reading scores and for the participating students. This insight will help the school staff determine if they should stay on the same path or look for some other program or approach to improve reading proficiency. The data showed an overall improvement in reading proficiency so the educators at the local school may decide to keep using it and may want look into conducting a more in-depth study. Teachers and administrators would like to look more specifically on which populations had a higher level of success over others and what signs they might have missed during the school year that would have indicated the student was struggling.

Rationale

Research has shown that across the United States students have not been reading at proficient levels, and, based on this, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate was implemented to require schools to improve students reading and achieve proficiency (Lee, 2006). The mandate set the requirement that all students would be reading at proficient levels by 2014 (Lee, 2006). The ABC Charter High School principal and staff had determined, based on incoming freshmen assessment data and the NCLB mandate, that they wanted to implement a program that would focus on improving students' reading proficiency. Figure 3 shows the trend in ABC Charter High School's students reading proficiency over the last few years, which illustrates the fact that less than 50% of their students were considered reading at proficient levels. The figure also shows that there has been an overall decrease in reading proficiency levels since 2007-2008. This led

to the staff choosing the myON[®] reader program as a tool to help improve reading proficiency.

The rationale for this research was to determine whether students participating in the myON[®] reader program saw improvement in their reading proficiency. At the time of data collection, it was the program's second year of implementation at the local charter school, and the charter school staff would like to review the data in order to determine if they should stay on the same path or look for something else. Along with this, a review of the national and local data helped support and justify the school's focus on reading as the data showed the problem across the United States.

In the following sections, I provide a review of the evidence of the local problem using statistics from New Mexico as well as publically available information about the charter school itself. Then I provide information about the problem on a national scale, showing that it is not only a local problem but a problem for the United States as a whole. This review will give support as to what motivated the ABC Charter High School staff to take action concerning reading and in turn this study.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In order to evaluate student reading proficiency, New Mexico uses a standards-based assessment (SBA) to measure a student's level of mastery of the standards and benchmarks set by the state. The assessment is given in Grades 3 through 8, H2 (which is usually 10th grade, and H3 (which is usually 11th grade; New Mexico Public Education Department [NMPED], (NMPED, 2013)). In addition to this assessment, as required by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 (NMPED, 2013b), schools

must administer the New Mexico Alternative Performance Assessment (NMAPA), which is an assessment that is given to individuals with disabilities. For the purposes of this study, I only used the SBA because at the time of this research the school in question did not have any students that were required to take the NMAPA.

The SBA data showed that New Mexico schools were struggling with adequate yearly progress (AYP) status in all subjects, and reading was no exception (NMPED, 2013a). Table 1 shows the AYP results for all subjects in the last 5 years for the state of New Mexico. These data showed a negative trend. There was a lower percentage of schools making AYP in 2011 than were in 2007.

Table 1

State of New Mexico School Adequate Yearly Progress—5 Years

Status	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Made AYP	45.5%	32.3%	31.8%	23.3%	13.6%
Did Not Make AYP	54.5%	67.7%	68.2%	76.7%	86.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note. From “New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data,” by NMPED, 2013a, retrieved from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>

When looking at just reading proficiency, Figure 1 shows the same downward trend. In 2011, there were 96 school districts across the state of New Mexico, and only 10% of these districts met AYP status in reading (NMPED, 2013a). There were approximately 46 school districts, or 48%, that were considered progressing. The remaining were rated at corrective action 1 and 2 (NMPED, 2013a), meaning over 50% of schools were in a state of corrective action in order to achieve AYP. The Albuquerque School District went from 60% proficiency in 2007 to 47% in 2011 (NMPED, 2013a).

These data illustrate the importance of working on reading proficiency in the New Mexico schools.

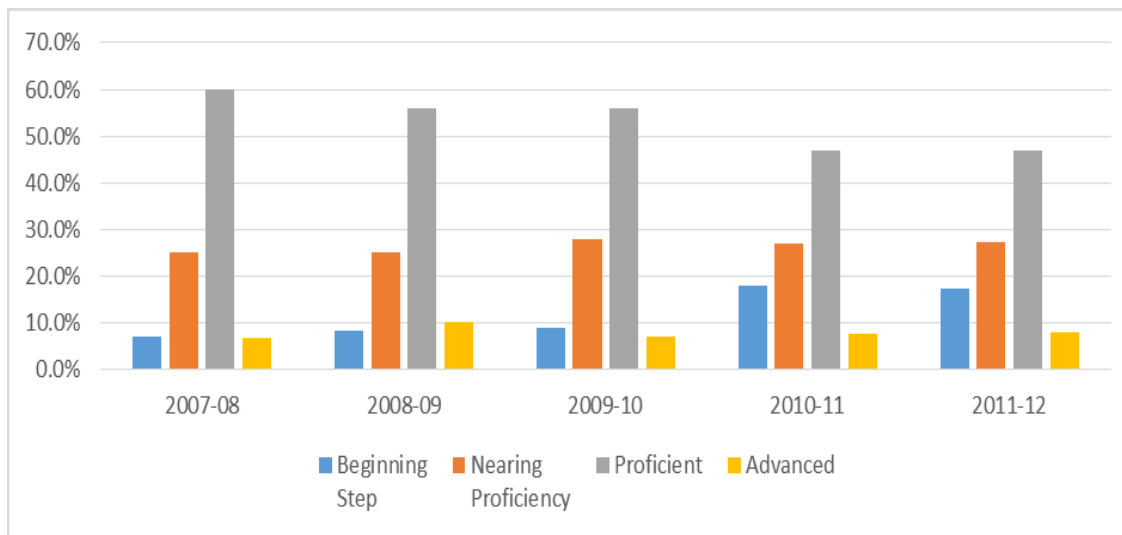


Figure 1. State of New Mexico reading proficiency 2007-2011. From “New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data,” by NMPED, 2013a, retrieved from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>.

The ABC Charter High School staff have been seeing a similar trend in reading at their school. Figure 2 shows the downward trend in the number of New Mexico charter school students reading at proficient and above between the years 2008 and 2012. These data were what motivated the staff to look at some type of reading intervention and led to the myON[®] reader program being chosen.

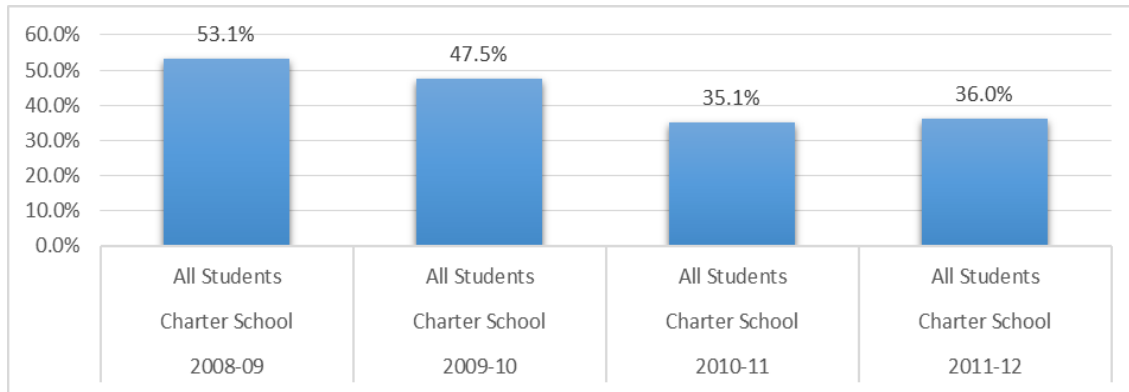


Figure 2. Charter school students reading at or above proficient 2008-2012. From “New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data,” by NMPED, 2013a, retrieved from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>.

The data in Figure 2 reflected all of the charter schools in the State of New Mexico. This figure shows a clear trend downward from 2008-2009 school year. Figure 3 shows the trend in reading proficiency at ABC Charter High School. Aside from a rise in the 2009-2010 school year, most recently there appeared to be a slowdown in the improvement in student reading proficiency. The data from Figures 2 and 3 were in part what influenced the principal and staff’s focus on reading improvement.

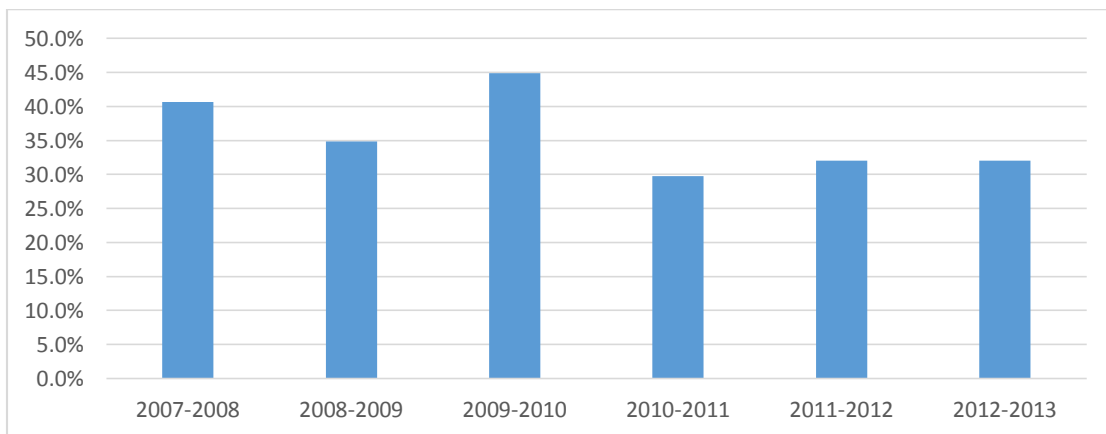


Figure 3. ABC Charter High School reading proficiency 2007-2013. From “New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data,” by NMPED, 2013a, retrieved from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The problem of low reading proficiency in schools is not an isolated problem, but one that educators have seen across the country, as illustrated in Table 2. In fact, it prompted the NCLB mandate to have all students reading at or above proficiency level by 2014 (Lee, 2006). Unfortunately, the national data by state presented in Table 2 did not support achievement of this requirement. As Table 2 illustrates, there were no schools that reached the average achievement level of *proficient*, which is defined as a score of 281-323 (NMPED, 2013a). The highest average score was shared by three states—Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut at 275—which would still require a 2.2% change to achieve average proficiency (NMPED, 2013a). The table shows that in a 5-year period, the highest increase in average scores was 2.86% and only 16 states had an improvement of 2% or higher (NMPED, 2013a). In fact, there were six states that had decreasing average scores: Maine, Kansas, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), South Dakota, Oregon, and Iowa (NMPED, 2013a).

Table 2

Average Eighth Grade Reading Achievement Levels by State

State	2007 Scale Score	2011 Scale Score	Change in Scale	% Change
Massachusetts	273	275	2.08	0.76%
New Jersey	270	275	5.04	1.87%
Connecticut	267	275	7.63	2.86%
Vermont	273	274	0.80	0.29%
Montana	271	273	1.94	0.71%
DoDEA	273	272	-0.34	-0.13%
New Hampshire	270	272	2.34	0.87%
Maryland	265	271	5.98	2.26%
Colorado	266	271	4.23	1.59%
Minnesota	268	270	1.95	0.73%
Maine	270	270	-0.05	-0.02%
Wyoming	266	270	3.34	1.26%
South Dakota	270	269	-0.66	-0.24%
Kentucky	262	269	6.87	2.62%
North Dakota	268	269	0.68	0.25%
Ohio	268	268	0.30	0.11%
Idaho	265	268	3.13	1.18%
Pennsylvania	268	268	0.08	0.03%
Nebraska	267	268	0.67	0.25%
Washington	265	268	2.63	0.99%
Kansas	267	267	-0.08	-0.03%
Virginia	267	267	0.39	0.15%
Wisconsin	264	267	2.98	1.13%
Utah	262	267	4.86	1.85%
Missouri	263	267	3.32	1.26%
Delaware	265	266	1.29	0.49%
New York	264	266	2.15	0.82%
Illinois	263	266	2.82	1.07%
Michigan	260	265	4.88	1.87%
Rhode Island	258	265	6.80	2.63%
Indiana	264	265	0.63	0.24%
Iowa	267	265	-2.90	-1.08%
Oregon	266	264	-1.48	-0.56%
National public	261	264	2.58	0.99%
North Carolina	259	263	3.79	1.46%
Georgia	259	262	3.65	1.41%
Florida	260	262	2.33	0.90%
Texas	261	261	0.62	0.24%
Alaska	259	261	2.49	0.96%
South Carolina	257	260	2.89	1.12%
Arizona	255	260	5.32	2.09%
Oklahoma	260	260	0.57	0.22%
Tennessee	259	259	0.05	0.02%
Arkansas	258	259	1.18	0.46%
Alabama	252	258	6.48	2.57%
Nevada	252	258	5.84	2.32%
Hawaii	251	257	5.86	2.33%
West Virginia	255	256	1.11	0.43%
New Mexico	251	256	5.11	2.04%
California	251	255	3.65	1.45%
Louisiana	253	255	1.45	0.57%
Mississippi	250	254	3.77	1.51%

Note. Achievement levels are graded from 200-500 and proficient is defined as a score between 281-323 (NAEP, 2013). Adapted from “NAEP State Comparisons,” by NAEP. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/Default.aspx?usrSelections=1%2cRED%2c0%2c2%2c0%2c0%2c0%2c0>

Figure 4 shows the trend data of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds from 2004 to 2012. The figure shows a very slight gain in 9- and 13-year-olds, yet 17-year-olds showed a troubling decrease in reading skills (NAEP, 2012). Other NAEP (2012) data showed a trend of gains among the lower performing students, but there was a long way to go to reach the intended NCLB goal of all students being proficient in reading.

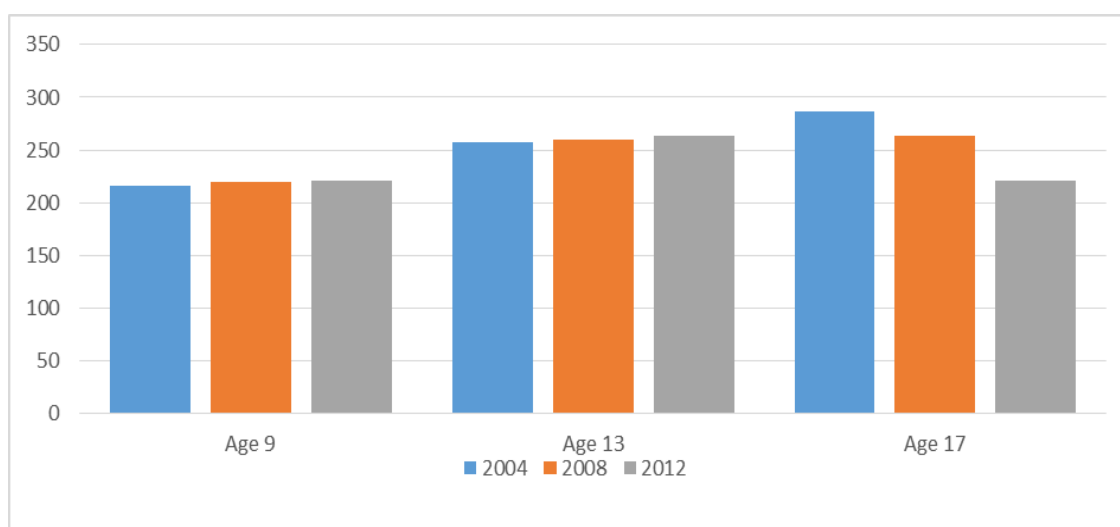


Figure 4. 2004-2012 trend in NAEP reading average scores. From “Trends in Academic Progress,” by NAEP, 2013, retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/main2012/pdf/2013456.pdf>.

The data illustrated in the previous section clearly showed a problem with student reading proficiency. With the clear failure of reaching the NCLB mandate in 2014 and an evaluation of their own students’ assessment data, ABC Charter High School has made it a priority to work on student reading proficiency levels. The following sections will go into more detail about the program the school is using to improve student reading proficiency.

Definitions

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) These are standards set by the states in order to make sure schools move towards the goal of 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014, which is a requirement of the NCLB mandate (Gill et al., 2009).

Charter school: A charter school is a public school under a specific charter granted by the state legislature or any other appropriate authority to eligible students (Keaton, 2012).

Literacy: A term used to refer to reading, writing, and other types of symbolic communication working together for understanding (Alvermann, 2002).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): A federal educational mandate created in 2001 that requires states put into place standards, assessments, and accountability efforts to ensure all students reach proficiency in reading and mathematics by 2014 (Gill et al., 2009).

Proficiency: The advancement in knowledge or skills in a subject area (Proficiency, n.d.)

Summative evaluation: The evaluating of data to determine the success or failure of a program that has been implemented (Lodico, Spaulding, Dean, & Voegtle, 2006).

Significance

myON[®] reader, a Capstone Digital product, is an online library that makes many types of reading materials available to teachers, students, and their parents (Sanford-Moore, 2013). As the researcher, I explored whether the program had any significant effect on reading scores for the students that participated. The concept was to be an impartial reviewer of the data in order to determine if the program should continue. If the

school decides to keep the program, a further in-depth quantitative study will be conducted by the school. An in-depth study will allow them to determine more specific strengths and weaknesses of the program, enabling them to focus their efforts on achieving even more success.

There are many reasons why reading at a proficient level is important in high school. For example, below proficiency reading scores accompany lower scores in other subjects in school as well as contribute to dropout rates (Boling & Evans, 2008; Hurst et al., 2010; Schimke, 2011). In a Chicago school district, researchers found that dropout rates varied from high school to high school (Hess, Lauber, & Chicago Panel on Public School Finances, 1985). A closer look found that of these schools the lowest dropout rates were at schools with the highest reading scores (Hess et al., 1985). A high percentage of students at the ABC Charter High School, New Mexico, entered the school with a low reading proficiency level. To improve reading proficiency levels, the school implemented the myON[®] reader program in the 2012-2013 school year. The school administration wanted to evaluate the program in order to determine if the students had gained any benefit from it.

The issues associated with low reading scores mentioned above point to the significance of reading not only for the individual's success but the success of the community at large. Due to these concerns, the NCLB mandate required that all students be reading at or above proficiency level by 2014 (Lee, 2006). This mandate was another motivation for the charter school staff's focus on improving reading proficiency.

There has been a lack of research studies on reading in high schools, making the study not only valuable for this charter school, but also other high schools that are considering a new reading program. It will not be easily transferable, but it will be an additional piece of information that a school could use in their determination of what might work for their situation, especially schools with a similar curriculum model as ABC Charter High School.

Research Questions

The data represented earlier in this study showed the difficulties that students were having at reaching reading proficiency in high schools across the country. These data were one of the reasons that the NCLB mandate placed such a high importance on reading proficiency in all schools in the United States. Unfortunately, based on the data, the deadline for reaching this goal has come and gone without being reached. Based on the data presented earlier in Figure 3, the ABC Charter High School staff have seen the same shortcomings in reading in their incoming freshmen and implemented a new reading program that it hoped will help the students make gains in their reading abilities.

When ABC Charter High School staff began to look into programs to implement, they found that it was difficult to find studies or programs that were specifically for high schools. I found the same lack of studies and research in this area as well. They finally settled on a program that matched up with the curriculum structure of the school and had broad availability outside the classroom.

The ABC Charter High School in New Mexico has implemented a reading program called myON[®] reader in order to assist students in improving their reading

proficiency. The staff at the school wanted to know if there was any improvement in student reading assessor results based on their participation and use of the program. Also, I wanted to know if there was a change in attitude towards reading and school in general based on teacher perceptions.

The four guiding questions for this study were as follows:

1. How significant was the difference in pretest and posttest reading achievement data of those students using the myON[®] reader program?
2. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading proficiency levels and quantity of reading students are engaged in at ABC Charter High School that used the myON[®] reader program?
3. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading material level of difficulty and students' reading proficiency levels of those students that used the myON[®] reader program?
4. What differences, if any, have teachers observed in students' attitudes, confidence, motivation or any other factor among the participants in the myON[®] reader program?

The teachers and administrators at the charter school found that students were testing below grade level on their reading assessments. These low reading assessments were what led to the implementation of the myON[®] reader program. Now that the program has been in effect for the last 2 school years (2012-2014), the data from the students' pretest and posttest assessments could be evaluated to determine if there was improved proficiency. In addition to looking at these data, I interviewed the teachers to

find out their perceptions of the program and if they witnessed any changes in students' attitudes, confidence, and motivation when it came to reading. Also, I inquired whether the teachers noticed students' attitude change towards school as a whole as their reading improved.

Review of the Literature

In the literature review, the definition of reading proficiency and the role of kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) reading programs were explored. The myON[®] reader program was researched in greater depth by reviewing the methods used by the program to improve reading. The myON[®] methods include the Lexile measure, self-selected reading, and the use of technology in and out of the classroom.

In order to gain saturation in the review of literature, I used database searches such as the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), EBSCOhost, Sage Journals online, Google Scholar, Google, Dissertation Abstracts International, and Walden dissertations. I attempted to limit my searches to the last 5 years but found that difficult for some areas of the study due to lack of available research in certain areas of interest, such as high school reading programs. The keywords that I used most commonly were *reading, proficiency, literacy, myON[®], Lexile, reading instruction, reading programs, reading K-12, self-selected reading, and education technology*. As documents were reviewed, it was important also to refer to the references provided for additional guidance on sources. As these documents were reviewed, it became very apparent the importance of adequate reading skills for students to be successful in their lives and to become a part of society as a whole.

Theoretical Framework

This study was primarily grounded in the theory of self-directed learning (Garrison, 1997). Self-directed learning is a large piece of the myON[®] reader program's framework in that the program is dependent on students working on their own to improve their reading skills (Brekhus, 2011). However, this does not mean the student is acting completely alone or without support. There are many influences that affect his or her success in using a program such as self-directed learning. Much of this can be explained by using the social constructivism framework, which relies on students having support from either a teacher, a fellow student or another adult such as a parent (Deulen, 2013; Powell & Kalina, 2009). ABC Charter High School offered this type of support by following a student's progress and providing help when a student asked for help or when the data showed that they were struggling. The school also provided the opportunity for students to work with each other, and because the program could be used at home they could work with their parents or other adults in the household as well.

In the following paragraphs, I will give an overview of each of these frameworks and how they relate to the reading program being implemented. There will be an emphasis on the theory of self-directed learning as it was the most directly aligned with the myON[®] reader program itself (Brekhus, 2011). The social constructivism aligned more closely with the school curriculum design, which does factor into the study as well (Deulen, 2013; Powell & Kalina, 2009).

Self-directed learning. The myON[®] reader program was developed with the idea that if students have easy access to different types of reading, they will read more

(Brekhus, 2011). As part of this, the myON[®] reader program involves self-directed learning theory as part of its framework (Brekhus, 2011). The theoretical model that encompasses both of these elements is one developed by Garrison (1997). The Garrison model consists of three elements, all of which are found in the myON[®] reading program. These three intersecting elements are

- Self-management (task control) – This is the part of learning that is affected by external elements.
- Self-monitoring (cognitive responsibility) – This is the process of being responsible for one’s learning and adjusting strategies for successful learning.
- Motivation (entering and task) – This is the anticipated successes and perceived value of the exercise. (Garrison, 1997)

Self-management encompasses the idea that the student should have a choice in how he or she approaches learning, what materials he or she wants to refer to for learning, as well as goal management and collaboration opportunity (Garrison, 1997). Within the context of this study, the myON[®] reader program provided these elements in that it allowed the student to choose the pace at which he or she worked, to choose where he or she wanted to work, and to choose learning materials. Garrison (1997) said that self-management (task control) is “determined by balancing the factors of proficiency, resources, and interdependence” (p. 5). Proficiency refers to the skills of the learner. Resources refer to the availability of support and assistance for the student. Interdependence refers to the norms set by both the institution and the standards set that

include student integrity and choice. All of these elements are touched on through the myON[®] reader program (Brekhus, 2011).

Self-monitoring is the process of the student's taking responsibility for his or her learning (Garrison, 1997). The students' must monitor their progress and be able to take action to adjust and make changes where needed to continue the learning process (Garrison, 1997). The myON[®] reader program provides feedback for the student to review (Brekhus, 2011).

In the context of self-directed learning, motivation is an important piece of this model's success. Motivational factors are what mold and foster the students' intentions as well as encourage task involvement (Garrison, 1997). The perceived value and the belief that they can achieve success are two key factors that affect students' motivation. The myON[®] reader program allows the student access to many types of reading materials on a multitude of subjects, allowing them to choose reading subjects that are important to them (Brekhus, 2011; Sanford-Moore, 2013). The myON[®] program's Lexile scales allow the students to choose reading materials that fit within their reading ability leading them towards success (Sanford-Moore, 2013).

Social constructivism. Lev Vygotsky is considered the founder of what is called social constructivism (Deulen, 2013; Powell & Kalina, 2009). His theory of social constructivism came from his belief that social interactions were a key part of a student's learning process (Powell & Kalina, 2009). He felt that learning is affected not only by other individuals participating in that learning but also by the culture of the students'

household or community. In addition, he thought other social aspects that make up one individual's experiences factor to students' learning (Deulen, 2013).

Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (as cited in Deulen, 2013) is made up of three core concepts:

- Zone of actual development – This is the point at which a student is in their learning and achievement level.
- Zone of potential development – This is the level at which a student could or should be in their learning and achievement level.
- Zone of proximal development – This is the effort and assistance it would take to get the student from the zone of actual development to the zone of potential development.

The zone of proximal development is the piece where the teacher, peers, and other adults interact with the student in order to span the gap between the student's actual development and the student's reaching his or her potential development (Deulen, 2013). Vygotsky viewed the interaction between these groups (as cited in Deulen, 2013) as the point at which a student expands his or her learning. ABC Charter High School's curriculum is structured in a way that students are responsible for their own learning but have teachers, other students, and parents to work with them whenever needed. The myON[®] reader program collects data on the students reading habits and level of reading. The teachers and parents can check in on a student's progress by reviewing the data provided by the program. These data can help keep them informed about how the students are doing as well as when it may be appropriate for them to approach the

students struggling with or encourage them to push forward to more challenging tasks.

The parents can see how their child is doing as well on their reading and can give encouragement and assistance. The students also have the opportunity and freedom to collaborate with their peers.

What is Reading Proficiency?

In 2001, the NCLB mandated that all students should be reading at proficiency and that all schools make AYP by academic year 2013-2014 (Daggett, 2003; Lee, 2006). The NCLB mandate did not, however, define a specific measure or level for proficiency in reading. The mandate allows each state to define its own measure of what *advanced*, *proficient*, *basic*, and *minimal* mean. The freedom to choose the proficiency measure has led to much controversy. Some educators and administrators feel that some states are purposely setting low standards in order to make sure their schools are meeting the NCLB requirements (Lee, 2006).

A review of the data included in the document Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales produced by the NAEP, it became apparent that there may be some truth to the argument that states are aiming low (Bandeira de Mello, 2011; Fiester & Annie, 2010). As of 2011, not one state was at the level NAEP set as its definition of proficient for either fourth or eighth grades (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). In fact, for fourth grade only 12 states defined proficient at or above what the NAEP considered basic skill level (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). Tennessee had the lowest definition of what it considers proficiency and Massachusetts had the highest level; the difference between these two states was 64 points (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). The fact

that states have been measuring their students' reading success at different levels makes it difficult to measure how students in the United States are matching up state to state or against other countries.

The state of New Mexico listed a proficiency standard for both fourth and eighth grades that was closely aligned with the NAEP definition of proficient (New Mexico Standards Based Assessment, 2011; Bandeira de Mello, 2011). Based on this alignment, New Mexico was in the top 30% of states that had proficiency definitions equal to or above NAEP's definition of basic for fourth grade (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). As for eighth-grade proficiency levels, New Mexico lay in the middle just above NAEP's basic proficiency level (Bandeira de Mello, 2011). Table 3 illustrates New Mexico's definition of proficiency for several grade levels. For the purposes of this study, the definition shown for Grade 8 was used for this study.

Table 3

New Mexico SBA Secretary-Approved Cuts—Reading

Grade	Proficient Definition	Min	Max
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multiple comprehension strategies to understand author’s purpose, plot, and genres (fiction, poetry, non-fiction) • Acquire new vocabulary through decoding and context • Use personal experiences to connect to characters and events • Use inferences to draw conclusions • Retell stories with good organization • Find main ideas • Recognize similarities and differences between texts 	29	43
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and comprehend text proficiently • Know how to locate information • Use key words for research • Interpret maps, charts, and graphs • Use varied strategies to comprehend text and vocabulary • Recall, paraphrase, and sequence what they read • Evaluate fiction and non-fiction • Draw logical conclusions and demonstrate understanding of word choice and perspective • Understand basic plots and genres • Interpret character’s motives and actions, and justify and support their answers 	37	45
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehend text in order to determine author’s purpose • Analyze and summarize information • Distinguish fact and opinion • Make predictions • Make judgments about usefulness of information • Use personal experience to evaluate text • Identify and compare story details • Make connections among literary works • Understand concepts of research techniques and primary sources. 	33	42
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately identify literary elements • Summarize, make judgments, and draw conclusions • Identify bias, apparent messages, emotional factors, and persuasive techniques • Distinguish between primary and secondary sources. 	37	45
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze, state, and defend a judgment using reasons, examples, details and an organized structure based on an author’s perspective, theme, literary characteristics and devices of various texts. • Consistently use context and vocabulary to understand text • Recognize relationships among research topics. 	34	45
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify major literary genres, including classical literature and mythology • Explain how story structures, literary devices, and literary language convey meaning in texts including poetry • Evaluate the information and views in various texts to select appropriate support for persuasive writing or research. 	34	44
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain connections between author’s message and purpose, tone and bias • Accurately interpret information in various formats • Demonstrate understanding of genres and functions of literary elements • Analyze stylistic features 	37	46

Note. From “Standard Setting Report”, retrieved from <http://ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AssessmentEvaluation/d111/2011%20NM%20Standard%20Setting%20Report.pdf>

Defining reading proficiency across the country is an important part of making sure students in the United States are reading at a level that can facilitate success in their lives. The importance of strong reading skills has tremendous implications: decreased dropout rates, increased earning potential, and increased community involvement. The fact that there are no set levels across the country is troubling. Without a standard measure of proficiency, it is difficult for educators to know if they are providing our students what they need to be successful. New Mexico is ahead of other states because they have aligned the definition of reading proficiency more closely with the NAEP's proficiency levels making it easier to see where New Mexico stands as a community within the United States.

Reading K-12

The NAEP data make it clear that high school students are struggling with achieving reading proficiency. However, reading program research studies for middle and high school students are not in abundance. This lack of research led to Congress authorizing funding in 2006 and again in 2009, administered by the United States Department of Education, to strengthen programs and build scientific studies in this area (Schiller et al., 2012). Unfortunately, even with this funding effort, it was a challenge to find studies focusing on middle and high school reading proficiency and programs to improve proficiency. The reading score trends presented in Figure 3 illustrate the problem that middle and high school students are having with their reading. These data support the need for implementing reading programs in middle and high school as well as research of these programs. The research would help inform educators of successes and

failures in reading programs and allow them to make data-driven decisions when choosing a reading program for their school.

There are a lot of resources to refer to when looking at kindergarten through third grade (K-3). The reason appears to come from a change in focus on students reading as they move from third to fourth grade. In K-3, the reading programs are focused on teaching the student to read, and in the fourth grade teachers begin to shift focus to reading to learn. Meaning, after fourth grade there is not an emphasis on reading as a subject itself (Fiester & Annie, 2010; Goldman, 2012). Yet when you look at the districts that have implemented reading programs and literacy plans implemented kindergarten through 12th grade the data shows these districts have overall higher levels of success than those that have not (Daggett, 2003). Interestingly, there are not many schools choosing to follow this model.

Daggett's (2003) wrote in his article that most teachers would agree that not all students are at the same level within their classrooms yet they are all required to read the same materials. High school students with low reading proficiency have difficulty learning subject material. This practice could lead to lower comprehension, lower test scores, and less proficiency in not only reading but other subjects that require reading (Daggett, 2003).

There are many educators who believed that third grade is the magic grade for reading. One study that reviewed the graduation rate of those students who were not considered proficient in third grade found that the dropout rates were higher for those students (Hernandez, 2011). The report provided data that implies that if students are

already at proficient levels in third grade, they will progress in reading moving forward. However, this may not be the case as researchers begin to look at reading proficiency levels of students after third grade. They are finding that students may not maintain or even improve reading proficiency over time. The data reviewed is showing that students are becoming less proficient in reading as they move up through their years in school. In fact, Figure 3 shows a clear decrease in reading proficiency of 17-year-olds from 2004-2012 (NAEP, 2012).

The United States is ranked just above average in reading proficiency compared to other nations when looking at fourth graders (Thompson, 2012). In fact, of the 53 educational systems evaluated worldwide the United States was in the top 13 with five ranked higher, and the remaining eight considered equal to the United States (Thompson, 2012). Unfortunately, when you are looking at high school students, the results are even worse. The United States scores were in alignment with the average of all the nations in the study. There were six countries ranked higher but only 13 ranked lower and the rest of the schools, 14, were considered equal to the United States (Fleischman, 2010).

These study results show that, in the area of reading, the United States is not preparing its youth for college or the workforce in the area of reading. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research conducted in the area of reading for middle to high school students making it difficult to determine why or when the problem begins. The staff at ABC Charter High School clearly sees reading proficiency levels as a problem and has implemented a program to help its students improve in this area with the implementation of the myON[®] reader program.

myON[®] Reader Program

myON[®] is an electronic library with over 4,500 digital books and is growing (Sanford-Moore, 2013). The program includes an electronic dictionary as well as the ability to highlight within the books being read. It also includes professional development for the teachers and staff in order to prepare them to implement the program and foster success. The following section will look at the myON[®] reader program in more detail in order to provide an understanding of the methodologies and metrics being used within the program itself.

The myON[®] reader program aligns with the current structure of ABC Charter High School and its computer-based learning environment. The following explains the three elements of alignment. First, the school is a one room classroom where each student has a computer to work on coursework at their own pace, so it is very technology based. Second, students may access lessons at home allowing them to conduct additional work outside of the classroom. Third, as part of the schools model they require parents to participate in their child's education. Based on this model the parents are also allowed access to the myON[®] reader program so they can join in reading with their child as well as allowing them to monitor how their child is progressing. The myON[®] reader program provides the information the teacher, parent, and the student need to track and measure their progress in reading. It also allows the student to have access to reading outside of the classroom via online access and login. They are encouraged to read at home with their parents and siblings if possible, and this technology affords them that resource. myON[®]

reader tracks the program access at home giving teachers insight to the students reading inside and outside of the classroom.

The program can be used in conjunction with other teaching tools, lesson planning, assessments, and reporting. Reports can be generated from the program for an individual student, building, school, or district. A report can also be generated using the teacher as the reference point allowing teachers and staff to compare outcomes in different classes. There are many other ways to combine and look at the data to better gain knowledge on the program's success or failure while allowing the teacher to foster an individual student's growth in reading.

The myON[®] reader program uses Lexile Framework for Reading to ensure that students are reading at their achievement level. The concept is if you match students up with reading that is at their skill level, in this case the Lexile scale, they are more motivated to read and enjoy reading (Daggett, 2003). Lexile Framework also assists in the forecasting of future growth in a students' reading. The Lexile Framework will be discussed in more depth later in the study.

The principal at ABC Charter High School explained the process of how they setup a profile for each student that is using the myON[®] reader program (ABC Charter High School Principal, personal communication, August 17, 2012). The student is given an evaluation to determine Lexile level as well as a survey to determine their personal interest, which is also entered into their myON[®] profile. Once everything has been completed and entered into the computer adaptive system allows for the teacher and

student to access reading materials that are targeted for the student and within the range that is appropriate for that student, hence making it personalized.

In the following section, I will review the key elements that make up the myON[®] reader program from the literature:

1. Lexile Framework for Reading
2. Self-Selected Reading
3. Technology: Access and Metrics

Lexile Framework for Reading. The Lexile Framework for Reading, a MetaMetrics product, is a tool used to match readers with the appropriate reading materials for their skill level (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Sanford-Moore, 2013; Smith, 2012). This framework is made up of two measurement pieces: text difficulty and student ability, referred to as Lexile scale (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). The Lexile scale has been used to rank thousands of books, magazines and newspapers covering more than 450 publishers, providing many reading material options for teachers and students from which to choose (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). The students have also been given a Lexile scale number that matches the measurement of the books. By using this matching method students can find reading that fits within their reading level range and interests.

The Lexile scale for beginners starts at 200L with the most advanced at 1700L. Students and reading materials are given a number in between these two levels (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Sanford-Moore, 2013). The Lexile Analyzer Software evaluates a text by looking at the semantic and syntactic characteristics of the reading materials and assigns it a number between 200L and 1700L (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). The Lexile

Analyzer does this by breaking the text down into slices with each slice containing no less than 125 words. These are then evaluated by looking at the frequency of words and the length of the sentences. Once each of these slices has been evaluated and scored, they are then averaged together to come up with the final Lexile level for that piece of reading material (Lennon & Burdick, 2004).

There are several ways that students can be measured to determine their Lexile level of reading. Many of the standardized tests used by school districts report results using the Lexile Framework. If the Lexile is not available, there are other computerized assessments that can provide this measure for students (Lennon & Burdick, 2004). The New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment is one that provides its results in Lexiles (Smith, 2012). Once the teacher has the student's Lexile number, they can easily help the student choose books based on his or her reading level as well as his or her area of interest. By matching up students with the correct level of reading, the student may avoid being less interested and/or frustrated when reading. Research has shown that students that read at the wrong level can experience frustration that can affect motivation or lead them to quit reading altogether (Daggett, 2003).

Using the Lexile measurement does not restrict students from reading outside of their calculated Lexile. Students are encouraged to find reading that is within the readability range. The readability range is defined by 100L below and 50L above a student's Lexile level (Lennon & Burdick, 2004; Sanford-Moore, 2013). For example, if a student is given a Lexile of 900L they would be encouraged to read between 800L and 950L. The Lexile number assigned to the student predicts a 75% comprehension rate of a

book at that Lexile number (Sanford-Moore, 2013). As the student moves below or above their Lexile, the percentage of comprehension would go up or down with that reading level.

Self-selected reading. Self-selected reading is the process of allowing students to choose their reading materials based on their interest and desire to read for enjoyment (Paulson, 2006). Several articles that I reviewed discussed concerns about using self-selected reading. Some worry that students will choose books that are below their reading level or too easy, while others will choose the same book again and again, and others will choose reading above their level. These are good arguments yet there is not a sufficient amount of data that proves one way or the other that I could find. However, there was one common theme and common concern: are the students reading more, reading for enjoyment, reading for knowledge and which really matters (Johnson & Blair, 2003; Paulson, 2006)?

The goal of any reading program is to increase the student's reading proficiency levels, which includes an increase in comprehension when reading as well as fostering learning. As students read more, i.e. practice, they become more proficient in their reading skills (Krashen, 2006, 2009; Rasinski & Padak, 2011). In fact, Rasinski and Padak refer to earlier research, which they were a part of, that showed that students' independent reading led to increases in word recognition, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, language syntax, and motivation for reading (Rasinski & Padak, 2011).

Technology: Access and metrics. The charter school involved in this study is highly dependent on technology as part of their curriculum. The school is a one room

classroom with a curriculum based on computer-assisted instruction. The students work at their own pace, and the teachers monitor their progress through all of the exercises. By monitoring student's progress, the teacher can see when a student might be having issues and needs assistance. The teachers are in the classroom and students can ask for assistance at any time. The learning environment at ABC Charter High School requires students to be able to read as all of their assignments are provided via computer. This environment means that without proficient reading skills much may be lost in their efforts to learn. This learning environment was another reason the staff at the charter school were so passionate about improving student reading along with the belief that better reading make better students and adults. The myON[®] reader program is technology based and integrates into the current curriculum model being used at the school.

The myON[®] technology in this context allows students to work at their own pace while the teachers evaluate and monitor their progress. The technology also allows the teachers to monitor students' progress allowing them to know when students may need help or encouragement so that the students' progress (Sanford-Moore, 2013). This technology truly allows the teachers the ability to make data-driven decisions about a students' learning in real-time.

The myON[®] technology not only provides insight for the teacher but also for parents and students. The possibility for students to review their progress in reading helps them to become self-directed learners and pace their learning (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002). The feedback that the program provides encourages students to look at these assessments in a way that encourages growth in a positive way. In part, the data they see

is about themselves not how they compare to the rest of the class, eliminating the feeling of being a winner or a loser (Stiggins, 2006).

Another factor to consider is intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the internal portion of motivation based on one's interests, enjoyment, curiosity, and seeking out activities based on this motivation (Clinkenbeard, 2012; De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012). Through the myON[®] reader program, the students choose their reading materials based on their interests. This program allows students who are interested in cars to read materials that are focused on this topic such as the magazine Popular Mechanics or books focused on automotive history. In contrast, extrinsic motivation comes from external sources, which influences a students' actions because of a desired outcome, such as grades or a perceived need or importance (Clinkenbeard, 2012; De Naeghel et al., 2012). The myON[®] reader program provides the student with real time feedback on how he or she are progressing from an external point of view. Motivation is a key part of ABC Charter High Schools students' success as the foundation of their curriculum design which depends on students working at their own pace, with support, to get their assignments completed and progressing through the program.

Implications

The motivation for this study comes from the desire for ABC Charter High School to evaluate a reading program that has been put into place. This program, myON[®] reader, is a computer library that was made available to the students in order to encourage them to read on their own time. They can choose from a multitude of reading materials at

many different levels of difficulty and subject matter. The staff at the charter school would like to evaluate data generated from the myON[®] reader program as well as assessment data to determine if the program is making a difference.

The study will allow the staff at the ABC Charter High School to determine if they should change the way they are using the program in order to enhance and improve on what is already being done. An implication of this would be the staffs building of a strong reading program that they believe in and will, in the long run, motivate students to do better in this area. Another motivating factor for the staff was the desire to help students do better in other coursework as well as life when they leave school.

Summary

Section 1 of this doctoral study has provided the background of the reading proficiency problem nationally and locally which lead the school to implement a new reading program at ABC Charter High School. The rationale for working on this problem was gained by reviewing data provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics along with data from the website of the State of New Mexico Public Education Department. This section also provided definitions for many of the special terms used throughout the study. Also, an extensive literature review was conducted in areas that relate to reading proficiency and the context of the reading program being evaluated. The next section will cover the research methods that were used to evaluate the myON[®] reader program to determine its value to the students in improving their reading skills.

Section 2: The Methodology

Mixed Methods Research Design and Approach

Mixed methods research methodology was used to determine if there was a measurable change in student assessment data of those students who used the myON[®] reader program at ABC Charter High School for school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. For the purposes of this study, pretest and posttest quantitative assessment data were evaluated to determine if there was any change in reading proficiency rates from 2013 to 2014. The qualitative portion of this research was conducted through an in-person interview with each of the teachers who helped implement the myON[®] reader program. These data were gathered to gauge their opinions of the program; as well as any changes in student attitude, motivation, or other factors towards reading in general and in other coursework.

Mixed methods design is typically used when both quantitative and qualitative data are available and when used together they would make for a stronger study outcome (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research evaluates numerical data to summarize results, whereas qualitative researchers work with data that are more likely to be narrative or verbal in nature (Lodico et al., 2006). The combination of these two types of data gave me the opportunity to gain better insight as to whether the myON[®] program has been successful not only for student assessment, but for developing students' attitudes as well. This method allowed me to overcome the intrinsic weaknesses using quantitative and qualitative methods separately might have had (Creswell, 2012).

Justification for Using Mixed Methods Design and Approach

There was not an opportunity to manipulate the independent variable for this study, making the mixed methods with a non-experimental research design the best approach (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative assessment data were collected once a year, using the Read Fluency Benchmark Assessor, and was provided to myself for review. Also provided were data available from the myON[®] reading program on each student's reading activities throughout the year. The qualitative data were gathered through personal interviews with the teachers. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative data gave an in-depth understanding of the results and the benefits to the students.

Strategy for Data Collection

For the purposes of this study, I collected the data in an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The explanatory design is used when collecting quantitative data first and placing a priority on that data set when it comes to evaluation (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2006). The qualitative data were collected and analyzed after the quantitative data had been received and examined. Reviewing the quantitative data first allowed me to use the qualitative portion of the study to probe more deeply into results that were found in the quantitative part of the study (Creswell, 2012).

Forms of Data Collection

The quantitative data were obtained through regularly scheduled assessments, which are given at the beginning of each school calendar year. Other quantitative data were collected from the myON[®] reader program itself as it tracked students interactions

with the program. The qualitative data were obtained through a semi-structured interview that I conducted with the staff of ABC Charter High School.

Summative Evaluation

This study consisted of a summative evaluation of the myON[®] reader program that will be provided to the principal of the school at study completion. This information will allow the principal and school staff to determine if the program was having the desired effect for the students. Summative data are collected to measure an outcome of the implementation of a program, in this case myON[®] reader (Lodico et al., 2006). This type of data was used because its purpose was to determine if goals or benchmarks have been met by the end of the program year(s) (Lodico et al., 2006).

Setting and Sample

The charter school where I conducted the research was small, with 179 students in Grades 9 through 12. Of the 179 students, 39 had been using the myON[®] reader program regularly over the previous 2 years. This study will not be representative of the general population, so convenience sampling was used. All of the students' myON[®] reader viable program data were analyzed.

Data Collection

The first phase of the exploratory design was to gather the quantitative data and then follow up with the qualitative data (Lodico et al., 2006). The quantitative data were analyzed first in order to help guide the writing of the interview questions. This analysis made sure that any questions that arose in the review of the quantitative data could be elaborated on as part of the qualitative portion. The following will go into more detail of

what instruments I used to collect these data, what was measured, and how that measurement took place.

The quantitative data came from two sources: regularly scheduled Read Fluency Benchmark Assessor and the myON[®] reader program itself. The data received were only for students that used the myON[®] reader program throughout the year. Students that did not use the myON[®] program were removed from both the assessment and the myON[®] data being provided to me. The program provides data on individual students, entire classrooms, or schools. These assessments are conducted at the beginning of the school year. The myON[®] reader program tracks what the students read, at what level they are reading, frequency, and progress throughout the year.

The data from the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor and myON[®] program were made available to me via recordable removable media. The removable media was password protected, as was my computer, in order to prevent others from gaining access to the data. The identity of the subjects were not provided to me in order to maintain confidentiality. A key coding process was used to hide the identity of the subjects, which was done by the principal at the school prior to providing the data to me. I never had access to the key at any time in the process.

For the qualitative portion of the study, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the staff to get feedback on their perceptions of the program. Because the school was so small, all five of the teachers that interacted with the students during this period were asked to volunteer for an interview. Of the five asked, two agreed to participate in the interview but requested to be interviewed at the same time. The

motivation for the interview was to find out if they saw any changes in student attitude, motivation, and confidence towards reading as they used this program. A semi-structured interview has a set of questions to lead the interview but that do not dictate the conversation as it pertains to the study (Lodico et al., 2006). The interview protocol used can be found in the appendices (See Appendix C). In order to create the interview questions, I first made a list of questions I thought would get the information that I desired from the teachers. However, before the interviews were conducted, the quantitative data were reviewed to determine if there were any trends or themes that may have needed clarification or further insight when speaking with the staff. Based on this determination, the questions were adjusted where needed, which were minor. The interview protocol provided in Appendix C includes these changes and is what I used for the interview. The interviews were audio recorded to allow me to participate actively in the conversation more freely without the fear of missing important comments and information.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software were used to help with analysis of the data from both the assessor and the myON[®] reader program. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the data, which include central tendencies, variability, and relative standings (Table 4). These were used in order to determine the direction of the changes in the data provided by the assessor and the program for each student (Creswell, 2012). The goal was to gain insight into the myON[®] reader program and the perceived relationships

between students' use of the program and differences between their pretest and posttest data.

In order to interpret Table 4, please refer to the following bulleted list:

- Fall_2013 – The results of the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor for Fall 2013.
- Fall_2014 – The results of the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor for Fall 2014.
- Hours_Read – The number of hours the student spent reading over the one year period
- Diff_Accucess_Score – The difference between the Fall_2013 (pretest) and Fall_2014 (posttest) data
- Lexile_2013 – The Lexile or reading level the student was at when they first started using the program in 2013
- Lexile_2014 – The Lexile or reading level the student was at when they started the school year in 2014
- Lexile_Diff – The difference between Lexile_2013 and Lexile_2014
- Valid N – The sample size for this study

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fall_2013	39	3.72	12.00	9.5477	1.80261
Fall_2014	39	5.84	12.50	10.9391	1.42984
Diff_Accucess_Score	39	-3.91	5.30	.8454	2.07805
Hours_Read	39	12.00	64.00	34.8718	14.01912
Lexile_2013	39	410.00	1185.00	926.7949	167.89912
Lexile_2014	39	600.00	1300.00	974.2308	143.33223
Lexile_Diff	39	-45.00	200.00	47.4659	53.09961

Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics used for the study. There were 39 students that used the myON[®] reader program regularly, and these student's pretest and posttest assessment scores were evaluated. The students mean assessment scores between Fall_2013 and Fall_2014 increased by 1.39 points indicating there may have been an improvement over the year. This improvement is also indicated by the mean of the Diff_Accucess_Score, which is the difference between the pretest and posttest, had an increase of 0.8454. The mean reading level showed an increase between Lexile_2013 and Lexile_2014 as well with a positive change of 47.44 in students' Lexile score (reading level). The information provided in Table 4 does give an indication that there was an

overall positive trend in that the means were all positive. As for the standard deviation these numbers do not necessarily indicate a positive or negative outcome they do, however, give us an indication of how spread out the data is around the mean or average. In the case of this research study, it does not do much more than that.

The reading assessment tool being used, Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor, has gone through many years of validity testing and reviewed for test-retest reliability (Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor - Technical Information, 2009). The original passages used in this assessment tool were evaluated in Washington State between 1998-2000 in order to determine concurrent and predictive validity (Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor - Technical Information, 2009). These eventually became what are referred to as the anchor passages for all future versions. Field tests were also conducted in order to confirm that the passages were properly written for the grade level intended, which led to another set of reliability and validity test being conducted in the 2002-2003 school year in seven states (Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor - Technical Information, 2009). The Read Fluency Benchmark Assessor is a tool that is used to assess a student's fluency by providing three passages for each grade level 1-8 (Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor, 2009). The program uses three fiction and nonfiction passages for each grade level. The student reads these passages aloud and the teacher records errors during reading. These passages have been leveled using several readability formulas as well as extensive field testing. The field testing was conducted to check reliability and validity of each passage to ensure that they are providing results at the proper grade level (Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor, 2009). This instrument is both

a norm-referenced and self-referenced. I will assume that the data from this source are accurate and provide a strong view into any changes in student reading proficiency.

The Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor data and the myON[®] reader program data were provided to me by the principal at ABC Charter High School. Data use agreement can be found in Appendix D. In order to maintain anonymity, the names were removed and a unique code was assigned to each student, which carried throughout all of the quantitative data received. Once the relevant data were provided to me via Microsoft Excel, I transferred it into the SPSS program for evaluation.

Pretest and Posttest Analysis

In order to evaluate the significance of the changes between the pretest and posttest data, the paired-samples *t* test was used to address the research question 1. The paired-samples *t* test is often used to compare two groups that can be related. In this case, the participants are members of both groups of data being studied (Lodico et al., 2006). This case can also be referred to as a repeated measures design: pretest and posttest.

Research Question 1. How significant was the difference in pretest and posttest reading achievement data for those students using the myON[®] reader program? In order to answer this question, I compared the mean student scores from the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor pretest and posttest data to determine if there was a significant difference between the two. In order to determine this, a paired-samples *t* test was conducted to compare the pretest and posttest data. Table 5 shows the results of the *t*-test. The data showed, with a 95% confident level, that there was a significant difference between the pretest ($M = 9.55$, $SD = 1.80$) and posttest ($M = 10.94$, $SD = 1.43$)

conditions; $t(38) = -2.541, p = 0.001$) (Table 5). In other words, because the Sig. (2-Tailed) value is below .05 it can be concluded that a statistically significant difference exists between the pretest and posttest data. Meaning the students using the myON[®] reader program did increase their reading assessment scores at a significant level.

Table 5

Summary of Paired-Samples t Test Comparing Pretest and Posttest Data

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest-Posttest	-.84538	2.07805	.33275	-1.51901	-.17176	-2.541	38	.015

The quantitative data analysis of Questions 2 and 3 was conducted using the statistical test Pearson's correlation coefficient. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was used because there is only one independent variable being studied (Creswell, 2012). An independent variable is a change in an educational practice or approach with the expectation that it will affect an outcome (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2006). The myON[®] reader program is the independent variable in this study, as it is the educational program that was implemented with the goal of improving student reading proficiency. The correlational research strategy is used to find patterns or relationships between two or more sets of data (Creswell, 2012). This strategy allowed me to determine if there was a correlation between the pretest and posttest assessment as well as data received from the myON[®] reader program itself.

Research Question 2. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading proficiency levels and quantity of reading students were engaged in at ABC Charter High School that used the myON[®] reader program? To answer this questions, a Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine if there was a relationship between the hours the students spent using the myON[®] reader program and the difference between their pretest and posttest assessment data. This evaluation was accomplished using SPSS software.

Figure 5 scatterplot shows a general upward trend, which indicates that there is some level of positive correlation between the difference variables. Once this was determined, I began the process of investigating the numbers further. Table 6 shows the outcome of that investigation.

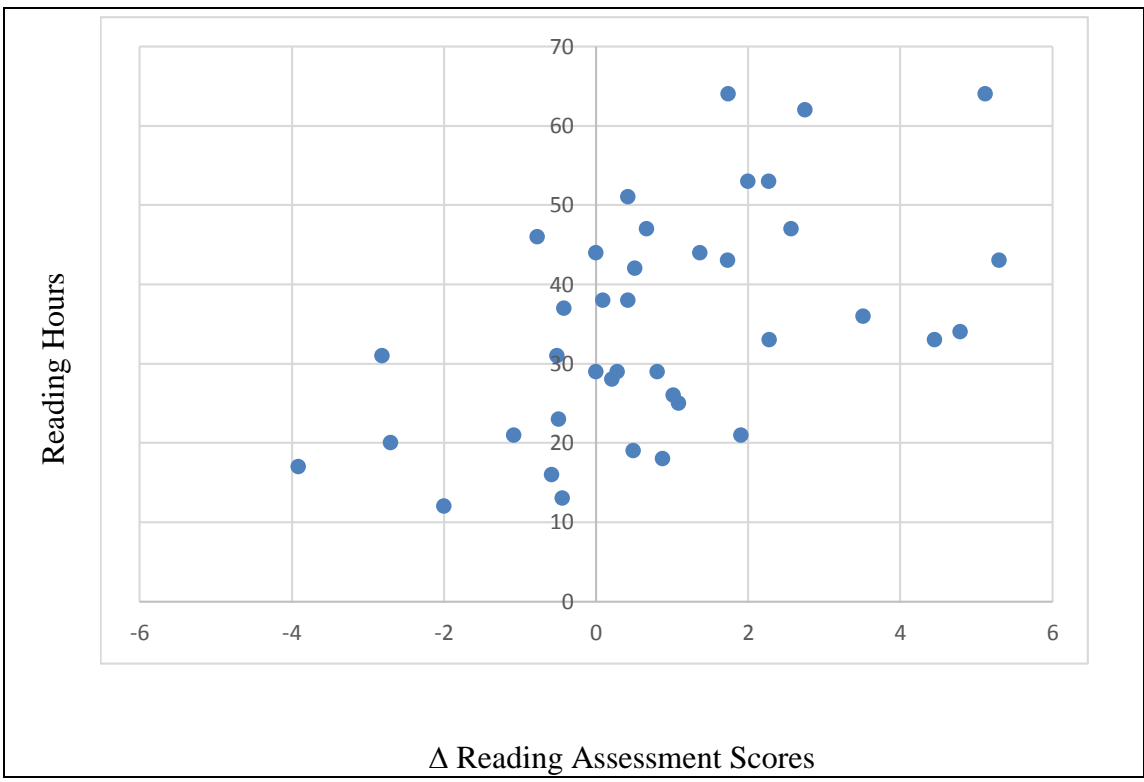


Figure 5. Scatterplot of reading hours compared to assessment scores.

Table 6

Correlation Between Hours Read and Difference in Pretest and Posttest

		Hours_Read	Diff_Pretest_Posttest
Hours_Read	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	39	39
Diff_Pretest_Posttest	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	39	39

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The information in Table 6 shows that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.527$, $n = 39$, $p = .001$. In this case, the r value of .527 indicates that

there is a moderate correlation between the variables (Lodico et al., 2006). The p value of .001 indicating the relationship is statistically significant which gives a 1 out of 100 opportunity of getting a significant correlation due to chance (Lodico et al., 2006).

Research Question 3. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading material level of difficulty and students' reading proficiency levels of those students that used the myON[®] reader program? A Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for question 3 to determine if there was a relationship between the 2014 Lexile scores (reading level) and the 2014 reading assessment data. SPSS software was used to compute this as well. Just as it was done for question 2, a scatterplot of the data was created to determine if there appeared to be a correlation between the Lexile level and a student's reading assessment scores. Figure 6 does show a positive slope indicating a correlation, which lead me to proceed with analyzing the data that was provided in Table 7.

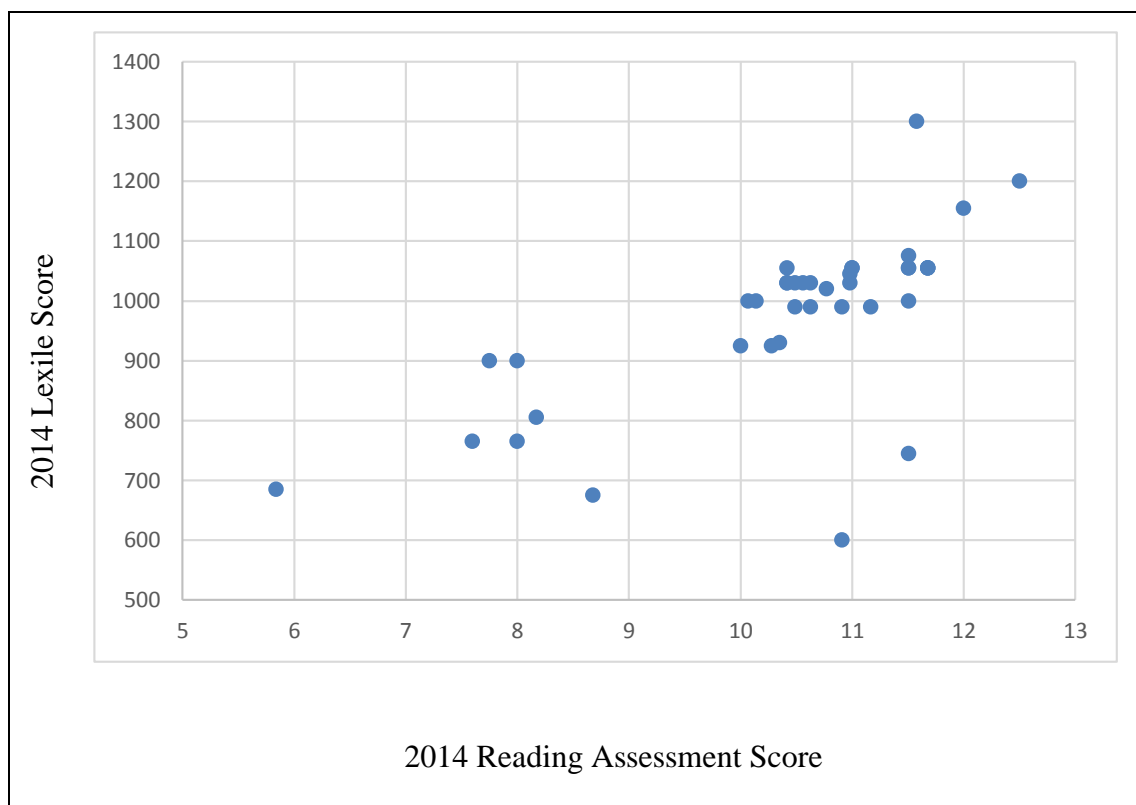


Figure 6. Scatterplot of reading assessment scores compared to Lexile scores.

Table 7

Correlation Between 2014 Reading Assessment Scores and Lexile Level

		Lexile_2014	Fall_2014
Fall_2014	Pearson	1	.676**
	Correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		39
	N		
Lexile_2014	Pearson	.676**	1
	Correlation	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	39	
	N		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to look more closely at the perceived correlation between the students Lexile rating and the students reading assessment scores a Pearson Correlation

Coefficient was used to measure this relationship. Table 7 shows the outcome of these calculations. The numbers show that there was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.676$, $n = 39$, $p = 0.000$ which indicates a better than moderate correlation between the two variables. This means as one variable changes there was a measurable change in the same direction in the other variable (Lodico et al., 2006). The results suggest a positive relationship between the Lexile score and the difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data was obtained through one interview with the two teachers at ABC Charter High School. The interview was semi-structured in nature. A semi-structured interview has a set of questions to guide the interview but does not dictate the interviews direction allowing me the freedom to probe deeper into their perceptions of the program by asking relevant questions based on active conversation (Lodico et al., 2006). I developed the questions for this interview early on in this study. However, once I reviewed the quantitative data, I looked at the list of questions to make sure that they were aligned with the results of the quantitative data analysis. I wanted to make sure that the line of questioning was going to be an additional piece of information to use in the triangulation process of reviewing the data. The questions I had originally written were aligned very well with what was found quantitative data with some slight adjustments. I removed any reference to increases in assessment data as I knew the teachers had seen the data, and it was clear there was an increase in students' assessment scores. I turned the focus completely to their opinion and perceived usefulness of the myON[®] reader

program itself. The data collected from this interview was recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed to formulate the findings.

The first step after the interview was to jot down notes to capture the key points I took from the interview. The next step was to listen and transcribe the recording. Once this was finished, the data was coded to pull out common themes. First, there was a preliminary analysis in order to get a sense of the data. This analysis allowed me to determine the best way to organize the data and decide if more data is needed (Creswell, 2012). Second, the data was coded using a model of coding similarly to the one presented in Creswell (2012) please see, Figure 7. The coding process entailed reading through the data as a whole, followed by dividing the text into segments, then coding the segments, reducing the codes to those that are relevant, and then finally reducing that into 5-7 themes. This process allowed me to better determine the teacher's perceptions and opinions of the program and its effects on the students reading and attitudes towards reading.

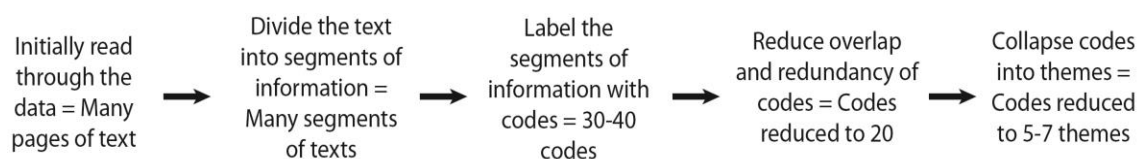


Figure 7. Interview data coding process. Adapted from “Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative Research” by J. Creswell, 2012, p.244. Copyright 2012, 2008, 2005, 2002 by Pearson Education, Inc.

As it turned out, I did not have as many data to filter through as expected and was able to work through the steps in Figure 7 fairly quickly. Two interviewees agree to be interviewed. The interviews were to be held separately, but they requested to be

interviewed together. I agreed to a group interview because it was clear that if I did not conduct this per their request, they would not have participated leaving me with no qualitative data.

I first divided the data by person, which was coded as interviewee number one and interviewee number two. Once I did this, I looked for themes within each of the interviewee's transcripts. Then I went through and highlighted, with yellow, the information that was relevant to the study in order to remove the irrelevant chit-chat between the questions. Once I had this highlighting, common words began to appear as I was reviewing the data. Then I started to pick out common words within the transcripts and chose a different color for each word. For example every time the words Graphic Novel came up I highlighted it in pink. This color coding allowed me to see visually which words/themes were beginning to appear in the transcript. This coding was what led me to the list of five themes presented later in this section.

The three sets of data: Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor, myON[®] program data, and teacher interviews were used together to determine whether the program has made a difference for the students at ABC Charter High School, New Mexico. A process of triangulation was used in order to verify the validity of each set of data. The triangulation was done by reviewing the data from the reading assessment scores, myON[®] reader program data, and the interviews to determine that the theme of improved student reading was a common one among all three (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2010; Merriam, 2009).

Interviews process. The selection of participants was based on convenience sampling. I contacted all of the teachers at the high school via email to ask for volunteers. That resulted in two of the five teachers agreeing to an interview. On November 14, 2014 I met with the two teachers from the school. They are the language arts teachers and were the teachers that had the most contact with students using the myON[®] reader program.

I started the process by having them read and sign the consent form in order to conduct the interview. The interview was conducted at the school per their request in a private room with the door shut to conceal their identities. I audio recorded the interview in order to allow the interview to be more conversational and less structured. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

After the interview, I took notes on what I thought the common themes were. I then listened to and transcribed the recording. Once this was complete, I went through and marked the common ideas from the transcripts as well as noted items that were mentioned multiple times. The items that were mentioned multiple times aligned with my earlier notes and aligned with both interviewees' ideas.

Interview results. Research Question 4. What differences, if any, have teachers observed in students' attitudes, confidence, motivation, or any other factor among the participants in the myON[®] reader program? When going into the interview, this question was the planned focus of the interview but soon became irrelevant very quickly. As I explained to them the point of the interview, interviewee number one said, "the students using the program are already strong readers." Interviewee number two follow up with "these are the only students that use the program in their free time regularly, mostly to get

out of doing other work because they enjoy reading.” Both teachers believed that this program did not benefit the weaker readers as much because those students did not voluntarily use the program. These students only used the program when given assignments to do so. I asked the teachers why they thought it was the case, and they believed there were many reasons for that. This statement was supported by the common themes that came out of the rest of the interview and are presented below.

The first four common themes discovered from the interview focused primarily on the pros and cons of the myON[®] program itself. The final bullet in the list is not as much of an outcome of the use of the program, but a common challenge the teachers both discussed. The two teachers were very forthcoming in their opinions about the program, and the themes are as follows:

- Flexible Access for Student and Household Members
- Not Enough High School Level Reading Material
- High School Reading Material Format Inadequate
- Beginning Assessment Not Flexible
- Lower Level Readers Worried about Reading Not Being “Cool”

In my analysis of the interview data, I focused first on what the teachers like most about the program. Then I followed up with the issues that they have with the program and why they believe there are not more students using the program, which will help explain what was meant by the themes listed above.

The teachers’ favorite feature of the myON[®] reader program is that it is made available to everyone in the household to use for reading. They noted that this because it

can help encourage the student to become more involved if they see others in the household using it. They also liked the fact that the program can be accessed from the computer and handheld devices allowing the student to use the program at home, school, and everywhere in between that has an internet source. This flexibility relates to the final theme of the list, reading is not cool, in that they thought if students were to see other household members reading it might encourage them to do so as well. In addition, teachers believed it was important that students could read in different locations allowing them to “hide” from others while they read.

Both of the teachers indicated that the biggest weakness of the program was the lack of high school level reading materials available. This lack of choice made it difficult for students to find reading at their level and in their areas of interest, which discouraged their use of the program. Also, a high percentage of the high school readings were presented as graphic novels, and many of the students voiced that they did not like these. They felt insulted by the simplification of the readings by putting them into this format. Neither teacher could think of one student that ever mentioned that they liked the graphic novel format.

The next issue with the program that teachers indicated was the inability to let students retake the initial evaluation. Some of the students did not take this initial evaluation seriously. This led to the students being assigned reading that was way below their level of reading and in random interest areas. Because of the inaccurate initial evaluation the student was then required to read a minimum of five books at the level and in interest areas as identified as a result of the evaluation before they could retake the

evaluation. This experience left many of these students bored in turn believing the program was not useful.

The two teachers did believe that the program was a good additional tool to have at their disposal. They did see that it can help those students that want to use it and believe that once there is more high school reading material available from the program it will be even more useful. Their hope is that the program developers will listen to their needs and begin to move in this direction.

Triangulation

I looked at data from three sources: the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor, myON[®] reader program data, and teacher interviews. The first two data sources listed are quantitative in nature, and the final one was qualitative making this study a mixed methods research design. Triangulation was used to compare the outcomes of each of these data evaluation results to see if they support each other. When looking at the outcomes of the quantitative portion of the study, there appears to be a positive outcome for the students using the myON[®] reader program. There was a statistically significant change in the students' pretest and posttest scores, as well as, a correlation between those scores, the hours spent reading, and the Lexile scores. In order to help confirm these findings, I also conducted teacher interviews, which makes up the qualitative portion of the study. The outcome of the interviews was mixed but still gave support to what was found in the quantitative portion of the study. The teachers did have some issues with the myON[®] program, but felt the students who were using the program did benefit from

using the program and both interviewees suspected that I would find that the data analysis would show that to be the case.

Protection Measures

In order to protect the participants in this research, all of the Walden University IRB guidelines were followed and approved (10-07-14-0273576). As part these measures, I only had contact with administrators and teachers at ABC Charter High School. The principal provided the quantitative data, and I interviewed two teachers for the qualitative portion of the study. I have made every effort to keep the data confidential and out of the wrong hands. I am not personally involved with this school and do not have regular interaction with the participants.

All assessment and myON[®] reader program data were coded by a principal at the school in order to protect the identities of the students. I did not have access to the key for the code in order to maintain their privacy.

The principal provided email addresses of the teachers so that I could contact them to ask them to participate in an interview. The teachers were informed that the interviews were voluntary and confidential. I also had them sign a consent form at the time of the interview to confirm that they were okay with participating in the interview. Appendix E provides an example of the interview consent form that was used. I did not include their names in the recording or the transcription of the recordings. I labeled each teacher as teacher one or teacher two so that I would be the only person who knows which teacher was quoted within the transcripts. I will keep a copy of these transcripts for five years.

Limitation of Study

The limitations of this study are the size of the quantitative study sample and that it was only at one school. This small amount of quantitative data or sample size will make it hard for the results of this study to be generalizable to other situations.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project for this study will consist of a summative evaluation of the myON[®] reader program being used at ABC Charter High School. This evaluation will be provided to the principal in a white paper format. The following section will go into more detail on the goals of this white paper and what will be provided by the white paper. The rationale, review of the literature, implementation, evaluation, and implications for social change, as they relate to this project, will be provided. The white paper will contain data analysis and recommendations for the principal and staff to review. This information will allow them to determine the future of the myON[®] reader program.

Description of Goals

The goal of the summative evaluation was to look at the available data to determine if there was a positive change in students' reading levels after using the myON[®] reader program. The summative evaluation will be provided via a white paper in the following format: introduction, review of the problem, review of the study, data analysis and results, conclusions based analysis, and references. The goal was that the staff and principal will gain insight into the effectiveness of the myON[®] reader program for the students who have been using it.

The white paper will provide ABC Charter High School an in-depth look at the data and any findings that may have come from this review of the data. The principal and staff would like to evaluate the results in order to determine if the program has had the desired effect on student reading levels. Based on these results, the staff and principal

will determine if they will continue using the myON[®] program and if it warrants more research in this area to make improvements.

Rationale

The use of a white paper will provide the principal and staff at ABC Charter High School the summative evaluation in a format that summarized the key pieces of this study needed to make their decisions. Appendix A provides a copy of the white paper that will be submitted to the school for their evaluation.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the students' reading proficiency and frequency of reading at the high school changed for the students using the myON[®] reader program. I also wanted to know what the teachers' perceptions of the program were and whether they have seen improvement, not only in reading but student attitude towards school as a whole. The white paper will provide a summary of the requested information so that the principal and staff can make an informed decision on whether to maintain the use of the myON[®] reader program.

Review of Literature

The following literature review will cover the use of a white paper as an efficient tool as well as the key components that it includes. Also included in this literature review will be the reasoning behind choosing a summative evaluation to present the data to the school.

White Paper

The first known use of a white paper was in 1899 (White Paper, n.d.). They were used primarily by the government and were not limited in subject content (White Paper,

n.d.). In England, *the blue book* was a government policy document bound in a blue book (Willerton, 2013). The white paper was developed to be a short document that gave background information and government rationale of a blue book (Willerton, 2013). The white paper eventually evolved into a more “detailed or authoritative report” (White Paper, n.d.). The white paper format was used extensively in high-tech industries as a way to provide complicated technical information to a nontechnical audience. This format allows them to get their ideas across no matter the readers’ backgrounds. For example, scientists from the Manhattan Project used white papers to present the material on nuclear projects to military personnel that were not trained as nuclear physicists (Willerton, 2013). This project was how the white paper began to be associated with documents of high importance and in some cases even classified in nature (Willerton, 2013).

The white paper continues to be used in government circles. In the 1990s, the Information Technology industry began to use them to disseminate information on new technologies in a way that was quick and informative (Willerton, 2013). This format was the first emergence of the white paper being used not only to distribute information, but also to begin marketing new technologies and products that required more detailed information. Now white papers are commonplace and used in many industries to provide information to many different audiences (Willerton, 2013). One of the common uses of the white paper is research reports (Willerton, 2013). For this reason, I have chosen it as the best method to provide my findings to the principal and staff at ABC Charter High School.

The goal of the white paper is to break down the findings of the study in a way that is easy to follow and gets to the point quickly. The goal was to have the white paper be fewer than 10 pages total. I wanted to make sure that the staff could get through the data quickly in order to find needed information easily.

The white paper began with an introduction to tell the staff what to expect and where I fit into the project. Information related to the problem of low reading proficiency in the United States illustrated that their focus on reading is not misplaced. Next, the study itself was covered, how it was conducted, and the research questions that were the focus of the research. Then came the evaluation of the data that was provided by the school. In this section, I aimed for making the outcomes clear and as nontechnical as possible due to different levels of research understanding among the intended audience. Finally, the conclusion, a summary of the general findings of the data, and one suggestion for moving forward were provided. I did not want to influence their decisions on the myON[®] reader program, but I did suggest there was a need for a more detailed research effort. For example, including a review of the pretest and posttest data for those students that did not use the myON[®] reader program would give them a better idea of whether it was the myON[®] reader program that helped those students improve at higher rates than the others.

Summative Evaluation

A summative evaluation is the process of evaluating data to measure an outcome and review whether those outcomes relate to the success or failure of a program (Lodico et al., 2006). These data are also provided to the client, in this case the principal, in an

end-of-year report. This evaluation was provided to the principal in a white paper format that summarizes the findings of the evaluation. I avoided giving my opinion or suggestions other than the need to take a broader look at their reading program.

Project Description

The implementation of my summative evaluation will be in the form of a white paper delivered to the principal. The principal may ask that I present the final paper to principal and staff in order to facilitate discussion of the study and determine how they should proceed. I have volunteered my experience as a meeting facilitator to help capture the discussion and summarize for them. This facilitation will allow each of them to participate fully in the determination of how they would like to move forward. I told the principal it was up to him how much he wanted me to participate once the white paper was written and delivered.

Timeline

Once I have my doctoral study completed, I will be able to provide a copy of the white paper to the principal and staff at ABC Charter High School. At this point, they will be able to review the white paper and determine if they would like me to provide a presentation and discussion of the data as well as facilitate a meeting as discussed above.

Roles and Responsibilities

In return for the school allowing me to use their reading program as the topic of my doctoral study, I will provide a white paper summarizing my findings. At this point, I will have completed any obligation I have to ABC Charter High School. Anything past

this point will be voluntary on my part and at the request of the principal and staff of the school.

Project Evaluation

A summative evaluation of the new reading program will be presented to the principal of ABC Charter High School in the form of a white paper (see Appendix A). The white paper includes a discussion of the local and national problem and study findings. It also provides suggestions on what the school might want to do moving forward based on the knowledge I have gained from reviewing the literature and study findings.

As I do not work at the school, I suspect this may be the extent of my interactions with the school. I will volunteer to help review data as an objective set of eyes, but this may be difficult once I have graduated. Also, the principal will be retiring in the next year so this will also make it difficult for me to participate in any future research unless the new principal wants my input.

Justification

The ABC Charter High School principal and staff have implemented a program called the myON[®] reader program with the intent to increase reading proficiency of the students. The summative evaluation will allow the principal and staff to determine if the program has helped the students as planned. The data was gathered at the end of the program, which makes a summative evaluation fit the format of the study. The very definition of a summative evaluation is the evaluation of data once a program has already been implemented, and stakeholders want to see what the effects of that change were.

Evaluation Goals

The goals of this evaluation were to provide the principal and staff a summary and presentation of the data in a way that is useful for them to make a decision on the myON[®] reader program. They will decide whether the program should be maintained or make some adjustments. The goal of the white paper is to provide the ABC Charter High School staff information in a concise manner to make a data-driven decision concerning the myON[®] reader program. Maintaining the program has recently become more important because the program has been written into the school's Charter.

Project Implications**Social Change Implications**

The principal and staff's focus on reading has come from a desire to improve students' grades in all subjects and finish school. They also want to provide them with the needed reading skills to be successful after high school. Some of these students will go on to college, but others will go straight into the workforce, both of which demand adequate reading skills to be successful. The students will also become active members of their communities which can rely heavily on being able to read and understand that reading.

Local Stakeholders Implications

The local stakeholders in this study include the principal, teachers, students, parents, and community. Each of these stakeholders can benefit from the increased success of students at the high school level. The following will go into each of these stakeholder benefits that may be seen if the students improve their reading proficiency.

First, the principals and teachers at the school gain in many ways from the students improving their reading skills. It not only reflects well on the school as a whole when assessment data improve, but it can boost morale and an overall feeling of success at the school. It may also improve the letter grade given to the school by state evaluators, which improves their status within the community. Improved assessment data can aid in helping the school to get additional grants and other support to improve in other areas.

The parents of students that are doing better in school may see an improvement in their attitude not only towards school, but in other aspects of their life. Students who are doing better in school tend to have fewer behavioral problems, which keep them out of trouble as they move through school (Scott, 2002). Students who do better in school also have a better earning potential when they enter the workforce, whether that is straight out of high school or after college (Schimke, 2011).

Far-Reaching Implications

Many of the positive implications mentioned above from students' having better reading skills applies to the community as a whole. Data show that low reading scores can lead to struggles in other subjects in school, which can contribute to high school dropout rates (Hernandez, 2011; Hurst et al., 2010; Schimke, 2011). Increased dropout rates can lead to higher incarceration rates (Lochner & Moretti, 2001). Lochner and Moretti (2001) estimated that a decrease of dropout rates of 10% can reduce assault arrest by 20%, motor vehicle theft by 13%, arson by 8%, and burglary rates by almost 3%. This data which has led to an increased focus on basic literacy instruction in prisons (Shippen, Houchins, Crites, Derzis, & Patterson, 2010). Research has found that inmates that

receive vocational training, which includes reading, had a much lower recidivism rate than those that did not receive the training, 25% compared to 77% respectively (Vacca, 2004). Another factor that is important for the local community is that adults who are better readers participate in their community more frequently than their counterparts.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The goal of this doctoral study was to provide ABC Charter High School an analysis of the available data to determine if the students using the newly implemented myON[®] reader program had an increase their reading assessment scores. This information will help in the decision on how to move forward using the program as part of their charter. The data analysis gave promising results, but there will need to be further investigation as they move forward to help them remain on a positive and effective path.

The following description will go into detail on the project's strengths and limitations. It will also provide a discussion of the study results. I will then relay some of the lessons that I learned while conducting this research and how I might have done things differently to improve the study. Finally, I will finish up with a discussion of how this research may impact the school and possibly other high schools looking to implement a similar program.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this project are contained in the fact that both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to look at reading outcomes at ABC Charter High School. The quantitative portion illustrates the change in students' reading scores before and after using the program, which did show a positive trend. The qualitative research provides information on the teachers' views of the program and any perceived benefit to the students. This research gave insight into how the teachers felt the program was doing and its benefits.

The quantitative portion of the study had its strength in that the assessment data are regularly gathered each year, so there was a protection against bias due to an expectation of it being researched for this effort. This protection holds true for the data coming from the myON[®] reader program itself. The teachers and students were not influenced based on an expectation of the assessments' effects on the research of the myON[®] reader program. Another strength would be the fact that I did not work at the school, so I had no vested interest in the outcome of the study other than it being completed and part of my graduation requirements.

The qualitative portion of the study holds its strengths because it provides a perspective of the myON[®] program from the teachers implementing it. Their perspective can broaden the picture presented by the quantitative data. It can also give an indication of whether those implementing the program believe in it and can in turn help make it a success.

Sample size was a limitation of the study. The sample size was small for both the quantitative and qualitative data, which in turn makes it difficult to generalize to multiple school contexts. Another limitation of the study was that I did not review data from students who did not use the myON[®] reader program. This additional data would have allowed me to compare the two groups to determine the actual effect the myON[®] reader program. In other words, the study could have provided a broader picture for the ABC Charter High School staff.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In order to address the limitations that I have noted above, I would suggest that a new quantitative study be conducted to address some of these. For example, I would suggest they look at all of the student reading assessment scores to compare the students that were using the myON[®] reader program and those that did not participate. This research could help them define the significance of the change in reading scores that were determined in this study through a comparison of the results.

I would recommend that the principal make better use of the knowledge and insight of the staff. I would meet with them more often to address concerns and successes they see with the programs implementation. I would encourage the teachers to keep notes on what they see over the course of the use of the program. I would make sure to create an environment that the teachers feel free to give their opinions of the programs being implemented and what solutions and changes need to occur for success.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines scholarship as the “serious formal study or research of a subject” (Scholarship, n.d.). This definition defines how I viewed my efforts in conducting this study. My goal was to examine recent peer-reviewed sources in order to conduct a serious and reliable analysis of the subject of reading in high schools. I read many articles looking for that information; unfortunately, that was harder than I ever could have imagined. The amount of research that has been conducted with high schools as the focus was quite small, and middle schools were not much better.

The discovery of gaps was a large part of the research process. The gap that I found was the lack of studies on reading in general for high school and reading programs being implemented in high schools. This is not to say that there was not a lot of scholarly writing on reading, but teaching reading in middle and high schools lacked an extensive investigation.

Even with this lack of research, in my specific subject, I was able to learn more about research methods that helped me determine the best way to evaluate the data, in general. This education allowed me to make the right research method choice when evaluating the data for this study. It also helped me through the development of my interview protocol in a way that fostered an excellent set of questions to make the interview successful and informative.

The considerable amount of reading and studying helped me in writing my doctoral study. I was able to use the Writing Center resources at Walden as well to help me through and eliminate some of the bad habits that developed over the years. It had been awhile since I had written or done research. The coursework, as well as other resources at Walden, was helpful in getting me through the completion of this study.

Project Development

The doctoral project started with discussions with a newly appointed principal at ABC Charter High School who had helped roll out the implementation of the myON[®] reader program. He knew I was pursuing my doctorate in education, and I asked if he had anything he would like me study for him. He mentioned that the myON[®] reader program that was being implemented, which would be an excellent opportunity for both his school

and myself. I have done quantitative research studies in the past but had never conducted qualitative research. I wanted to take the chance to add the qualitative aspect of the study to gain experience in the area as well as broaden the credibility of the research.

My review of state and national data gave me a good indication of the importance of reading and the challenges that educators and scholars have seen in this area. The data showed low reading proficiency scores across the United States and in comparison to other countries (NAEP, 2013; NMPED, 2013a). These data made me even more determined to learn as much as I could in the area of reading and look at why the experts believed this was happening. I reviewed more than 200 research studies, article, and so forth throughout the course of this study that covered many theories. While conducting the literature review, the lack of research on high school reading programs, high school students' reading achievement in general, and what the plan is in this area was incredible. With all of this reading, much of it was not relevant to this particular situation, which made for some frustrations. When I read that there was a push to increase research in this area in 2006 and 2009, which included funding for research, I was amazed that there had not been any improvement in this area. All of this motivated me towards working with a school that found reading an important aspect of education.

Due to the small size of the school and limited teaching staff, a determination of methodology was easy as there were not many options. It was determined that the use of convenience sampling for this study made the most sense. It was less invasive and gave the largest sample size available. The available data also helped determine the research method used for this study.

The statistical analysis did illustrate some positive change for the students using the myON[®] reader program. However, in my opinion, the study did not go far enough in developing a strong confirmation of the program benefits. It did provide useful feedback in that the myON[®] reader program overall did not have an adverse effect for those students using the program.

Leadership and Change

My career background has primarily been in the business, research, and leadership fields. I have always believed that a good leader is defined the same in all fields of work. I found this to be justified as I worked through the leadership coursework as part of my program at Walden University. All leaders have the challenge of balancing the desires of the many stakeholders that are present in any situation, which can be very difficult. One of the most important things a leader can do is make sure that all the stakeholders understand that each of them comes from different experiences and backgrounds. It is also critical for a leader to make sure the stakeholders know they are an important part of the final determination of implementing any successful endeavor. In the case of education, it becomes even more important because it is the youth and future of this country that are at stake.

Every leader has to be prepared to be proven wrong, be flexible, be able to deal with conflict, and be willing to make a final decision. Every stakeholder will not be happy with the decision because making everyone happy is impossible. A great leader will make the effort to ensure each of the stakeholders is heard and that they understand fully the reason the final decision was made. This effort can eliminate much of the

tensions that can happen when making the final decision. The other aspect of a good leader is the ability to admit that the direction taken was wrong and doing what is necessary to fix that. They must be willing continually to evaluate the efforts being put forth in order to maintain a good perspective of what is working and what is not. Also, the ability to adapt to changing environments and situations is paramount.

A successful leader will also encourage open and honest discussions with all stakeholders. Stakeholders need to feel free to voice their opinions without the fear of retaliation. Also, a leader needs to remember that they may not be the subject matter experts. In my experiences in the past, I have worked with leaders that did not have a clue about how to do what I did every day and they knew that. I was their subject matter expert, so they depended on me to provide them with the background, knowledge, and support to make decisions for successful outcomes. The leader was there to provide his staff with the resources requested, support when needed, and shelter us from the nonsense that occurs in any organization.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

My former research experience is part of what drew me to pursuing a new career in education; as I felt my background would be valuable in the efforts to improve education and foster success in student learning. I wanted to become a teacher when I first entered college, but for some reason never pursued that course. Recently when faced with unemployment and an opportunity to return to school I decided to look back at what I wanted to do, which was teach. As I looked at this more carefully, I decided it was

smart to maintain my interest in research as it is an important tool in education. Hence the decision to pursue a degree in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

As I worked through the coursework at Walden University, I remembered my passion for leadership and being a supportive and positive leader, which also has factored in my goals for my future career. My experience and interest in research methodology, I look forward to working with educators in this capacity to improve local schools. A project at work helped determine the direction I wanted to go in my education. I will discuss this further in the next section.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

I work for large national laboratories and am fortunate enough to be part of a group that is working on a workforce pipeline consortium. The consortium is K-20 focused on several public schools, Minority Serving Institution/Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Other Universities, and industry in South Carolina. My current employer is facing challenges in finding qualified students in cyber security. This shortage is due to not only to competition from other large cyber driven companies but also a small number of students who have chosen this career path. The national labs also have a passion for developing opportunities for minorities across the United States.

The overall goal of this project is to develop a consortium with members from each of the groups mentioned above. This consortium will enable resources for K-12 schools to open students' eyes to the opportunities available in the field of cyber security. The program consortium members are working with the HBCUs to improve their undergraduate curriculum in cyber security to ensure their graduates are prepared and

sought after by Tier 1 universities. This collaboration will help ensure a larger pool of minority graduate students prepared for cyber security work being conducted at the national labs. I hope to use what I have learned through my studies at Walden and learned from my past experiences to work with the consortium as a team member to develop it into a successful talent pipeline for the national labs as well as an opportunity for students to succeed.

The coursework at Walden University has also helped me grow in the area of education as a practitioner. I am able to see projects through the eyes of an educator. Not as well as I would have if I had been in the classroom, but it has helped me to understand the education terminology and how to ask the right questions when trying to solve problems. I want to use these skills to help our lab become more integrated and work more closely with the educators in the program mentioned earlier. Some of the educators have been very excited about working with us while others see us as not being a positive source of information. This opinion has made it necessary to be able to bridge that gap between “us vs. them” which is how some of them are looking at the relationship. The teams desire was to let them know that the Labs have a need for these students to come out prepared for the workforce, but also has a passion for improving education overall. I hope that my education here at Walden will help in building that bridge.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

In my past careers, I have developed and managed many projects in the workplace. I was not prepared for some of the challenges I faced. One of the challenges was that I did not work at the school, which meant I did not have the personal connection

with those involved, making it harder to encourage participation. The Walden program was my first online education experience for the most part I did not miss the personal connections you make meeting people in-person. I did find during the production of my study this lack of interpersonal connection to be an issue especially with my first chairperson. Luckily I was able to get a new doctoral chair that completely changed my view. It is harder because you do not have that personal face-to-face interaction, but that can be overcome.

I did learn some lessons that would change my approach when conducting research. When conducting research on someone else's behalf you have to make sure to show the stakeholders of the research outcome that you are truly doing it on their behalf. My working with the principal alone in the beginning was my mistake. The teachers did not understand my motivations for conducting the research and that the principal wanted my help in giving them support for their decisions towards the reading program going forward. I would have been better served spending some time at the school with the teachers.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

This doctoral study is one more piece of information in a high school looking at a reading program for their school. The sample size was small making it hard to generalize. However, it does at least give a school that is looking at the myON[®] reader program an additional piece of information that can hopefully help them make an informed decision. It may also help them determine how they might use the myON[®] reader program in conjunction with other programs.

I also believe that this study does show the need for research on reading in high schools. I tried to point this out as much as possible as it is an area that needs to be reviewed and discussed. The data clearly shows there is a need for reading intervention overall and in high school. High school student data demonstrates that they are struggling with basic reading that in turn can affect other areas of their coursework. If this study does not do anything else other than get one person to look into this further and start the development of a research project including high school reading, it is a success.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

The implications of this study are aimed at the school in question. ABC Charter High School believes that students' reading is important and students are struggling in this area. The results from the study did show a correlation between the students that are using the program and a measurable improvement in their assessment scores dependent on the Lexile scores and the amount of time students spend reading. The study, however, falls short of proving that the myON[®] reader program was the primary reason for that increase. The data from the students not using the program was not reviewed making it difficult to say definitively the program was the cause of the increase. With that said, there was improvement in assessment scores for the students that did use the myON[®] reader program. This study does point out the need for more research in this area, not only for the school in question, but all high schools looking at reading programs.

Applications

The application for this study is twofold. First, it is an important piece of information for the principal and teachers at ABC Charter High School in that the study did show a significant difference in assessment outcomes for the students using the program. Second, it is a good representation of the lack of information out there concerning high school reading programs and reading improvement. With the NCLB mandate on reading falling short and student reading proficiency data showing a grim picture of reading proficiency in the United States, this study should help point out the need for a more in-depth research in this area reading and encourage a continued focus reading in K-12.

Directions for Future Research

This study could have grown into a very large and effective study if time and resources were available. As part of the charter at ABC Charter High School, parents are required to participate at a minimum level for their child to stay enrolled. The educators that started the school felt that parent or guardian participation is a critical piece to students' success in school. The myON[®] reader program is made available to the entire household, allowing the parents to get involved in reading as well. It would have been nice to look at this aspect of the program to see if parents, siblings, and others in the household were using the program. Should the school be capitalizing more on the aspect that the household has access and how they can encourage them to participate as well? If so, would this have a positive effect on the usage levels of all the students and what they get out of the reading that is available? Another aspect is access. The program is

accessible via computer and mobile devices making it easy to use on the go. Did this have an effect on student's usage of the program? I could go on with many more questions that could have been investigated. A more in-depth look would give a more accurate picture of what the myON[®] reader program may be providing to the students.

Conclusion

There is much data out there showing the shortfalls in reading proficiency across grade levels, which point to the necessity of developing and implementing reading programs to improve. Yet high schools seem to be left out of the research and data pool. Research clearly needs to be done in this area to answer why the United States educational system is failing these students and why does their reading proficiency decrease over time, even though they are required to read every day for their studies. The more I read the literature, the more questions I had. As you look at educational research, it becomes apparent there is never a silver bullet. Why? Because each human is different in the way they learn and maintain that learning over time. It also proves that educators have to be resilient, passionate, and determined to stay the course. The data also was clear that the community needs to be involved with its youth and their learning, the parents or those directly interacting with the students on a daily basis outside the classroom. This learning cannot be done in the classroom alone; learning is a continuous process, and everyone must remember to be involved.

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White Paper: ABC Charter High School

1 Introduction

ABC Charter High School implemented a reading program called the myON® reader program. The program was put into use with the goal of improving student reading assessment scores. The program is an online program that can be used by the students anywhere there is an internet connection. It is also made available to the entire household with the hopes that parents and other household members will use the program in turn encouraging the student to use it as well.

This white paper will give a summary of the research conducted by Tommie Kuykendall, as part of her doctoral studies at Walden University, on the myON® reader program and its use at the school. I have reviewed and evaluated the data, provided by the school, to determine if there was positive change in student's assessment score for those using the myON® reader program. I will cover the problem, study process and findings in the following sections.

2 Problem

Research has shown that low reading scores coincide with lower scores for the rest of students' studies at school. It has also been found to be a contributing factor in student dropout rates (Hernandez, 2011; Hurst, Franklin, & Scales, 2010; Schimke, 2011). As part of this study, I conducted an extensive literature review as well as a review of readily available data. The data shows that students in the United States are struggling with reading. Figure 1 gives a graphical representation of national data for 9, 13, and 17-year-olds in the United States. In 17-year-olds there appears to be a negative trend in how well students are doing in reading. Figure 2 shows a similar trend with data from ABC Charter High School. ABC Charter High School has implemented the myON® reader program to address the low reading proficiency issue.

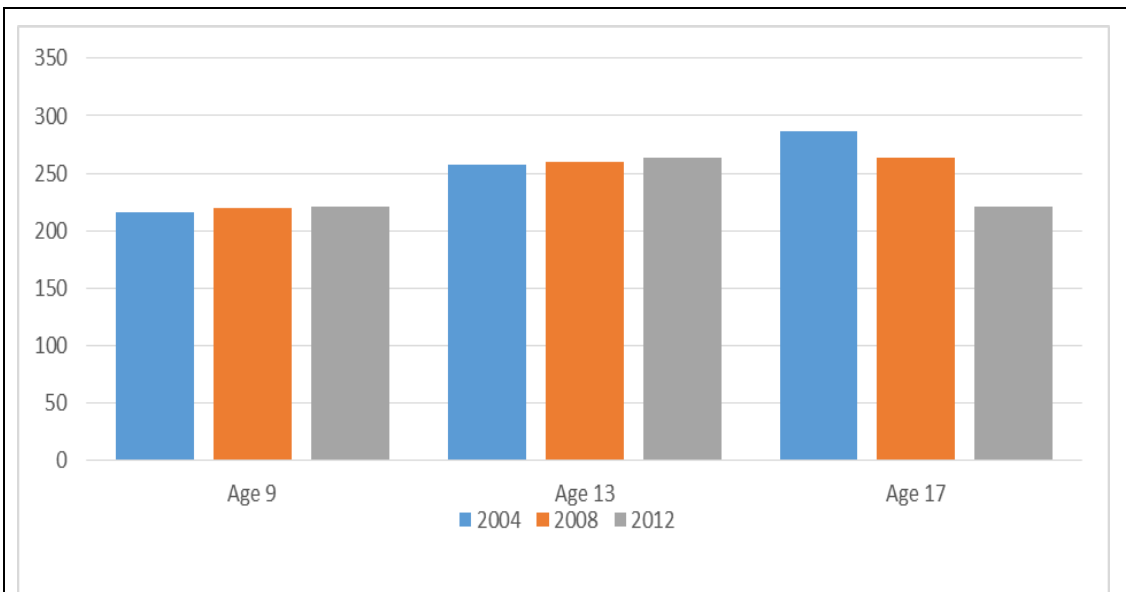


Figure 1. 2004-2012 Trend in NAEP Reading Average Scores.

From "Trends in Academic Progress," by NAEP, 2013, retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/main2012/pdf/2013456.pdf>.

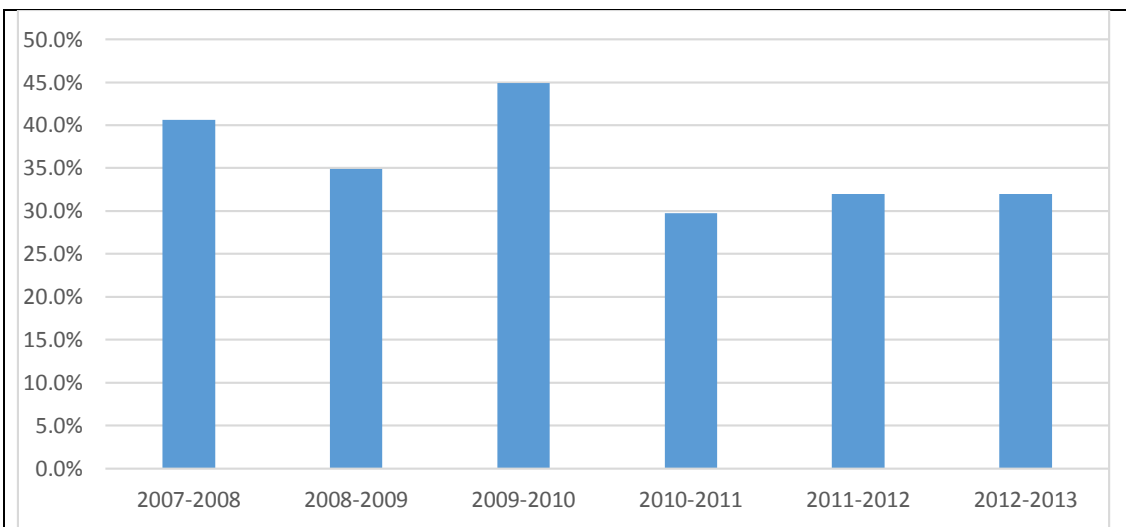


Figure 2. ABC Charter High School Reading Proficiency 2007-2013.

From "New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data," by NMPED, retrieved from <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NMSBA.html>.

3 The Study

The study was conducted to complete the requirements of a Walden University doctoral program by myself, Tommie Kuykendall. I needed a topic for my doctoral study and knew the principal was implementing a new program at the school so we agreed this would be a great opportunity for both of us. I do not work at the school, so my lack of connection to the school was determined to be a benefit in that I do not have a stake in the outcome of the analysis of the data.

The data that I reviewed is data that was readily available through already conducted reading assessments at the school that allowed me to have access to pretest and posttest data. Also available was data produced by the myON® program itself. Finally, I conducted interviews to gain insight from the teachers and if they felt the myON® program was having an effect on student attitudes towards reading and/or towards school, in general. All of this data was not reviewed or gathered until final IRB approval was gained.

The following is a list of the research questions that were covered in this study. These questions came in part from my review of the literature as well as what the principal at the school wanted answers. The goal was to give the principal and teachers an indication of whether the program had been useful or not.

Research Questions

1. How significant was the difference in pretest and posttest reading achievement data of those students using the myON® reader program?
2. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading proficiency levels and quantity of reading students are engaged in at ABC Charter High School that used the myON® reader program?
3. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading material level of difficulty and students' reading proficiency levels of those students that used the myON® reader program?
4. What differences, if any, have teachers observed in students' attitude, confidence, motivation or any other factor among the participants in the myON® reader program?

In order to access the information needed for this study the principal provided the data for the students that were using the myON® reader program from 9-12 grades. The names were removed, and a code was assigned to each student. I was not given the code and will not have access to that code at any time. The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis. I asked each of the teachers at the school if they would participate and two agreed. I interviewed them via a semi-structured interview process. These interviews were recorded to free myself up to participate in the conversation versus taking detailed notes.

4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed and illustrated using SPSS and Microsoft Excel software. The data were provided to me via email in a Microsoft Excel format, and the necessary data was transferred to SPSS. The interview data was transcribed into Microsoft Word, and I visually looked for common themes that were voiced by the two teachers. To better understand the data provided Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the data used to analyze questions 1 through 3.

Table1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fall_2013	39	3.72	12.00	9.5477	1.80261
Fall_2014	39	5.84	12.50	10.9391	1.42984
Qty_Books_Read	39	4.00	28.00	12.9231	6.08010
Hours_Read	39	12.00	64.00	34.8718	14.01912
Diff_Accucess_Score	39	-3.91	5.30	.8454	2.07805
Lexile_2013	39	410.00	1185.00	926.7949	167.89912
Lexile_2014	39	600.00	1300.00	974.2308	143.33223
Lexile_Diff	39	-45.00	200.00	47.4659	53.09961
Valid N (listwise)	39				

1. How significant was the difference in pretest and posttest reading achievement data of those students using the myON® reader program?

Research question 1 was analyzed by comparing the mean scores from the Reading Fluency Benchmark Assessor pretest and posttest assessments of the students that are using the myON® reader program. I used a paired-samples *t* test to find that with a 95% confidence level there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest data of those students using the myON® reader program. Table 2 shows the data that came from this analysis.

Table 2. Summary of Paired-Samples *t* Test Comparing Pretest and Posttest Data.

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest-Posttest	-.84538	2.07805	.33275	-1.51901	-.17176	-2.541	38	.015

2. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading proficiency levels and quantity of reading students are engaged in at ABC Charter High School that used the myON® reader program?

A scatterplot of the data points was created to see if there was any indication of a correlation, which is illustrated in Figure 3. This figure shows a general upward trend in the data indicating a correlation. To further analyze the correlation between reading assessment data and hours spent reading I used a Pearson's correlation coefficient. What I found was a moderate correlation between the change in assessment scores and the hours spent reading. Table 3 shows the outcome of this analysis.

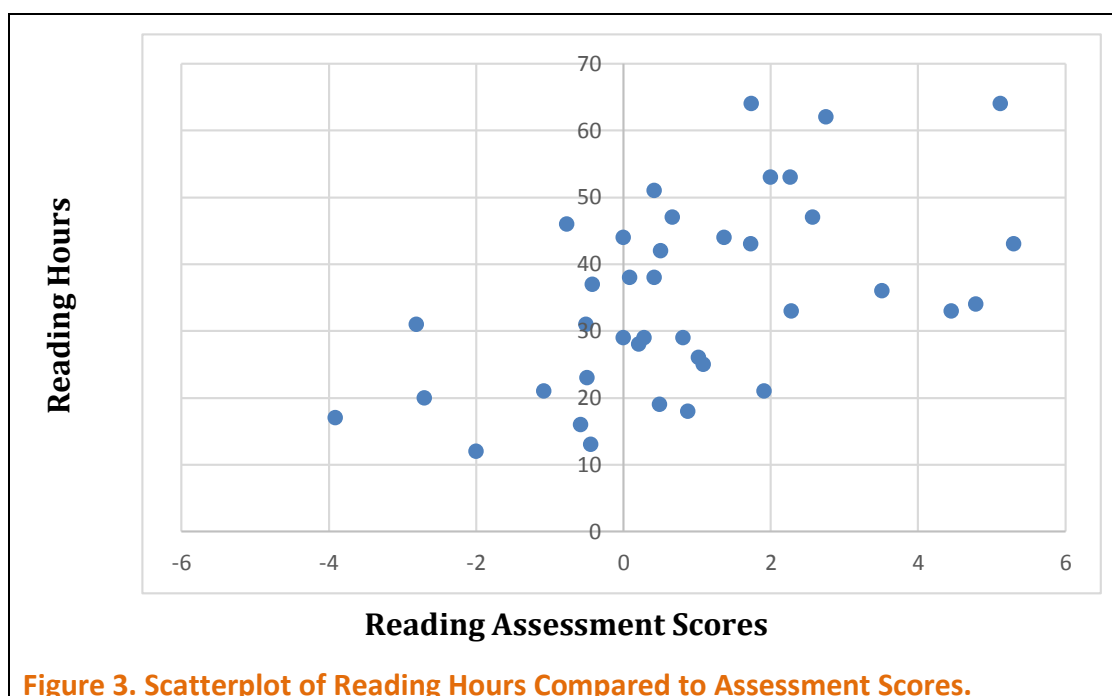


Table 3. Correlation Between Hours Read and Difference in Pretest and Posttest.

		Hours_Read	Diff_Pretest_Posttest
Hours_Read	Pearson		
	Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	39	39
Diff_Pretest_Posttest	Pearson		
	Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	39	39

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading material level of difficulty and students' reading proficiency levels of those students that used the myON® reader program?

Research Question 3 was evaluated in the same manner as research question number 2 however the students reading level or Lexile score was used and compared to the difference in the pretest and posttest scores. This evaluation enabled me to determine if there was a correlation between the students reading level and their assessment scores. Figure 4 is the scatterplot that was generated first to determine if there was a chance of

a correlation, and then Table 4 shows the findings of this analysis. Based on the analysis there is a correlation between the Lexile scores and the difference between the pretest and posttest scores.

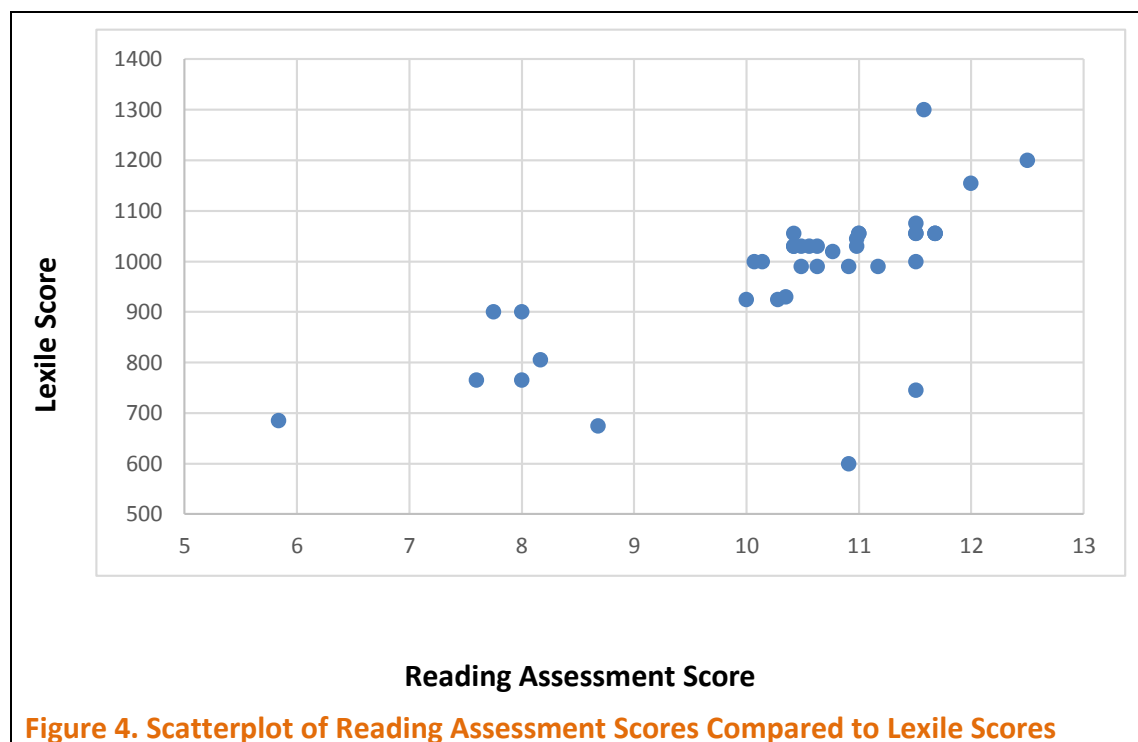


Table 4. Correlation Between 2014 Reading Assessment Scores and Lexile Level.

		Hours_Read	Diff_Pretest_Posttest
Fall_2014	Pearson		
	Correlation	1	.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	39	39
Lexile_2014	Pearson		
	Correlation	.676**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	39	39

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4. What differences, if any, have teachers observed in students' attitude, confidence, motivation or any other factor among the participants in the myON® reader program?

As I began the discussions to answer this question, it soon became clear that there was no answer to this question. The reason being that the students that have been using the myON® reader program the most were students that were already strong readers. The other students that were using it only did so when they had assignments that required the use of the program. The teachers said that they did not see a change in the students that were using it because the students either did not care much about the reading or were already confident in their reading skills. With that said, I did continue the interview to see what we could find out about the program and how the teachers perceived usefulness and perceived success of the program.

The two teachers I interviewed have the most interaction with the myON® reader program. There were five common points that came from both of the teachers about the myON® reader program. They both were worried that they sounded negative about the program; however, they believe it could be a strong program with some changes. The common points were:

- Flexible Access for Student and Household Members
- Not Enough High School Level Reading Material
- High School Reading Material Format Inadequate
- Beginning Assessment Not Flexible
- Lower Level Readers Worried about Reading Not Being “Cool”

Bullet one was the teacher’s favorite thing about the myON® reader. They said for many reasons this was good because the parents and siblings can participate in reading as well which could encourage others in the household to read. Also, this availability allows the student to access the reading from anywhere that they have an internet connection.

Bullets two and three go together. The teachers said that the program did not have enough high school focused material, and the material that was high school focused was primarily in the form of graphic novels. This lack of high school level materials did not give the student the freedom to choose something other than the graphic novel version, and many of the students thought the graphic novels made the reading too elementary. The teachers felt the myON® reader program will be more useful in their situation when more high school reading materials are added.

The fourth bullet is an issue only when students do not take the initial evaluation of their interest and reading level seriously. The teachers said the students will goof off when completing the interest survey and then the reading level test not realizing that

they will be stuck with at least five readings at the skill level they tested at and on subjects they may not actually be interested in. The problem is that the teachers do not have the flexibility to let the student take the test again, and the students are stuck, potentially discouraging the students from coming back and using the program in the future.

The last bullet is more an issue that the teachers see with the kids than it is an issue with the myON® reader program. Both teachers mentioned it several times, so I decided to include it in my findings. How do they convince kids that reading is cool and that it is okay to do it? This can also be an issue at home. That is another reason they like that the entire household is able to use it and they can try to encourage the parents to read so that the kids see them doing it and might get over this feeling of not being “cool.”

Overall the teachers like the idea of the myON® reader program and believe that it is probably wonderful for grade school level students. At the grade school level there are more choices in reading materials. Once the myON® reader program begins to add more high school reading material, it will be a more useful product and not feel as much like a supplemental reading program. The teachers feel the need to use other programs in addition to this one to get everything they need.

5 Conclusion

The data does show a positive trend for the students that are using that program. With that said, there would need to be a more in-depth look to determine if the myON® reader program created that upward trend or if it was due to another factor. I would suggest to the principal and staff to look at the pretest and posttest data from the students that did not use the myON® program to see if there was any change in their scores as well, if available. This further research would give them a better picture of the possible effects the myON® reader program has had.

6 References

Hernandez, D. J. (2011). *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

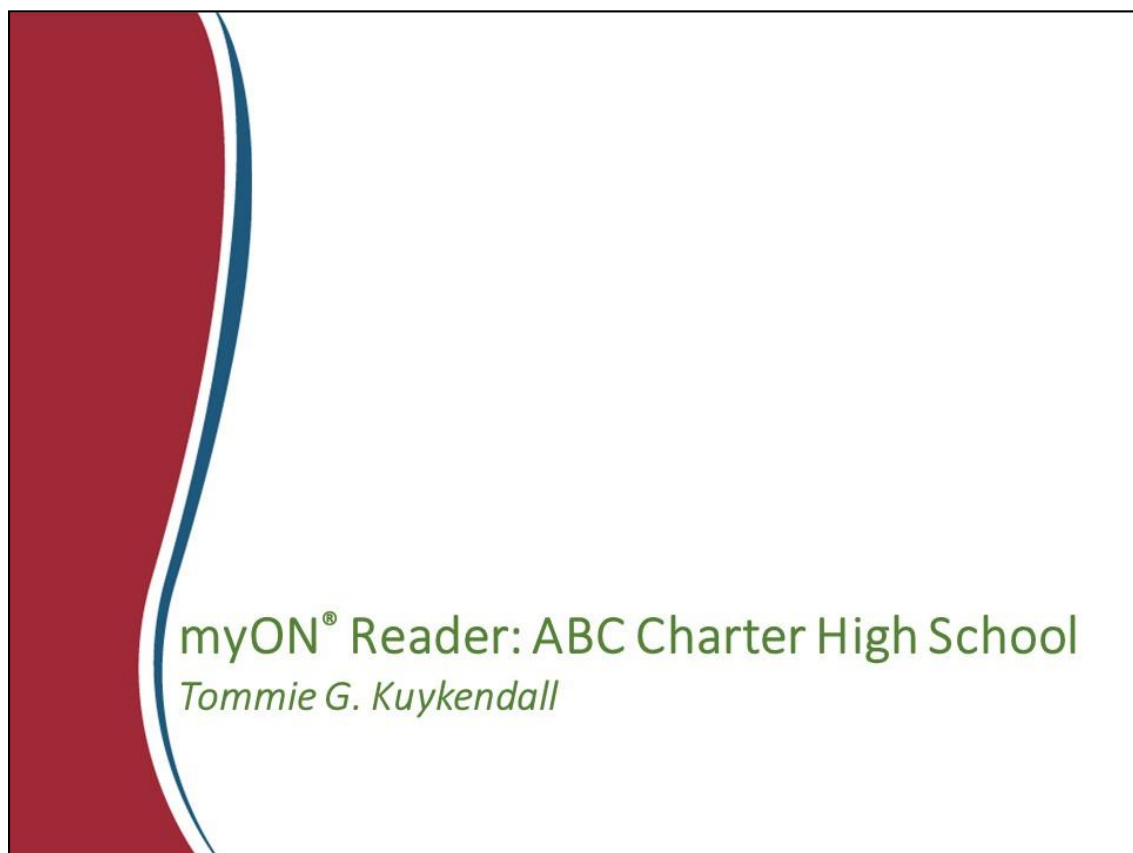
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White Paper Presentation



myON® Reader: ABC Charter High School
Tommie G. Kuykendall

Introduction

- Improve Reading Assessment Scores
- myON® Reader Program Implemented
- Review of the Data?

Problem

- Low Reading Scores an Issue for the U.S.
- Negative Trend in 9, 13, and 17 Year Olds
- ABC Charter High School Data Shows Same Problem

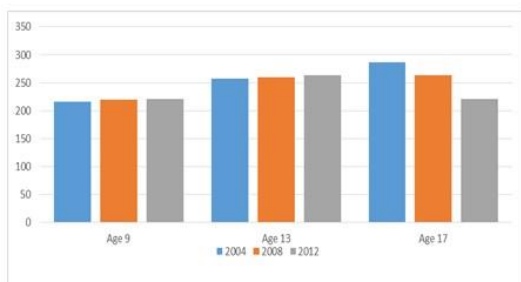


Figure 1. 2004-2012 Trend in NAEP Reading Average Scores.

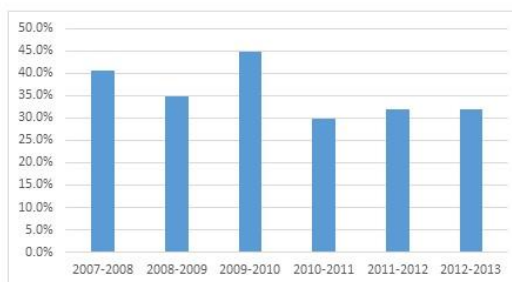


Figure 2. ABC Charter High School Reading Proficiency 2007-2013.

The Study

Research Question

1. How significant was the difference in pretest and posttest reading achievement data of those students using the myON® reader program?
2. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading proficiency levels and quantity of reading students are engaged in at ABC Charter High School that used the myON® reader program?
3. What level of correlation, if any, was found between the reading material level of difficulty and students' reading proficiency levels of those students that used the myON® reader program?
4. What differences, if any, have teachers observed in students' attitude, confidence, motivation or any other factor among the participants in the myON® reader program?

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

- A Significant Difference was Found
- 95% Confidence Level

Table 1. Summary of Paired-Samples t-Test Comparing Pretest and Posttest Data.

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest-Posttest	-.84538	2.07805	.33275	1.51901	-.17176	-2.541	38	.015

Data Analysis *continued*

Research Question 2

- A Moderate Correlation was Found
- Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level

Table 2. Correlation Between Hours Read and Difference in Pretest and Posttest.

		Hours_Read	Diff_Pretest_Posttest
Hours_Read	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	39	39
Diff_Pretest_Posttest	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	39	39

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Data Analysis *continued*

Research Question 3

- A Moderate Correlation was Found
- Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 Level

Table 3. Correlation Between 2014 Reading Assessment Scores and Lexile Level.

		Hours_Read	Diff_Pretest_Posttest
Fall_2014	Pearson Correlation	1	.676**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	39	39
Lexile_14	Pearson Correlation	.676**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	39	39

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Data Analysis *continued*

Research Question 4

Common Themes from Interview:

- Flexible Access for Student and Household Members
- Not Enough High School Level Reading Material
- High School Reading Material Format Inadequate
- Beginning Assessment Not Flexible
- Lower Level Readers Worried about Reading Not Being “Cool”

Conclusion

- Data Shows Positive Trend
- Need to Do Further Research to Determine Cause
- myON® Program Needs Improvement for High School Use

References

- Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Hurst, B., Franklin, K., & Scales, K. B. (2010). How Does a High School Reading Class Influence Students' Reading Levels, Habits, and Perceptions? , 35, 10-18.
- NAEP. (2013). 2009-2011 Achievement-Level Descriptions. Retrieved 7/49/2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieveall.aspx>
- NMPED. (2013a). New Mexico Accountability Data: Statistics and Data from http://www.ped.state.nm.us/AssessmentAccountability/AcademicGrowth/NM_SBA.html
- Schimke, K. (2011). Pre-K-12 Literacy: State of the Nation. The Progress of Education Reform. Volume 12, Number 6: Education Commission of the States.

Appendix B: Study Authorization Letter

██████████ Director/Principal

██████████ Charter High School

████████████████████
Albuquerque, NM ██████████
████████████████████
████████████████████

Tommie Kuykendall, EdD Student
12310 Claremont Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112
505-239-0138

April 12, 2014

Dear Tommie,

Based on my review of your research prospectus, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled myON Reading Program: Did it Improve Reading Proficiency? As part of this study, I authorize you to review the data that will be provided to you by myself that was collected by the school via the Read Naturally Benchmark Assessor and the myON Reader program. The data provided will not have students personal information included for confidentiality. Also, the teachers at the school will be available on a voluntary basis to be interviewed by you for one hour each.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing data to be evaluated, time to meet with you to complete the process and provide feedback as needed. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB. I also understand that the research you are conducting is to complete your doctoral program at Walden University.

Sincerely,



██████████ Director/Principal

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

ABC Charter High School Interview Protocol**Interview Details**

Date: _____ *Time:* _____ *Location:* _____

Interviewer: _____ *Interviewee:* _____

Interviewer

Title:

Interviewee Title: _____

You have been selected for this study on the basis that you have interacted over the past year with the students that have been using the myON® reader program. The research as a whole is looking at the myON® reader program and its benefit to the students that have used it over the last year. I want to know your overall opinion of the myON® reader program and how you feel it may have benefited the students not only in the area of reading proficiency but attitude and level of confidence in reading or in general.

This interview will be recorded in order to capture all of the information. The data within these recordings will remain confidential and only reviewed by myself. I may also need to come back at a later date to visit with you again if I find that I have questions that need to be answered. I have a consent form for you to sign if you decide that you would like to participate in this interview process. Your participation in the process is completely voluntary. You may terminate the interview at any time during the interview.

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been at ABC Charter High School?
2. Where you involved in the selection of the myON® reader program?
3. Did you work directly with students that are using the myON® reader program?
4. What is your overall opinions of the myON® reader program?
5. What were some benefits the students gained from using this program that you have seen?
6. Of these additional benefits what was the most shocking to you? In other words, what were you not expecting students to gain from the use of this program?
7. What do you feel the students attitudes were towards the myON® reader program?
8. How did the students interact with each other using the myON® program?
9. Do you believe the school should continue to use the myON® reader program? Why or Why not?
10. Do you have any additional information that you believe is relevant to this study?

Appendix D: Data Use Agreement

DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement (“Agreement”), effective as of April 12, 2014 (“Effective Date”), is entered into by and between Tommie Kuykendall (“Data Recipient”) and [REDACTED] (“Data Provider”). The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set (“LDS”) for use in research in accord with the HIPAA and FERPA Regulations.

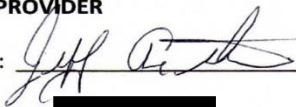
1. Definitions. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the “HIPAA Regulations” codified at Title 45 parts 160 through 164 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.
2. Preparation of the LDS. Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable HIPAA or FERPA Regulations
3. Data Fields in the LDS. No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS). In preparing the LDS, Data Provider shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research (list all data to be provided): pre-test and post-test data obtained from the Read Naturally Benchmark Assessor, myON reading program data, and discussions with data providers.
4. Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:
 - a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;
 - b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;
 - c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;
 - d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

- e. Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.
5. Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS for its Research activities only.
6. Term and Termination.
- a. Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.
 - b. Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.
 - c. Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.
 - d. For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.
 - e. Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.
7. Miscellaneous.
- a. Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

- b. Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.
- c. No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.
- d. Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.
- e. Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

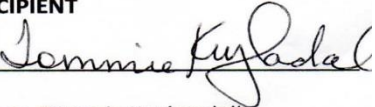
DATA PROVIDER

Signed: 

Print Name: 

Print Title: Director/Principal

DATA RECIPIENT

Signed: 

Print Name: Tommie Kuykendall

Print Title: Student

Appendix E: Interview Consent

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I, (Name of Participant), volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Ms. Tommie Kuykendall a doctoral student at Walden University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about the myON® reader program being used at the high school for which I work.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand I was chosen to participate based on my familiarity with the use of the myON® Reader program at the high school. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one at my school will be told.
2. I understand that most interviewees participating in the study will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. I know being in this type of study involves some risk of minor discomfort such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview. I understand that being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. I understand that the benefit to this study will be gained insight into the myON® Reader program.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Tommie Kuykendall a student at Walden University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
5. Staff and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects: Behavioral Sciences Committee at the Walden University. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, you may contact Walden University Dissertation Chair, Dr. Elina Lampert-Shepel, at elina.lampert-shepel@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is 10-07-14-0273576 and it expires on October 6, 2015.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

My Printed Name

Signature of the Investigator

Date

Ms. Tommie Kuykendall

Cell 505.239.0138

Work 505.284.7818



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Tommie G. Kuykendall

Summary

Business professional experienced working in fast-paced environments demanding strong organizational, prioritizing, technical, and interpersonal skills. Trustworthy, ethical, discreet, and committed to superior customer service. Confident and poised in interactions with individuals at all levels. Resourceful in completing projects without direction, self-sufficient and thrive in a multi-task environment. Capabilities include:

- Project Management
- Corporate Manuals & Training
- Contract Management
- Problem Solving
- Business Process & Efficiencies
- Event Planning

Project Management Experience

- ❖ I took a leadership role in order to manage the activities of several technical staff & managers to complete required tasks in order to develop collaborate with other national labs and k-20 institutions which included Minority Serving Institutions at its core. I developed agendas and other communications for in order to manage our time and keep us on track as well as maintained action item list with deadlines associated with those. I also took it upon myself to write the first draft of our requirements document for the program as we were on a tight deadline on customer deliverables and my strong interest in education as it aligns with my current degree aspirations.
- ❖ I organized & managed TITANS activities over the 2013-2014 timeframe which most notably included the 2 day University Day event which included faculty, tech staff, student interns and Student Intern Office personnel. The event showcases the opportunities at Sandia and gives the students the opportunity to show off the work they performed over the summer giving the professors from the visiting colleges and universities a better idea of the caliber and type of employees Sandia needs as future hires.
- ❖ I planned & organized 2011, 2012 and 2013 Cognitive Science & Technology External Advisory Board with little direction following corporate requirements, timeline, and within budget each year.
- ❖ I managed logistics & preparations for CERL open house which included high level state, Sandia, DOE, and NNSA officials by tracking & assigning action items for all involved including building maintenance, tech staff for tours, management, and protocol office.
- ❖ I developed & managed the customer care process from the point of sale to the point of delivery of a \$2 million twin engine jet aircraft by working with the contracts & legal department to ensure proper paperwork was filed, working with customer care to facilitate

customer needs, working with finance to maintain records of ownership as they changed, working with production to ensure they had the information they needed on chosen customer options, color pallet etc. all the way up until the day of delivery when I turned it over to our delivery team by handing them the final documentation of proof of payment. I did this all while working with these groups process mapping in order to determine the best processes long term & documenting those for future rollout.

Education

Doctorate of Education (Ed.D), Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment *Projected Graduation 2015*

Master of Science, Agricultural Economics, Agribusiness, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

Thesis: "Feasibility Study & Marketing Plan for Homemade Soap Making Company" *Fall 1997*

Bachelor of Business Administration, Management & Minor Equivalent in Hospitality & Tourism Services, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM *Summer 1991*

Publications

(Maiden Name Nielsen)

Keplinger, K.O., T.G. Kuykendall, S. Norvel, & E. Osei, 2000. "Livestock & the Environment: A National Pilot Project –A Nutrient Budget: For the Upper Maquoketa River Watershed, Iowa." Report. Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX.

Kuykendall, T.G. & H. Jones, 2000. "Livestock & the Environment: A National Pilot Project – National CAFO Database." Report. Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX.

Nielsen, T.G., K.O. Keplinger, & R.H. Neal, 1998. "Livestock & the Environment: A National Pilot Project --Economic Impacts of the Erath County Dairy Industry: An Input-Output Analysis." Report. Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX.

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Experience

Office Administrative Assistant, Org 5624, 5627 & 5629, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM 06/13-Present

- Managed TITANS preparations for University Days by working closely with the three internship programs and the Sandia's Student Internship Program by maintaining actions item lists, creating agendas and facilitating meetings around University Days
- Organized TITANS team interaction, meeting, agendas, timelines, action items & lessons learned items to work to make a stronger program
- Managed part of the Minority Serving Institution team to develop consortium for South Carolina by facilitating meetings as needed and writing up the requirements document for moving forward

- Assist in the preparation of CCD (Center for Cyber Defenders) to receive approximately 30 summer interns
 - Acquiring projects across 5600 and others for the students
 - Assist in matching students to projects
 - Order desktop computing equipment as well as maintaining inventory of these items

Office Administrative Assistant, Org 1462 & 1463, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM

01/11-06/13

- Managed preparations for CERL open house which included Senator Udall, Congressman Lujan, Mayor Berry, Paul Hommert, NNSA Leadership, Corporate Leader and other industry leaders in Cyber Security
- Planned and Organized Cognitive Science & Technology External Advisory Board meeting for three years which included: hotel arrangements, meals, meeting announcements, date selection with members, processing no-fee agreements, expense vouchers, Sandia required paperwork, and visitor tours
- Managed the move of Orgs 01462 & 01463 to new CERL building
- Manage building through MAXIMO during reconstruction managing construction projects at different levels of completion from the design phase, choosing final design options to completion
- Managing effort to create poster displays throughout the building
- Helped in the facilitation of strategic planning exercise which included both organizations
- Create presentations, design work for meetings, organizing conferences & displays
- Arrange corporate travel, support director & other managers when OAA or SMA are out
- Conducted & created training for VACT & Alarm System in CERL

Customer Care Manager, Eclipse Aerospace, Inc., Albuquerque, NM

10/09-08/10

- Reconnected with owners of Eclipse 500 aircraft to create a positive customer service experience
- Developed new customer care system in order to provide great service through communication & honesty which included the training of new & current employees on the process
- Setup information tracking for customer care records in a creative & cost effective way using Microsoft SharePoint & Excel
- Implemented process to track customer parts requests, service requests & other requests this included training of others for rollout

- Provided exceptional customer service in a challenging environment by answering calls & messages promptly, providing requested information, taking orders over the phone, directing them to the right person for help
- Worked across departments such as the aircraft service center, engineering & supply chain
- Assisted in work order, sales order, shipping, & other duties to facilitate parts sales & service
- Managed all incoming email & phone calls to our customer service line

HR & Contracts Manager, Mechtronic Solutions Inc., Albuquerque, NM 03/09-10/09

- Developed HR department due to recent growth of company from 20 employees to 60
- Maintained contracts with Sandia National Laboratories as well as other companies in order to comply with their requirements
- Responsible for rewriting the employee handbook & implementation
- Created, reviewed, & reworked business processes
- Recruiting which included posting positions, prescreening of applicants & obtaining references
- Supervised two employees – receptionist & purchasing
- Conducted receiving into accounting system

Customer Order Manager, Eclipse Aviation, Albuquerque, NM 10/07-02/09

- Responsible for reviewing, executing & record retention of all customer contracts including deposit agreements, purchase agreements, change order requests
- Worked closely with the Sales, Contracts, Marketing, Production, Finance & Customer Care in order to process customer orders, develop processes & wrote work instruction to make more efficient interactions
- Developed training for both CRM & R3 sides of SAP for the Ownership Experience & Product Support group
- Participated in the rework of CRM module in order to make the tool more user friendly & to provide better internal & external customer services

Executive Assistant, Eclipse Aviation, Albuquerque, NM 7/07-10/07

- Assistant to the VP of Ownership Experience & Product Support
- Produced & designed presentations & other design work for meetings, conferences & displays
- Scheduled meetings & managed calendars
- Reviewed travel reimbursements prior to submitting for signature

- Arranged all corporate travel

Executive Assistant, TPL, Inc., Albuquerque, NM

10/02-7/07

- Assistant to the owner of the company and acted on his behalf in his absence
- Responsible for proper submittal of grant proposals to the DOE, EPA, DOD, DARPA & other government organizations in the SBIR program
- Developed more efficient processes for travel request & reimbursements which included writing process work instructions which lead to my writing a new employee manual to include all of these changes
- Designed & created print shop ready brochures, datasheets & other informational & promotional materials
- Produced & designed presentations & other design work for meetings, conferences & displays
- Trained myself & produced new company website using Adobe GoLive
- Arranged all corporate travel & Other clerical duties as needed

Typesetting/Graphic Design, Little Giant Printers, N. Richland Hills, TX

9/00-9/02

- Responsible for layout & design of many types of printing projects such as: brochures, multi-page publications, CD covers, business cards, letterhead, newsletters, directories & other promotional materials
- Assisted in the production of paper & metal plates which included striping & plating of negatives
- Worked directly with customers on projects both original art & re-creation
- Scanned & adjusted photos for high quality printed documents

Sr. Research Assistant, Texas Institute for Applied Environmental Research, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, TX

7/98-2/00

- Conducted economic research on agriculture, environmental, & marketing issues
- Evaluated data using the Input-Output model IMPLAN
- Assisted faculty in research activities such as collecting data, processing data & data analysis
- Assisted in graphic design & layout of documents, proposals, reports, working papers, display & presentation materials for meetings & workshops
- Assisted in graphic design duties for a workshop in Washington, DC that included top officials from the EPA, USDA, Milk Market Producers